

## Chapter 7: Anger and Aggression

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## Anger and Aggression

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This chapter will provide (1) signs of anger, (2) theories about how and why aggression develops, and (3) means of preventing or coping with anger (in yourself and in others).

### Introduction—An Overview of Anger

How we deal with stress, disappointments, and frustration determines the essence of our personality. In this chapter we consider frustration and aggression. Anger may do more harm than any other emotion. First of all it is very common and, secondly, it upsets at least two people--the aggressor and the aggrieved against. There are two problems: how to prevent or control your own anger and how to handle someone aggressing against you. This chapter attends more to self-control.

The overall effects of anger are enormous (Nay, 1996). Frustration tells us "I'm not getting what I want" and eventually anger is related to violence, crime, spouse and child abuse, divorce, stormy relationships, poor working conditions, poor physical health (headaches, hypertension, GI disturbances, heart attacks), emotional disorders, and so on.

Just how widespread is hostility? Very! *Psychology Today* (1983) asked, "If you could secretly push a button and thereby eliminate any person with no repercussions to yourself, would you press that button?" 69% of responding males said yes, 56% of women. Men would most often kill the U. S. president or some public figure; women would kill bosses, ex-husbands or ex-boyfriends and former partners of current lovers. Another survey of college students during the 80's indicated that 15% agreed that "if we could wipe out the Soviet Union, and be sure they wouldn't be able to retaliate, we should do it." That action could result in over 100 million deaths! The respondents seemed to realize the great loss of life because 26% said, "the United States should be willing to accept 25 million to 50 million casualties in order to engage in nuclear war." What an interesting combination of intelligence and mass violence in the same species. In light of the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union, this kind of pugnacious, arrogant, uncaring thinking is really scary. The problem was an unwillingness to carefully consider the atrocities of nuclear warfare plus a macho toughness engendered by the 1980's Cold War rhetoric.

For reasons I hope to soon make clearer, Americans are amazingly violent compared to people in other countries. In 2002, approximately 290 million Americans suffered 23 million crimes. 23% of those crimes were crimes of violence. For every 1000 people over 12, there was one rape or sexual assault, another assault resulting in an injury, and two robberies. Yet, criminal violence is fairly predictable (not at some specific time but in general) in the sense that 50% of males convicted of a crime between 10 and 16-years-of-age will be convicted of more crimes as adults. Also, being exposed to violence in childhood (at home, in their community, & in the

media) is associated with the child having poor health (Graham-Bermann & Seng, 2005) and with them being violent as an adult. We could do something about these things but we don't, perhaps because we believe aggression is just "human nature" and/or because we are angry and thus indifferent to stressed kids, especially if they are of another race or a different economic or ethnic group. Also, our society is far more insistent on punishing rather than preventing adolescent violence/crime/misbehavior (another reflection of our own anger?).

Great atrocities are attributed to crazed men--Hitler, Stalin, terrorists, etc. But, several psychological studies cited in this and the next chapter suggest that ordinary people can rather easily become evil enough to discriminate against, hurt, and brutalize others. Likewise, Goldhagen (1995) has documented that ordinary Germans by the thousands rounded up and executed millions of Jews. It isn't just the prejudiced and deranged that brutalize. There is scary evidence that almost all of us might, under the right conditions, develop a tolerance or a rationalization for injustice. Even the most moral among us may look the other way (certainly the many murderers in Germany and Russia talked to priests, ministers, town officials, etc.). German doctors performed atrocious experiments in concentration camps. Each of us strongly resist thinking of ourselves as potentially mean or bad, yet there is evidence we can be persuaded to do awful things by leaders and governments. Interestingly, we have little trouble believing that others are bad and immoral. Storr (1994) attempts to explain intense human hatred and cruelty to others, such as genocide and racial or religious conflict. Concerning hatred, we are psychologically still in the dark ages.

The crime rate soars in the U.S. and our prisons overflow; infidelity and spouse abuse are high; 1 in 5 women has been raped, 683,000 women were raped in 1990 (30% were younger than 11!); our murder rate is several times higher than most other countries. We are prejudiced. We distrust and dislike others. Even within the family--supposedly our refuge, our safe place, our source of love--there is much violence. Between 1/4 and 1/2 of all wives have been physically battered which causes great psychological trauma too (Goodman, Koss, & Russo, 1993). Physical fights have occurred within 12-16% of all marriages during the last year. In 50% of these instances it is mutual violence, i.e. *both* try to beat up on the other. But children 3 to 17 are the most violent: 20% per year actually abuse their parents; 93-95% are a "little physical" with parents. In addition, last year 10% of children were dangerously and severely aggressive with siblings. Nearly one third of us fight with our siblings. About 25% of all murders are by teenagers. There are 1.2 million cases of child abuse per year. Pogrebin (1983) even says we are a child-hating society but that overlooks the vast majority of children who are loved, even pampered.

One of the most appalling statistics is that among women who die while pregnant or within one year of pregnancy, 30% are murdered (Chang, Berg, Saltzman & Herndon, 2005). The percentage is a little higher in young teen women (especially black) who have not gotten good prenatal care. A similar study by The Washington Post found that 2/3rds of these murders involved domestic violence. Many were slain at home by husbands, boyfriends, or lovers. In spite of our TV preoccupation in early 2005 with the Laci Peterson case, we aren't doing much about helping women during this stressful period

in their lives. By the way, this statistic in the US reminds one of the high murder rates reported among married Indian women who have *not* produced a boy baby. We will discuss violence within the family later in this chapter.

One in eight high school students are involved in an abusive "love" relationship right now. 40% of youths have been in a fight in the last year; 10% were in four or more fights last year. 25% of young males have carried a weapon at least one day in the last month (of that 25%, 60% carried a knife and 25% a gun). Boys and men are much more likely to carry a weapon than a female, but don't assume that only men act violently. Recent studies suggest that college (not high school) women are more likely than men to kick, push, bite, and slap in anger, especially when they are jealous. Hostile, aggressive young people tend to come from broken, angry, violent homes.

Violence comes in many forms and in many situations. On the extreme end of the scale, there are mass murderers, serial killers, terrorism, wars, rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, parent-child or sibling violence, violence by psychotics and people with antisocial personality disorders, child physical and sexual abuse, and ethnic or religious groups or nations that go to war. I do not intend to imply that these acts are similar. I'm simply pointing out the wide diversity and regrettable frequency of violence. Since the 9/11/2001 attack on the World Trade Center Towers in New York City, there has been a lot of attention on *preventing* violence by terrorists (mostly by capturing or killing the terrorists first) but little serious research has been done to further our understanding of the causes or prevention of angry aggression. (Levin & Rabrenovic, 2004, provide a sociological view and discuss ways small groups have reduced hatred). Much research is needed.

Of course, anger isn't only expressed in horrendous events—it is a part of everyday life. A survey of 6,000 families published by the British government (Flouri, E., 2005) found that 89% of children born in 1958 were "never" or only "sometimes irritable." Most children were "mild mannered" but boys were more commonly rated by their mothers as "frequently irritable" than girls between 5 and 12. Moderately angry children do not necessarily become angry young adults. Anger seems to wane with age. When these children get into their 20's and 30's, the angry women slightly outnumber angry males. Angry young adults have more health problems and are less likely to have gotten married. Among the more extreme "consistently angry" children, they remain more angry and dissatisfied with life in their 30's than their less angry peers in childhood.

There are many efforts to measure and predict violence (Quinsey, Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1998; Spielberg, 2005; search a search engine), but mostly in maximum security and psychiatric institutions. Much better measures and ways to predict violence are needed. Knowledge about how to reduce aggression in many situations is even more needed.

