

The Transforming Power Mandala



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- Anger Overview
- Anger is the result of two factors;
- Stressor – a real or perceived stress, threat or loss to our body, property, self-esteem, values or control (when we don't get what we want).
 - Trigger Thoughts about an old stressor or its impact on us, which ignite a hostile response.
- Basic Needs – We frequently get angry when there is a threat to our basic needs, such as:
- Need to survive: food, safety, shelter
 - Need for connection: fulfilled by loving, sharing and cooperating with others.
 - Need for meaning in life: fulfilled by achieving, being recognized and respected.
 - Need for control or power over one's life: fulfilled by having and making choices in life.
 - Need for fun: fulfilled by laughing and playing.
- Some important dynamics of anger are:
- We become more angry when we are stressed and our body resources are down.
 - We are rarely ever angry for the reasons we think.
 - We often become angry when we see a trait in others we can't stand in ourselves.
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The Anger Iceberg



Managing Our Own Anger

The Anger Iceberg is a tool you can use to understand and manage our anger. Anger and hurt are two sides of the same coin.

First, write down what you are angry about.

Then ask yourself, what are the hurt feelings under the anger. For example, “I felt hurt because no one valued my opinion.”

Now ask yourself to identify the unmet needs under the hurt feelings. For example, “I needed to be respected by my colleagues.”

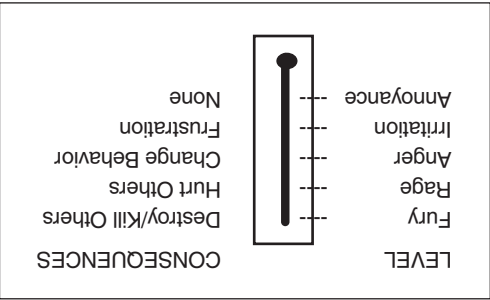
Now ask yourself to identify the hidden fear under their needs. For example, “I feared that they would never respect me.”

Dealing with the Anger of Others

In facing the anger of others it may help to understand what lies beneath their anger. We may respond to the hurt, needs and fears of the other person rather than focusing on the anger. Asking questions often helps.

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The Anger Thermometer



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- It is important to be aware of your own anger thermometer. Frequently we do not respond to minor annoyances but they build up. When anger gets to the level of rage, we have usually lost control.
 - Anger is a secondary emotion
 - What is important is what you do with it
 - If you are angry about something in the past, that is not anger, it is a resentment or grudge

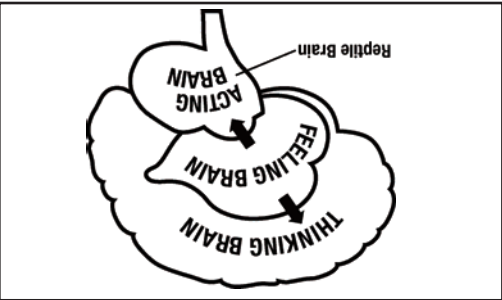
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4. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means we have to give up our desire for revenge. When we have been hurt, it is a natural urge to want to get back at the person who hurt us. However, we may initiate a cycle of revenge which can escalate. Forgiveness is the tool to break the cycle of revenge.
 5. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means we have to give up our attitude of self righteousness. For many of us it is important to be "good" and "righteous" and to oppose anything we see as "wrong" or "evil." In some ways, this may be a bargain with the devil. We cannot maintain our position as being a "righteous" person unless there are "bad" people out there that we can oppose. Forgiving someone may mean that we need to give up our self righteousness and start being honest about both the good and bad parts of ourselves.
- Grudges may become an obsession and may become a way to "Let others rent space in our heads."

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- Addiction to Grudges

Some of the reasons that we hang onto grudges are:

 1. We believe that letting go of grudges and forgiving someone is a sign of weakness. Think about a person who has forgiven you. Is that person weak or strong? In fact, forgiving someone is usually a sign of strength. Usually the strongest and most mature individuals are the first to forgive.
 2. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means that we have to give up being a victim. Sometimes we like to feel sorry for ourselves. This is a very human reaction. It is easy to blame others for our problems. We may also want people to sympathize with us because we have been hurt or oppressed. Taking responsibility for our problems and forgiving others is the path to personal strength.
 3. Letting go of grudges and forgiving someone means we have to give up our anger. Anger can be addictive. Anger may help us to feel powerful. But we all know anger is not good for our emotional and physical health. Forgiveness is the step to inner health.

Your Brain on Anger



Emotions are felt in the feeling brain that sends information to either the thinking brain or the acting brain. When our thermometer is at anger or less we are usually in touch with our thinking brain and are in control. When our thermometer is in rage or fury, we are usually only in touch with our acting brain and are out of control. Our acting brain does not think, it only acts. It is vital to manage our anger before it gets to this level.

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This diagram shows that everyone has an inner core that is positive. The core is the source of love and caring. It is the part of our personality that enables us to connect with others and with our inner sources of power. It is the source of Transforming Power.

So why don't we stay in our core all the time? When we are in our core, we tend to feel vulnerable. As a result we often cover our positive core with fear.