Among the more fascinating findings is a measure called the "Finger Length Ratio", calculated by dividing the length of the second finger (the index finger) by the length of the usually longer fourth finger (the ring finger). This ratio is generally smaller for males than for females, indicating males' ring fingers are longer relative to their index finger than is true of females. In males and females, this ratio using the right hand has been found to be related to the amount of testosterone available to the fetus early in pregnancy. Studies have also found that men with smaller digit ratios are judged as more masculine and better in physical sports. In addition, the finger

length ratio in males has been found to be related to certain psychological test scores, especially physical aggression. That relationship between the second and fourth fingers, reflecting early prenatal conditions, is believed to be an even better predictor of physical aggression than a male's current adult level of testosterone. The finger ratio, however, did not predict anger, hostility, or verbal aggression, only physical aggression. Likewise, finger length ratio in women does not correlate with any of these anger measures (Bailey & Hurd, 2005). Please note: The relationships found in this study based on about 140 subjects are not strong and reliable enough to be used to make individual predictions of physical aggressiveness using a person's index finger being shorter relative to his ring finger. Yet, this is an amazing finding indicating the distant but important early prenatal influence on adult personality traits. This measure is just one small factor influencing physical aggression. Such a finding should remind us to not expect human behavior to be simple and easy to understand.

## Definition of Terms

We will study more about how anger develops. Is it innate? Certainly most three-year-olds can throw a temper tantrum without any formal training and often even without observing a model. Is it learned? Why are the abused sometimes abusers? Does having a temper and being aggressive yield payoffs? You bet. How do we learn to suppress aggression? How can we learn to forgive others?

Anger can be the result of hurt pride, of unreasonable expectations, or of repeated hostile fantasies. Besides getting our way, we may unconsciously use anger to blame others for our own shortcomings, to justify oppressing others, to boost our own sagging egos, to conceal other feelings, and to handle other emotions (as when we become aggressive when we are afraid). Any situation that frustrates us, especially when we think someone else is to blame for our loss, is a potential trigger for anger and aggression.

So, what is frustration? It is the feeling we get when we don't get what we want, when something interferes with our gaining a desired and expected goal. It can be physical (a flat tire), our own limitations (paralysis after an accident), our choices (an unprepared for and flunked exam), others' actions (parental restrictions or torturing a political prisoner), others' motives (deception for a self-serving purpose), or society's injustice (born into poverty and finding no way out).

Anger is feeling mad in response to frustration or injury. You don't like what has happened and usually you'd like to get revenge. Anger is an emotional-physiological-cognitive internal state; it is separate from the behavior it might prompt. In some instances, angry emotions are beneficial; if we are being taken advantage of, anger motivates us to take action (not necessarily aggressive) to correct the situation. Aggression is action, i.e. attacking someone or a group. It is intended to harm someone. It can be a verbal attack--insults, threats, sarcasm, or attributing nasty motives to them--or a physical punishment or restriction. What about thoughts and fantasies in which we humiliate or brutally assault our enemies? Is that aggression? What about violent dreams? Such thoughts and dreams suggest anger, of course, but are not aggression as I have defined it here.

An important new term has come into use: Indirect Aggression (Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2003). This is where gossip or rumors are spread about someone or where a person is left out, shunned, or snubbed. This behavior has been shown to be more common among girls because girls, in general, are more eager than boys to be accepted into their social group and to have close personal relationships. Having bad things said about you or being neglected or avoided is very hurtful to a teenage girl. Sometimes it is called Relational Aggression because it is designed to hurt certain relationships in the group and build other contacts. It is a way to manipulate relationships and create excitement. Viewing indirect aggression on TV increases this kind of action by the viewer. Heim, Murphy and Golant are experienced in the business world and discuss indirect aggression by women in the corporate America.

While aggression is usually a result of anger, it may be "cold" and calculated: for example, the bomber pilot, the judge who sentences a criminal, the unfaithful spouse, the merchant who overprices a product, or the unemotional gang attack. To clarify aggression, some writers have classified it according to its purpose: instrumental aggression (to get some reward, not to get revenge), hostile aggression (to hurt someone or get revenge), and annoyance aggression (to stop an irritant). When our aggression becomes so extreme that we lose self-control, it is said that we are in a rage.

Aggression must be distinguished from assertiveness which is tactfully and rationally standing up for one's own rights; indeed, assertiveness is designed not to hurt others (see chapter 8).

Anger can also be distinguished from hostility which is a chronic state of anger. Anger is a temporary response, which we all have, to a particular frustrating situation; hostility is a permanent personality characteristic which certain people have.

## Recognizing Anger

We know when we are very mad, but anger and aggression come in many forms, some quite subtle. Look inside yourself for more anger. This list (Madlow, 1972) of behaviors and verbal comments said to others or only thought to ourselves may help you uncover some resentments you were not aware of:

### Direct behavioral signs:

1. Assaultive: physical and verbal cruelty, rage, slapping, shoving, kicking, hitting, threaten with a knife or gun, etc.
2. Aggression: overly critical, fault finding, name-calling, accusing someone of having immoral or despicable traits or motives, nagging, whining, sarcasm, prejudice, flashes of temper.
3. Hurtful: malicious gossip, stealing, trouble-making.
4. Rebellious: anti-social behavior, open defiance, refusal to talk.

### Direct verbal or cognitive signs:



1. Open hatred and insults: "I hate your guts;" "I'm really mad;" "You're so damn stupid."
2. Contempt and disgust: "You're a selfish SOB;" "You are a spineless wimp, you'll never amount to anything."
3. Critical: "If you really cared about me, you'd...;" "You can't trust \_\_\_\_\_."
4. Suspicious: "You haven't been fair;" "You cheated!"
5. Blaming: "They have been trying to cause me trouble."
6. I don't get the respect I deserve: "They just don't respect the owner (or boss or teacher or doctor) any more."
7. Revengeful: "I wish I could really hurt him."
8. Name calling: "Guys are jerks;" "Women are bitches;" "Politicians are self-serving liars."
9. Less intense but clear: "Well, I'm a little annoyed;" "I'm fed up with...;" "I've had it!" "You're a pain." "I don't want to be around you."

#### Thinly veiled behavioral signs:

1. Distrustful, skeptical.
2. Argumentative, irritable, indirectly challenging.
3. Resentful, jealous, envious.
4. Disruptive, uncooperative, or distracting actions.
5. Unforgiving or unsympathetic attitude.
6. Sulky, sullen, pouting.
7. Passively resistant, interferes with progress.
8. Given to sarcasm, cynical humor, and teasing.
9. Judgmental, has a superior or holier-than-thou attitude.

#### Thinly veiled verbal signs:

1. "No, I'm not mad, I'm just disappointed, annoyed, disgusted, put out, or irritated."
2. "You don't know what you are talking about;" "Don't make me laugh."
3. "Don't push me, I'll do it when I get good and ready."
4. "Well, they aren't my kind of people."
5. "Would you buy a used car from him?"
6. "You could improve on..."
7. "Unlike Social Work, my major admits only the best students."

#### Indirect behavioral signs:

1. Withdrawal: quiet remoteness, silence, little communication especially about feelings.
2. Psychosomatic disorders: tiredness, anxiety, high blood pressure, heart disease. Actually, college students with high Hostility scores had, 20 years later, become more overweight with higher cholesterol and hypertension, had drunk more coffee and alcohol, had smoked more cigarettes, and generally had poorer health (Friedman, 1991). See chapter 5 for a discussion of psychogenic disorders.

3. Depression and guilt.
4. Serious mental illness: paranoid schizophrenia.
5. Accident-proneness and self-defeating or addictive behavior, such as drinking, over-eating, or drugs.
6. Vigorous, distracting activity (exercising or cleaning).
7. Excessively submissive, deferring behavior.
8. Crying.

Indirect verbal signs:

1. "I just don't want to talk."
2. "I'm disappointed in our relationship."
3. "I feel bad all the time."
4. "If you had just lost some weight."
5. "I'm really swamped with work, can't we do something about it?"
6. "Why does this always happen to me?"
7. "No, I'm not angry about anything--I just cry all the time."

### Hidden Anger—passive-aggressiveness

It is obvious from these "signs of anger" that anger is frequently a concealed or disguised emotion. And why not? Getting mad is scary... and potentially dangerous. One common way of expressing suppressed anger has been given a special name: passive-aggressiveness. It is releasing your anger by being passive or subtly oppositional. For example, such a person may be "tired," unresponsive, act like he/she "doesn't understand," be late frequently, exaggerate others' faults, pretend to agree ("sure, whatever"), be tearful, be argumentative, be forgetful, deny anger ("nothing's wrong"), procrastinate, and frequently be clumsy or sick (Hankins, 1993). Many of these traits and behaviors are listed above.

There is another related form of concealed anger: feeling like a victim. Feeling victimized assumes that someone or some situation has mistreated you. But a person who specializes in constantly feeling like a victim may not identify or accuse his/her abuser. Instead, he/she generally feels that the world is against him/her, that others vaguely intend to make him/her miserable. Victims usually feel helpless; therefore, they take little responsibility for what has happened to them. They think they were terribly mistreated in the past but they now seem unable to accept love and support, e.g. if you offer them help, they never get enough or if you try to cheer them up, it seldom works. A victim is much more likely to sulk, pout, look unhappy, or lay a guilt trip on something than to get angry. They play games: "Why does it always happen to me?" or "Yes, but" (no one's ideas or suggestions will do any good). The self-pitying, pessimistic, sad, jealous victim is surely sitting on a mass of hostility.

Both the passive-aggressive and the victim are likely to be aware of their anger, even though it is largely denied. In chapter 9 we will discuss "game playing" in which the aggressor plays "You're Not OK" or put down games without being aware of his/her anger. Anger expresses itself in many forms: cynic, naysayer, critic, bigot, etc. Potter-Efron & Potter-Efron (1995) describe

ten different styles of expressing anger; this may help you identify your type and help you stop it.

### How angry are you?

There are so many frustrations in our daily lives; one could easily become chronically irritated. Perhaps more important than the variety of things that anger us, is (1) the intensity of our anger and (2) the degree of control we have over our anger. That is, how close are we to losing control? About two-thirds of the students in my classes feel the need to gain more control over their anger.

How much of a temper do you have? Ask yourself these kind of questions:

- Do you have a quick or a hot temper? Do you suppress or hide your anger (passive-aggressive or victim)?
- Do you get irritated when someone gets in your way? fails to give you credit for your work? criticizes your looks or opinions or work? gives themselves advantages over you?
- Do you get angry at yourself when you make a foolish mistake? do poorly in front of others? put off important things? do something against your morals or better judgment?
- Do you drink alcohol or use drugs? Do you get angry or mellow when you are high? Research clearly shows that alcohol and drugs are linked with aggression. Drinking decreases our judgment and increases our impulsiveness, so watch out.

You probably have a pretty accurate picture of your temper. But check your opinion against the opinion of you held by relatives and friends. There also are several tests that measure anger, e.g. Spielberger (1988) and by DiGiuseppe & Tafrate (2003). The latter scale has 18 subscales but only takes 20 minutes.

### A case of jealous anger

Tony and Jane had gone together a long time, long enough to wear off the thrill and take each other for granted. The place where this was most apparent was at dances and parties. Tony was very outgoing. He liked to "circulate" and meet people, so he would leave Jane with a couple of her friends and he would go visit all his old buddies. This bothered Jane; she would have liked to go along. But what really bothered Jane was Tony's eye for beautiful women. As he moved around greeting his friends, he looked for the best-looking, relatively unattached woman there. Tony was nice looking, a good dancer, and not at all shy. He'd introduce himself, find out about the woman, tell some funny stories about what he had done, and, if it were a dance, ask her to dance. Eventually, he would excuse himself and come back over to Jane and her friends. He just enjoyed meeting new people and dancing or parties.

Jane resented this routine. She had told Tony how she felt many times. He told her that she was being ridiculous. Jane felt much more anger, hurt, jealousy, and distrust inside than she let show. She was usually quiet and

"cool" for a little while but pretty soon she would dance with Tony and it seemed like she got over it. Yet, even the next day she would think about what had happened and cry. About lunch time she would wonder what Tony was doing. A little fantasy would flash through her mind about Tony calling up the woman he danced with and asking her out to lunch. That would hurt her too.

## Understanding Anger: Facts and Theories



### How much hatred is there in the world? The 2002 WHO Report



When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?  
 -----Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)

WAR IS A RACKET It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.  
 -----General Smedley Butler (1881-1940),  
 US Marine Corps, two time winner  
 Congressional Metal of Honor



In 2002 the World Health Organization (WHO) produced the first carefully estimated world report about violence ( [The World Report on Violence and Health](#), October, 2002, can be downloaded as a PDF full report or as a series of summaries from [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/world\\_report/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/) or you can email [bookorders@who.int](mailto:bookorders@who.int)). The WHO researchers found that about 1.6 million people die in violent ways every year. This includes wars, murder by gangs and groups, youth violence, child abuse, elderly abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and suicide. Besides the people dying a violent death, there are, of course, many millions of people injured by violence and/or left to suffer the long-term consequences of violent acts. Keep in mind many violent events occur at home and are never reported.

Perhaps other ways of looking at these statistics will be more meaningful to you. For ages 15 to 44, violence causes about 14% of all deaths among males and 7% of deaths among women. World wide about 1425 people are murdered each day,

which is almost one person every minute. As we saw in the last chapter, about half of all violent deaths are suicides; one person dies this way every 40 seconds. Armed conflict, during the 20th century, took a tragic 191 million lives (half were civilians), about 35 deaths an hour. That is appalling, considering that wars are leader or state dictated events that often do not benefit the people who fight the wars (how much did you gain from the 110,000+ US soldiers who died in Korea and Vietnam?). Yet, the world is doing relatively little to reduce arms or to outlaw wars.

Women take the brunt of serious domestic abuse. Half (up to 70% in some countries) of all women who are victims of homicide are killed by their current or former husbands or boyfriends. Moreover, in parts of the world, up to one-third of young girls and teens are forced into their first sexual experience. Sometime during the course of their lifetime, 25% of women have been treated abusively by their sexual partner. So, what should be a wonderful loving experience is turned into an inconsiderate, hateful interaction.

I hope you are disturbed by these statistics. Enough of us need to get upset enough that we urge and encourage that cultures change. The World Report on Violence and Health provides impressive data documenting how cruel we humans are to each other. The experts who compiled this report believe violence can be prevented. They don't spell out specific plans yet, but the director, General Gro Harlem Brundtland, mentions a few causes to be addressed: child abuse, substance abuse, marital conflict, guns, and inequalities between the sexes and between rich and poor. There are many other and underlying causes of violence, of course, but each of us must watch for defeatist attitudes, such as "Oh, violence is way too complicated to do anything about it," or "anger is just human nature, you can't change that," "these poor countries can't even feed their children, so how could they overcome anger?," "do you think the wealthier countries will agree to help the poor countries who would over-run them if they could?" and "religions haven't been able to build love and reduce hate in thousands of years, so how could self-serving, power-grabbing governments do it?" These pessimistic thoughts stop constructive actions.

What can be done to reduce hate, anger, and violence? I hope, as you read this chapter, that you find several opportunities for you to control your anger and to contribute to global efforts to avoid violence or war and to be kinder to each other. I believe parents and schools could teach everyone many things about how to control their anger. I believe help in resolving parent-child and marital conflicts could be made readily available. We could, as individuals, encourage other people, our own government, and other nations to negotiate differences rather than developing a negative stereotype of each other and fighting with each other. Good conflict resolution practices could be praised wherever they occur. Teach the benefits of understanding others and acquire the wisdom of forgiving unkind acts. There are many things to do that will reduce the level of violence in families and increase the kindness in the world.