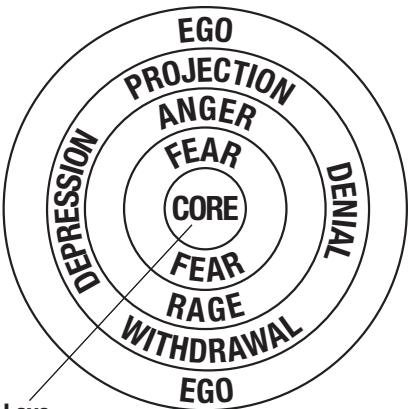
But, since we feel weak and powerless when we are fearful we often cover up our fear with anger. And anger enables us to feel powerful.

But, since we don't like to go around angry all the time, we cover up our anger with defense mechanisms. For example, if I am angry at you, I project that anger onto you and say, "I'm not angry at you but you're angry at me." Denial, depression and withdrawal are other defense mechanisms.

And then, we cover it all up with our egos, which is the image we present to the world.

Our goal is to get back to our core.

Personality Diagram



Love, Caring, Honesty, Spiritual Feelings, Unity, Kindness, Empathy, Transforming Power

Managing Stress

We live in a stressful world and prisons are an especially stressful environment.

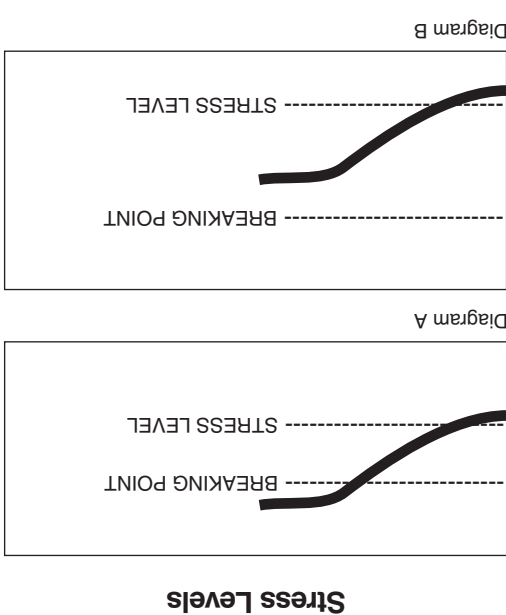
We all live with a stress level and we all have a breaking point. The breaking point may be higher or lower in some individuals.

Diagram A shows that minor stresses may build up until we reach a breaking point. The event that triggers the breaking point may be minor but often produces a major response.

Diagram B shows that by your lowering stress levels you may be able to keep your anger from reaching the breaking point.

Take some time each day to lower your stress level. This may be by prayer, meditation, reading, listening to music, working out, talking to family, talking to a good friend, or whatever works for you.

It is also important to be aware that those around you may be close to their breaking point. Be careful so you do not trigger people who have a short fuse.



The Anatomy of an Apology

Some of the elements of a genuine apology are:

1. The apology must acknowledge responsibility. The person making the apology needs to take responsibility for having done something wrong. It is an effort to right the balance between the offender and the offended. For example, saying, "I'm sorry that you're upset by what I said," is not taking responsibility for your actions and blames the other person for the upset.
2. The apology must be specific. It names the mistake that caused the harm. It is more than saying, "I'm sorry for what I did." The Apology needs to identify the error that you've made. Generalities will not do.
3. The apology must express how the mistake hurt the other person. It should let the other person know that you understand their feelings. It should express some empathy for the other person. "I understand you were really worried that something might have happened to me when I was an hour late for dinner."

4. The apology may involve regret and guilt. The apology needs to express remorse. A real apology involves pain, suffering and soul-searching regret. It may express your concern that your mistake may have jeopardized your relationship and that you value the relationship.
5. The apology must express a willingness to change behavior. It lets others know that the mistake will not occur again. Sometimes some sort of restitution is called for. One way of handling this would be to say, "Let me know if there is anything I can do." Or if you broke something of value, you can offer to replace it.
6. If the offense was made publicly the apology should be public also. It is not fair to offend somebody publicly and then make an apology in private.

Most of all, an apology is a willingness to let go of the ego and treat another person with respect. It is an expression of honesty. It is a sign of strength rather than a sign of weakness.

I Messages

1. Letting go of the "blame game" is the first step in using an "I Message."
2. I Messages are about being assertive rather than aggressive or submissive.
3. I Messages are about encouraging the other person to empathize with your feelings.
4. I Messages are about inviting the other person to change their behavior.
5. I Messages are NOT about blaming the other person for your feelings.
6. I Messages are NOT about being a victim
7. You Messages are about blame and tend to make the other person angry and defensive.
8. If you want to start a fight, You Messages are a sure way to do it.
9. Disguised You Messages generally begins with "I think..." or "I believe..." instead of "I feel..."
10. Disguised You Messages are a way of making the other person responsible for your feelings and are a subtle way of blaming the other person.

The I Message

Start with an affirmation.

I feel { good } when _____ happens

because _____

(And if you receive a positive response.)

And what I would like to see happen is _____

The You Message

You make me _____

You are _____