There are two related problems that badly need attention: (1) having self-control and individually coping with an angry person and (2) conflict resolution within families, ethnic and religious groups, work organizations, and especially between armed gangs, political movements or militaristic countries. Self-control is different from peacefully settling arguments between tribes and countries. Relatively little science-based efforts are being made in either area, although the world is filled with people willing to give you or sell you advice about self-discipline. And there are even more moralistic teachers and preachers holding forth along with lawyers, social

scientists, and politicians who claim special skills or methods for fairly resolving conflicts. With all these people trying to save the world, why aren't the World Court and United Nations better supported and used to keep peace? Why do some people have many more resources and much more influence than others if the majority of people in the world really believe in democracy? Why can't modern, educated societies restrict revenge and develop rules of engagement to limit violence like many animals and primitive tribes did? Why do we think in terms of using massive force, unconditional surrender, "kill them all," etc?



"The world is too dangerous...not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen."

-----Albert Einstein

"The mere formulation of a problem is far more essential than its solution. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advances."

-----Albert Einstein



## How do we get so angry? Sternberg's theory

Psychologists have given much less thought to hate than to love, depression, fears, and bad habits. Yet, there are a few books and theories about why we hate (Keen, 1986; Dozier, 2003; Levin & Rabrenovic, 2004). One of the best and most recent theories is by Dr. Robert Sternberg (2005), who is well known for his descriptions of higher mental functions (intelligence, creativity and wisdom). He has also proposed a theory about love. He says that love has three parts: (1) intimacy, (2) passion and (3) commitment. A major factor that contributes to the love one achieves in life consists of the various love stories (expectations and memories) one experiences and retains about love over his/her life time. Examples of love stories or beliefs are: (a) marriage is a business deal and each person has jobs to do; (b) one person can not meet all your needs so you need to have lots of relationships, not just a lover, and (c) love soon becomes boring or a series of unhappy wars; (d) love is a fairy tale of a prince and a princess who have a wonderful life together loving each other forever; and so on.

Sternberg applies many of the same ideas to hate. The three components that make up hate are: (1) First a steady avoidance of interacting with people we don't like which leads to having few facts and little understanding of each other. Without meaningful interaction with our enemies there is little way to discredit the propaganda and rumors we hear about them being inferior, arrogant, immoral, cruel, subhuman, or evil people, almost like dirty or vicious animals. (2) A second part of hate is a strong emotional reaction of passionate anger, contempt, and disgust or dislike for the enemy. These negative feelings are quick conditioned responses which our brain doesn't check for accuracy. (3) The third part of hate consists of a belief system that adds fuel to the hot emotions and justifies our hate and our firm commitment to avoiding, denouncing, and degrading or destroying the hated group.

Of course, each part of hate varies in strength from person to person, time to time, and situation to situation, resulting in different kinds of hatred discussed later.

Starting early in life children are often taught—via stories—and citizens are persuaded (via propaganda by the state) that the enemy is a despicable group of people. Sternberg considers that very important, using several pages to describe the typical stories used to generate hate that underlies war, terrorism, massacres, genocide and so on. The evil enemy is often described as a stranger who looks odd and is dirty and trying to control or wanting to torture you. He is likely to hate your religion and be an enemy of God. One of the favorite stories to arouse hatred describes the hated group as rapists and murderers of women and children. Early in US history Indians were described as savages standing in the way of the “Manifest Destiny” of our great new nation. Summary: the hate-generating stories often depict the enemy as barbaric, ignorant, cruel, dirty, lazy, animalistic, greedy, dangerous, and lusting after women and as enemies of God. Sternberg (2005) also discusses the motives of governments, religions, ethnic or economic groups for wanting to foment hate.

The more you have of these three parts of hate the more you hate the people you consider enemies or bad. If you have enough hate, it is quite possible that you would support genocide; many countries have—Germans in the Holocaust, Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Pakistani in Bangladesh, Russians in Ukraine, Hutus in Rwanda, Tutsis against Hutus in Burundi, Serbs in Bosnia and Kosovo, Genghis Khan in Asia, Sudanese against Darfur, and even in U.S. history Christians in the Crusades and the United States used force to almost eliminate the Indians. It is hard to imagine how intelligent humans are able to build up enough hate to justify killing basically innocent men, women, and children. Sometimes the hate is so intense that people are not just quickly killed but brutally destroyed by cutting off their heads or raping the women using guns, knives, and crude instruments so that, if they live, the women can never have children.

Leaders and moral authorities sometimes use propaganda to build a belief system so filled with intense hatred that the general public becomes persuaded that it is morally justified and even a moral duty to fight and kill the enemy. This hate-building process is happening many places in the world even in its most intense form, e.g. in Israel and Palestine, in Iraq, in other Islamic countries, in Northern Ireland, in North Korea. But in many places moderate dislike and strong suspicions are being built by leaders. Leaders should be very cautious about labeling people as evil, even if it garners them votes or power. The stereotypes generated by propaganda are often not accurate at all and certainly don't fit everyone in the group described. Not everyone subject to this propaganda becomes avid haters; some may merely come to feel superior to the enemy and, in general, self-righteous.

One advantage of Sternberg's theory of hate is that various combinations of the three components result in several distinctly different kinds of hate which could help us better understand the nature of hate...and may yield clues to treating the hater. The most intense type of hatred could be called “burning hate.” This occurs when all three components are so intense (burning passion of hate, scornfully avoiding interacting with the hated group, and a solidified belief that the enemy is bad) that the result may be a belief that the “enemy” should be annihilated. There is, of course, hate in milder forms: “cool hate” when the angry person just doesn't want to be around the disliked group, “hot hate” like road rage where the person is feeling very angry for a short time but doesn't know much about the other person

and knows it is temporary, and “simmering hate” when the hater feels loathing or disgust towards a certain group of people for a long time but feels only a moderately intense passion of hate. Some psychologists believe such people could stay angry for a long time and eventually work out plans to become quite dangerous to national leaders or to leaders of the enemy group, such as gays and lesbians. Several kinds of hate are described by Sternberg’s system.

Almost as an afterthought in his article Sternberg (2005) asks “is there a cure for hate?” No, he says, but there are things that could be done when war or terrorism is threatening: (1) Urge both sides to avoid using negative stereotypes and to cool the rhetoric by omitting the hate producing stories, (2) recognize the three-legged stool that hate is built on and remember that hate increases when any ingredient is strengthened, (3) remember that derogatory stories and propaganda rapidly escalate anger and hatred and increase the risk of violence, (4) take action, if you can, to oppose hate and reduce tension rather than being a passive observer. Sternberg believes that angry conflicts are best fought by wisdom, including understanding practically useful psychology and having empathy for others so you can see things from another perspective. Wisdom is the key to recognizing the exaggerations and hateful lies in the propaganda and stories that form the basis of prejudice and hatred of other people. He has proposed that schools develop programs to teach wisdom—or use the teaching program he has already developed (Sternberg, 2001).

Aaron Beck (2000), an early founder of Cognitive Therapy, presents a similar explanation of the cognitive distortions that lead to individual violent behavior and to group/governmental acts of terrorism, war, and genocide. If these atrocities are going to be stopped by rational people, much more needs to be learned about anger, prejudice, violence, and self-control. And a world movement against killing as a way of solving conflicts needs to be nourished.



Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

-----Carl Jung, 1857-1961, Swiss Psychiatrist~~



## How anger interacts with other emotions and factors

Since anger can be such a powerful emotion, its impact is felt in many ways. Perhaps we should start by reviewing the complex relationships that exist between anger and other emotions (see Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8) as well as between anger and other behaviors or factors, such as values. First of all, if you are strong-willed, the values, morals, ideals that guide your life may have a big influence on your angry emotions and aggressive behaviors. On the other hand, if your anger is especially strong, it may severely test or overwhelm your ideals about how to behave. In any case, you have to find a way for your anger to co-exist with your sense of appropriate behavior and your philosophy of life (see Chapter 3). Many people (including me) believe that your ideals should trump your surging angry moods (if you fail in this, then you will have another emotion—guilt--to deal with).



I believe that one of your highest priorities should be keeping your vindictive anger, your self-serving (or others-be-damned) ambitions, and your resentment under control. The consequences of anger, such as being inconsiderate, mean, or violent, are behaviors; therefore, you need to have a thorough knowledge of how to avoid the pitfalls of anger and control your excessive aggression and other unwanted behaviors. (See Chapter 4).

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To think is easy. To act is hard. But the hardest thing in the world is to  
act in accordance with your thinking.

– Johann von Goethe, 1749-1832, German Poet, Dramatist, Novelist

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Most of us feel a little tense when we get angry. We know there are risks involved; we might lose control and others might retaliate. We certainly get anxious when someone gets angry at us. When we feel put down, we may become aggressive to boost our ego. When we become stressed, our self-control weakens; we are at risk of acting on impulse, neglecting commitments, or becoming irritated. Yet, anger can be a great motivator that helps us get over our fears. To do right we often need a strong determined intolerance of injustice and to be most effective we may need to keep our stress under control (see Chapter 5). Both anxiety and depression are stressful and interfere with self-control (Oaten & Cheng, 2005). Acting out of anger may also bring on guilt or shame as well as anxiety, so the emotions get complex and confused. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 should help you deal with these major emotions but these intermeshed feelings are exerting pressures in different directions on your values and your behavior. You may need to read parts of several chapters. To complicate matters even more, keep in mind that therapists often believe that one emotion may be used (unconsciously sometimes) to conceal another feeling. For example, a person may start a fight with a parent, spouse, or friend to change the topic, to get attention, or to avoid expressing positive feelings or closeness. Another example: it has been my experience that when many women look depressed and cry, they are often (about 75% of the time) feeling anger under their sadness. Does that seem likely to you?

It is well supported by careful research that stress, depression, and anger are bad for your physical health, especially your heart. Gradually even medicine is recognizing this and, since depression fairly often doesn't respond to antidepressants, it is becoming more common for medical researchers to recommend trying psychotherapy if antidepressants do not work within a couple of months...and the reverse...if psychotherapy doesn't reduce depression, then switch to medication for a while (Medical Staff, Stanford University School of Medicine, in *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 2005, 62, 513-520).

Famous theories also suggest that there are strong connections between depression (Chapter 6) and anger (Chapter 7). The things we do while angry are a prime source of guilt and shame (see next section). Anger turned inward on the self is a classical dynamic that is supposed to cause depression. Some psychologists, e.g. Dr. Tony Schirtzinger (Self-Therapy at <http://www.helpyourselftherapy.com/>), say "depressed people are angry people who won't admit it." These therapists recommend reducing depression by teaching patients to assertively express their frustration and anger. By getting their angry feelings out into the open and by

assertively getting more of the things they want in life, their depression declines. Other therapists see a different connection, believing that the pain of having depression causes the anger to build. My point here is that there are many connections among emotions and with behavior. You may need to learn about these connections in order to understand and control your anger.

You might at first believe that dependency (Chapter 8) has very little to do with aggression, but that isn't so. In Psychiatry it is a common assumption that a weak, submissive, dependent person is likely to be very resentful of his/her circumstances (but often is not able to express their anger). Ask yourself: how many sacrificing wives and selfless mothers experienced resentment after the Women's Movement increased their awareness? Answer: millions. Also, a famous psychology experiment described in chapter 8 demonstrates that dependency can drive people to be aggressive even though they aren't angry. Stanley Milgram studied compliance or "obedience to authority" by having a psychology instructor direct volunteer helpers to shock students as a part of an experiment. Actually no electric shock was given but the volunteers *believed* they were giving powerful, painful shocks (and felt very uncomfortable about doing that). The study tried to find out: (1) What percent of volunteers would follow orders to shock someone? And, (2) How much pain would they inflict on the subjects? The answers they found were: (1) a high percentage of them were willing to administer (2) strong shock when urged to. The results showed that most people will do some very mean, cruel things just to comply with a person in authority whom they hardly know and may never see again. That study certainly relates to the willingness of ordinary Germans to carry out the horrors of the Holocaust.

Anger is usually directed towards people and most of the people who are targets of anger get angry in return. Most of this Anger chapter tries to explain why we get angry and what we can do to reduce or avoid anger. This is a complex matter—so many experiences make us more or less volatile, including our genes, our personality, our childhood experiences, our community, our social group, our frustrations with loved ones and children, our alcohol and drug use, etc. which are partly discussed in Chapter 9. Watch some children and you will probably observe that some would prefer to fight than to be neglected. It is fascinating that people who live in small towns in the South provide an example of the influence of a cultural code of honor (Nisbett, 2005). Small towns and rural areas across the south and west to the Texas Panhandle have a preference for violent activities: football, hunting and shooting, corporal punishment in schools, and support for going to war. When asked if a man has a right to kill to defend his home, 36% of rural Southerners say "yes" but only 18% of rural Northerners say "yes." Note: The murder rate in the South is *3 to 5 times higher* than in similar northern areas. Why is this? Nisbett says it is because of the Scotch-Irish settlers there were herders (sheep, hogs, and cattle). Apparently herders the world over are zealous protectors of their flocks and property...and quick to take offense at the slightest insult. A Northerner would just laugh off a mild insult; the Southerner doesn't overlook slights.

Lastly, anger plays a big role in our love and sexual relationships (see Chapter 10). Who make us the maddest? Often the person we love. Lovers have the power to hurt us deeply. For unclear reasons, people with intense anger (and maybe serious mental disorders) get involved in many kinds of sexual urges and activities. Examples: rape, assault, molestation, sadism, and masochism. Anger plays a role in impotence, frigidity, and pornography. Research has shown that watching more physically aggressive porno films increases the aggressiveness in males (Byrne &

Kelley, 1981). On the other hand, sex therapists report that some loving couples have their best sex after being angry. In fact, Bry (1976), a female sex therapist, recommends that married couples try to make love to erase their anger. It may work for some but I'd suggest some other approach.

I hope you are seeing that understanding and coping with anger (yours and others') may require you to become familiar with many other emotions and lots of behavior change methods. The last five "methods" chapters in this book spell out in detail many ways of modifying behaviors, emotions, skills, thoughts, and insight, all of which can help you. This chapter is designed to be your guide

## Are some people just "evil"? If not, how do they learn to be so awful?

Occasionally you hear of a horrendous crime—an 80-year-old woman is brutally assaulted, being raped, stabbed many times, and perhaps the head or body parts cut off and buried. No one can understand why a total stranger would do this. In one's mind one paints a picture of intense, uncontrolled rage. The act is so extremely abhorrent that one can't imagine oneself doing such a violent, revolting and senseless thing. Most people might say "the person who did that is an evil person." That is about as far as one's explanation can go. For most people that may be all the explanation of behavior they need. In some peculiar way "evil" explains what has happened. But the term isn't an adequate explanation. "Evil" says the acts are bad but it doesn't clarify the reasons or the means by which "evil" forces caused this atrocity.

"Evil" is one of the oldest explanations of terribly bad behavior. It is a religious concept, coming from the ancient notion of opposing good and evil forces—God and the Devil—fighting for control over people's lives and worldly events. At other times in less serious and bizarre circumstances it is said almost as a joke, "The Devil made me do it." That may be a subtle request that the listener not undertake a deeper analysis of the speaker's motives. "The Devil did it" may also be said more seriously to help explain some shamefully inconsiderate, immoral, or selfish behavior or to escape some responsibility for what one has done. It is like saying "it was not entirely my fault" or "I don't know why I did it."

There are many abominable acts committed for unfathomable reasons. I don't refer just to mass murder of unknown people (the World Trade Center Towers, the Washington, D.C snipers) but also to leaders who plan genocide (Hitler, Malosovich, and Sudan or Uganda leaders) or start or prolong unnecessary wars, businesses that deceive or cheat lots of people, and so on, as well as spouse and child abusers, rapists, sexual abusers, petty criminals or ordinary cons, and people who are cruel to animals. One can see why the most horrible and least understood acts of these people might be called "evil" because the term reflects our fear of and disdain for immoral acts. But when "evil" replaces explanatory scientific terms and methods, it blocks our getting knowledge about the true causes of terrible violent and weird behaviors. Let's think about that a little bit.

There certainly are uncaring, self-centered people in the world; they are in powerful political and economic positions, in prisons, in business, in families and virtually everywhere. In our society, we don't approve of greed but we certainly understand

the payoffs involved in taking advantage of others. Even when greed is extreme (like a corporation executive absconding with all the retirement funds of the employees) we are likely to see that kind of act as selfish, cruel, or psychopathic, rather than "evil." The idea of "evil" is more likely to be used when the crime is brutal, senseless, and heinous but has no obvious pay off (like huge profits, amassing power or status, or getting revenge). Using "evil" as an explanation is an attempt to understand unusually bad behavior without having knowledge about how such behavior actually develops. The use of "evil" is something like 1000 years ago when people attributed a severe drought to the Gods being angry. But "evil" provides no valid explanation of an atrocious act, thus, "evil" can't accurately explain the forces or conditions that lead to these behaviors (similarly, science-based weather forecasting today is more accurate than understanding and predictions were 1000 years ago). The idea that an atrocity was just "God's will" doesn't really explain anything because we are left with the problem of explaining why God willed such behavior (that would be even more difficult than predicting behavior). And we are left without any understanding of the mechanisms of how "evil" exerts its influence on behavior; it is just magic. The effects of "evil" influences are not predictable because those forces are not based on any documented cause-and-effect relationships. In contrast we know the causes of droughts and floods. "Evil" seems to merely proclaim that behaviors might be caused by spiritual/mystical forces (like the Devil). When we know more about violence and greed, our explanations will be more specific.

The concept of "evil" only partly satisfies the powerful human needs to understand why things happen. There are many circumstances where "evil" is used or could easily be used to explain the intense driving force behind inexplicable violence. If you have any doubts about the degree of hatred and rage in some people, then read some of the histories of famous criminals (Fox, J. & Levin, J., 2005) or Hickey, (2001). You might also read the actual law enforcement profiles of offenders who have tortured, raped, maimed and killed totally innocent victims (Campbell & DeNevi, 2004). Warning: these books describe very gory events. Not recommended to the young or the squeamish. However, these authors discuss the cultural, historical, and religious factors that influence our myths, including "evil," and stereotypes of violent individuals. They then also describe the biological, psychological, and sociological reasons, based on current science, for serial or mass murders. In general, these experts deplore the lack of research about such awful offenses. In general, they claim that serial killers are "losers," who feel they have never distinguished themselves, but are obsessed with power and dominance. Abusers turn to violence to achieve power; they use brutality to look like powerful men. Often as a child, they were themselves abused and rejected. Like all behavior, "evil" acts have a history.

Personally, I think "evil" is a vague but quite descriptive literary term which implies that mysterious, supernatural forces are responsible for abominable thoughts, intentions, and overt acts. But the concept of "evil" keeps us in the dark ages. Such thinking obstructs historical investigations for causes, objective measurements, and scientific study. There is little agreement from person to person what "evil" influences are, where they come from, how they work, and whether evil forces can be changed. Since evil can't be observed (the resulting horrible acts are observed but the nature of the "evil" influences triggering bad acts can't be directly observed), how could we gain knowledge about "evil"? The "evil" concept alone detracts us from objectively and scientifically studying many topics and acts of great importance, such as war.

In my estimation, when we come to understand (through hard scientific studies) the complex factors that underlie violence, such as the factors mentioned above and discussed later in this chapter, we will no longer need the concept of “evil.” Many decades from now, when lawful cause and effect connections are known between genes, childhood experiences, brain disorders, psychological or mental disorders, attitudes and thoughts, hormonal influences, specific psychological/social environments and mean, cruel, or destructive behaviors, we will no longer need to believe in supernatural forces to understand anger, violence, and meanness. Even now, most people no longer need to believe in Satan or demons but the notion of “evil” is still with us in subtle forms. We do need to learn a lot more about the complex conditions and laws of behavior that produce violence, resentful attitudes, prejudice, intolerance, greed, delusions, poor impulse control, and psychopathic behavior.

I want to give you another example of how science can understand awful (“evil”) acts and thereby avoid the mystical anti-scientific notions embedded in explanations that use “evil.” Military leaders, as well as psychologists and psychiatrists, observed during the Vietnam War that some soldiers who had been in combat—sometimes captured and tortured—and had seen the brutality involved in war were more likely to become brutal and violent themselves. Some US soldiers killed old men, women and children without good cause. It may amaze you—it did me—that an estimated 20% of American officers who died in Vietnam were killed by their own men. A psychiatrist, Jonathan Shay (1995), studied such acts and wrote a book, *“Achilles in Vietnam: Combat trauma and the undoing of character.”* His title states his thesis, namely, going through the horrors of war, results in the soldier’s own conscience and morals (or impulse control) deteriorating and becoming radically changed. This is especially likely if the soldier has personally been grossly mistreated or if the soldier has been misinformed or misled about “what is right” by his own officers or government, and if the soldier has brutalized others. For some soldiers it becomes much easier to inflict pain, disregard suffering, and to kill—the kinds of things that we might call “evil.” Another consequence to the soldier fighting a war may be long-term suffering of Traumatic Stress Disorder (discussed in chapter 5). We will also see in this chapter that many “evil” people have grown up without experiencing dependable love, care, and empathy. Many violent people, grossly mistreated when young, have learned early to enjoy hurting others, e.g. bullying others and hurting animals.

A fascinating study by Alette Smeulers, a professor at Maastricht University in Netherlands (presented at EPCR in Torino, March, 2002), is about the training used to convince a person to torture, torment, or maim for a government. A few people have life experiences that make them sadistic and cruel but there have been many schools, mostly government run, that make ordinary people into torturers. How do the trainers change people? Smeulers says these training programs usually select people with a militaristic background, i.e. accustomed to taking orders and having unquestioning loyalty to authority. There are then three long stages in the training of torture perpetrators: (1) routine exposure to being in situations where torture occurs, e.g. first just guarding prisoners who are tortured. More and more they are permitted to see the torture. Then gradually the trainee is asked to actually help the torturers. (2) At first, hurting someone is hard, but the trainee learns to rationalize and justify his actions. In the trainee’s mind the enemy is dehumanized; they are seen as evil or inferior. Feelings of shame and guilt are blocked or overcome--desensitized. (3) Being brutal and cruel becomes routine and habitual. “I just did my job. I had no choice” The torturer rationalizes his actions...and his government’s

actions. You get used to stressing the prisoners and inflicting pain. So, these schools clearly show that cruelty can be taught. Not every one will willingly torture people; it is way too disturbing for some. But some will convince themselves that the cruelty is necessary. After becoming a torturer or abusive—naturally or by special training—can they become kind? Some stop when they are confronted with their actions. Some continue to take pride in what they do.

Shay's book about the effects of combat is very powerful. It should be read before anyone votes for war. It will open your eyes to the soldier's view of war, especially what the author calls "the betrayal of what's right." The soldier comes to war believing that killing civilians is wrong, that the entire nation approves the killing he is sent to do, that company commanders know what is happening in the war, where the friendly artillery shells will land, and what dangers lie 100 yards ahead, that we are winning the war if the enemy has more dead than we have, etc. However, the events and conditions the soldier experiences in combat may convince him/her that what he is told is not the truth...that even his own leaders have betrayed him. Those confusing situations contribute to combat fatigue or Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Finally, there are many probably false beliefs about the forces of "evil" that should be investigated. Examples: (1) That "evil" develops very early in childhood and becomes an unstoppable part of a person's basic primitive personality. (2) That "evil" urges can't be psychologically explained and "evil" can't be blamed on life events, like child abuse, emotional trauma, ethnic or religious hatred, psychological disorders, TV, friends, etc. (3) "Evil" is an addiction, like in a serial killer, and is an insatiable thirst for a special "high" that comes with over-powering, injuring, and killing people or animals. (4) That "evil" people experience no regrets or guilt about what they have done and have no wish to change. These assumed characteristics of "evil" can be studied and confirmed or refuted. If the notion of evil is not researched, it may, like other social taboos, interfere with our psychological thinking about anger and violence for 100s of years. My belief is that "evil" is a left-over idea from centuries old religion and mysticism that needs to be replaced with research based concepts.

Later in this chapter we discuss specific abusive situations that make us very uncomfortable and, partly for that reason, these acts are not researched nearly as well as they should be. Examples: very violent or threatening people, rapists, incest perpetrators, sexual and emotional abusers of children, molesters, people who inflict pain and torture children, etc. Mental illness may be a much more powerful factor in these behaviors than we believe at this time, consider, e.g. Andrea Yates, the post-partum depressed mother who killed all 5 of her children, and Susan Smith, who drowned her children by sinking her car in a lake. The "evil" notion may still play a role in our thinking about these kinds of behavior too, even in our courts.

## The Control of Emotions

The Greeks had various views of emotions—Aristotle believed having emotions was a part of the good life while Stoics saw emotions as faulty thinking that led to misery. Christians became preoccupied with emotions, passions, or strong desires, focusing on the "seven sins:" greed, gluttony, lust, anger, envy, and pride. Descartes attempted to sidestep the complexly bewildering interaction between mind and body by teaching that there were two separate (dualistic) worlds, one made up of physical matter (our body) and the other of spirits (our mind and emotions). God was also

regarded as spirit. Descartes thought our minds interacted with our bodies but can exist without a physical body. Within the last century, Freud taught that psychiatric problems were often due to the individual's loss of control of his/her emotions. Likewise, he thought that a society could flourish only by controlling the emotional impulses of its members. Most modern psychologists also believe mental health involves controlling emotions and the distress caused by them.

### Society tries to control meanness with harsh punishment

Certain emotions, however, get more and different attention than others. For instance, anxiety and depression get far more treatment, both talking therapy and drug treatment, than anger and aggression. Society relies heavily on punishment to reduce aggression and defiance of the law—a method not used with anxiety or sadness. In the case of criminals, almost the *only* method for changing this emotion is physical restraint—“lock them up and throw away the key”. Overall the results of using punishment to stop misbehavior have not been promising. And we do not seem highly motivated to investigate various other methods of reducing violence, hatred, and breaking the law. For people who are annoying at work or school, there are a few anger management programs (discussed later) but not nearly the variety of specialized individual treatment methods and clinics as available for sad or stressed people. It may be that angry people are not as eager to change themselves as tense or disappointed people are. It is probably also true that the victims of someone else's anger are not very eager to help the offender change; they mostly want to stay away from them. These attitudes and conditions are part of the social circumstances that make it harder to reduce anger.

For reasons I hope to soon make clearer, Americans are amazingly violent compared to people in other countries. In 2002, approximately 290 million Americans suffered 23 million crimes. 23% of those crimes were crimes of violence. For every 1000 people over 12, there was one rape or sexual assault, another assault resulting in an injury, and two robberies. Yet, criminal violence is fairly predictable (not at some specific time but in general) in the sense that 50% of males convicted of a crime between 10 and 16-years-of-age will be convicted of more crimes as adults. Also, being exposed to violence in childhood (at home, in their community, & in the media) is associated with the child having poor health (Graham-Bermann & Seng, 2005) and with them being violent as an adult. We could do something about these things but we don't, perhaps because we believe aggression is just “human nature” and/or because we are angry and thus indifferent to stressed kids, especially if they are of another race or a different economic or ethnic group. Also, our society is far more insistent on punishing rather than preventing adolescent violence/crime/misbehavior (another reflection of our own anger?).

The U.S. crime rate has fallen over the last 10 years. But the number in jails and prisons continues to increase due to old get-tough policies, e.g. mandatory drug sentencing and “three strikes and you are out,” so we now have over 2 million incarcerated. Over 60% of prison inmates are from minorities! 12.6 % of all black males in their late twenties are in jail; 3.6% of Hispanic men and 1.7% of white men of that age are serving time! (*Associated Press, April 24, 2005*) Something is wrong with this picture. For one thing, the public and politicians rely on punishment (long sentences in prison) and doesn't even research rehabilitation. Many prisoners are not serious or violent. About 7,500 youth under 18 are in state prisons or local jails.

Many prisoners have mental illness or psychiatric problems and get little or no treatment. Each year in prison costs the public on average about \$35,000, in other words about \$115 from every adult and child in the state. The cost I mention doesn't include the loss of productivity at work and for the family. We could send an inmate to college for about half as much!

### Society doesn't try prevention

Violence comes in many forms and in many situations. On the extreme end of the scale, there are mass murderers, serial killers, terrorism, wars, rape and sexual violence, domestic violence, parent-child or sibling violence, violence by psychotics and people with antisocial personality disorders, child physical and sexual abuse, and ethnic or religious groups or nations that go to war. I do not intend to imply that these acts are similar. I'm simply pointing out the wide diversity and regrettable frequency of violence. Of course, anger is much broader and isn't only expressed in horrendous events—it is a part of everyday life. Since the 9/11/2001 attack on the World Trade Center Towers in New York City, there has been a lot of attention on *preventing* violence by terrorists (mostly by capturing or killing the terrorists first) but little serious research has been done to further our understanding of the causes or prevention of angry aggression. Much research is needed.

There are many efforts to measure and predict violence (Quinsey, Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1998; Spielberg, 2005; DiGiuseppe & Tafrate (2003); Frick & Hare (2003); or use a search engine), especially in juveniles or in maximum security and psychiatric institutions. Much better measures and ways to predict violence are needed. Knowledge about how to prevent aggression in many situations is even more needed.

### Innate, genetic, hormonal & physical factors

Freud came to believe in a death or aggressive instinct because he saw so much violence, sadism, war, and suicide. Konrad Lorenz (1966) believed that species, both animal and human, survived by having an aggressive instinct which protected their territory and young, and insured only the strongest individuals survived. The sociobiologists, noting the frequency we go to war, also suggest that we have inherited an aggressive nature, a tendency to lash out at anything that gets in our way, a need to dominate and control.

Research has shown that stimulation of certain parts of animals' brains leads to aggression. Stimulation of other parts stops aggression. We don't know how this works. In 1966, Charles Whitman killed his wife and mother because "I do not consider this world worth living in...", then climbed a tower on the University of Texas campus and fired his rifle at 38 people. He killed 14 before being killed. An autopsy revealed a large tumor in the limbic system of his brain (where the aggression "centers" are in animal brains). In epileptic patients with implanted electrodes, in rare cases violence follows stimulation of certain parts. Abnormal EEG's have been found among repeat offenders and aggressive people. So, aggression may sometimes have a physical basis. Brain damage can be caused in many ways (Derlega and Janda, 1981).



Aggression may also have a chemical, hormonal, or genetic basis too. Steroid users sometimes have intense anger while taking the drug and for a long time afterwards, called "steroid rage." Of course, emotions and behaviors are to some extent learned but genes play a role in this complex matrix of causes. A large survey of adopted children has found that living with an adoptive parent who committed crimes is less risky than merely having the genes from a person who committed crimes (Mednick, Gabrielli & Hutchings, 1984). The power of human genes is discussed in chapter 4, but, obviously, within animals certain breeds of dogs, like Pit Bulls, are more vicious than others. More aggressive breeds can be developed, e.g. rats or fighting bulls. Maybe we could and should develop kinder, gentler, smarter humans.

One may frequently hear that people with serious mental illness are not more dangerous than the general population. That is good to hear because there is such a stigma against mental illness. However, according to [Janssen](http://www.medscape.com/viewprogram/2013_pnt) ([http://www.medscape.com/viewprogram/2013\\_pnt](http://www.medscape.com/viewprogram/2013_pnt)), institutions that treat the seriously disturbed, e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar, character disorders, and substance abuse, report more violence during treatment and during follow-up. As you might expect, patients who are hostile-suspicious, agitated, and delusional are the most likely to be violent. Often the target is a family member. Over half of Mental Health professionals have been assaulted by a patient at least once (that wasn't true in my case).

As more studies of genes are being done, a complex interaction is being found of specific genes with specific neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, or with enzymes, such as monoamine oxidase A, which regulate mood and aggression. Moreover, researchers believe they have found that traumatic life experiences, such as being abused, have an impact on specific genes which, in turn, increase the likelihood of anti-social behavior (Terri Moffitt, King's College London; Evan Deneris, Case Western Reserve University, School of Medicine). Such findings are not useable now but they suggest future treatment possibilities.

Other physiological factors may be involved. Possible examples: high testosterone (male sex hormone) is associated with more unfaithfulness, more sex, more divorce, more competitiveness, and anti-social behavior. Remember too that in the Introduction to this chapter it was mentioned that the amount of testosterone available to the fetus influenced the length of fingers which is related to physical aggressiveness. It is also known that a viral infection, called rabies, causes violent behavior (pain causes aggression). About 90% of women report being irritable before menstruation. Furthermore, 50% of all crimes by women in prison occur during their menstrual period or premenstrual period. By chance only 29% of crimes would have occurred during those eight days. Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) increases during the premenstrual period and it too causes irritability. Reportedly some women have a stronger sexual attraction to masculine men when they are ovulating. About 3 times in a 1000 a male inherits an extra X or Y chromosome, so they are XYY or XXY, instead of XY. At one time it was thought that XYY and XXY males committed more violent crimes. Now it appears that this isn't true but these males are arrested earlier and more often. So we can't forget our inheritance. There is so much we do not know yet.

Another example: Little is known about the thrill-like reactions some people report during vicious, seemingly senseless crimes, such as murder. There are cases in which the killer seems to really enjoy the killing process, even experiencing an emotional high. We don't know if that is just a physical thrill or if it is the psychological/emotional consequence of exercising the ultimate power of one person over another person. Perhaps there is some confusion of physical brutality with a sexual thrill. But it seems likely that the high, when it actually happens and regardless of its source, could be a reinforcement for violence. In a similar way psychotic disorders or brain disorders may lead to strange and violent urges, sometimes taking the form of seeming like instructions from God to do bad things. A common outcome is that such a violator is judged by a court to be a bad or evil person (see above discussion of evil) responsible for his/her actions and, at the same time, is judged to have a psychotic brain disease with crazy thoughts, despicable urges, and abnormal physical conditions that he/she can hardly seem responsible for. Our better legal minds have not yet solved this logical conflict between "the person" and the "the disease" or between "the mind" and "the brain."

In all of these possibilities--instinct, heredity, hormones, or brain dysfunction--the aggression occurs without apparent provocation from the environment (although there is almost always a "target"). According to some of these theories, the need or urge to be aggressive is boiling within each of us and seeks opportunities to express itself. There is also clear evidence that alcohol consumption and hotter temperatures release aggression, but no one thinks there is something in alcohol or heat that generates meanness. The socialization process, i.e. becoming a mature person, involves taming these destructive, savage, self-serving urges that probably helped us humans survive one million years ago but threatens our survival today.

Is it just man's nature? Or his raging hormones? In any case, it is not his fault?

Some psychologists believe that the evolutionary development of males resulted in their being genetically programmed to feel an urgent need to have status and children—to reproduce his genes and to build resources within his control. One way to be successful at that is to be violent, i.e. to take what he wants, to kill other men who are competing for the females one desires, to kill the women who are leaving them, are uncooperative, or are unable to have desirable children, etc. Men kill their mates much more often than women. David Buss (2005) says these self-serving drives became man's nature because they paid off to the murderers for thousands of years. His theory is based in part on 400,000+ FBI files of men who have killed. For example, Buss found that 50% of the women killed by their husbands were murdered within 2 months of separating. And that "the other man" is also at high risk when he tries to take another man's mate. The focus is more on acquiring some very aggressive urges, rather than on controlling irrational impulses.

Another explanation of bad men is based on the rather unscientific sounding notion of "just being born bad." Yet, this is a psychiatrist writing about the con or cheat or psychopath or irresponsible "black sheep" of the family being diagnosed as an Antisocial Personality Disorder. Dr. Donald Black (2000) has written a book trying to explain in more scientific detail the genetic and biological causes of the "criminal mind" and the sociopaths' lack of a

conscience. Black discusses the warning signs in children and various ways of medically treating the disorder. There are about seven million Americans with this psychopathic disorder. Several books have been written over the years about this disturbing but intriguing malady.

Just as women have trouble "going through menopause," it is believed that men too suffer from fluctuating hormones and stress, maybe as many as 30% of them. The author, Jed Diamond (2005), calls it the Irritable Male Syndrome and writes to explain the complex causes and the possible treatments. Men tend to view emotions as feminine, so it isn't seen as manly to feel depressed. We men cover over sadness with anger or workaholicism or alcohol addiction or domestic strife. Women have twice as much depression as men and men have five times as much alcohol abuse and antisocial behavior as women. Under stress women seek help, talk, cry and bitch; under stress men feel mistreated, lose their cool, get angry, and become grouchy.

If any of these descriptions fit you, reading one of these books might be helpful. Many other books are recommended in this chapter. For the female sex, an older book that analyzes anger in women and effectively focuses on turning anger into a constructive force in one's life is Harriet Lerner's, *The Dance of Anger*.

## Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis

Any observer of human emotions recognizes that certain circumstances and actions by others seem to make us mad. When we are intentionally hurt, insulted, cheated, deceived, or made fun of--all these things arouse anger and aggression (Byrne & Kelley, 1981) and distrustful people have more of these experiences. In each case we had hoped for more--for more consideration, more fairness, more understanding. We were frustrated, i.e. prevented from achieving some desired goal. Some theorists believe that anger just naturally results from frustration. This is called the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

Our frustration will be more intense if our goal is highly desirable, if we "get close" to our goal and expect to get it, if the barrier to our goal unexpectedly appears and seems unjustified or unfair, and if we "take things personally" (Aronson, 1984; Berkowitz, 1989). There are several physiological reactions that accompany frustration, including higher blood pressure, sweating, and greater energy. Psychosomatic symptoms, such as heart disease, occur more often in people who are cynics and distrustful but hold in their anger. Some of us explode, others swallow feelings. Our blood pressure sometimes goes up more when we explode, at other times it goes up more when we swallow the feelings, depending on the situation. The more physiologically damaging anger reactions seem to occur under two extreme conditions, namely, when we feel utterly helpless, or, the opposite, when we have overly optimistic expectations of reaching unreachable goals.

It is obvious that even though we are frustrated and feel angry, we may not become aggressive--not if such a response might result in our being injured or rejected or fired. Yet, if you think of anger as a drive, an urge inside striving for expression, then merely deciding to placate your boss or an

obnoxious football player doesn't do anything to reduce your anger (indeed, probably increases it). We can learn to control our anger but as a basic drive it remains there seeking some expression. That's the theory (both Freud and Dollard and Miller, 1950).

### Displacement of anger

There are two implications of this theory (both seriously questioned recently):

1. The unexpressed anger will spill out in other directions (displacement). For example, Dollard and Miller described a teenage boy who was unable to go on a trip because his friend had a cold. Not long after this he got into a big fight with his little sister. This displaced aggression is directed away from the real target and towards a safer target, called a scapegoat. This provides a partial release of the pent up frustration but the initial disappointment may never be admitted and experienced fully. Indeed, displacement can also be a defense against recognizing the real source of anger (see chapter 5). Displacement is referred to several times in this chapter, especially under prejudice.
2. When the angry feelings build up inside, presumably like pressure in a hydraulic system, it is thought by many therapists to be relieving to express the feelings and get them completely "off your chest." This is called venting or catharsis, a cleansing of the system. Early in Freud's career, psychoanalytic therapy depended heavily on catharsis--uncovering old emotional traumas and venting those feeling until we had some understanding of the internal stress and a thorough draining of the pent up emotions. It is a popular and common notion that feelings need to be expressed openly and completely. Clearly, when a child wants something he/she can't have, it is likely to cry, get angry, and even hit, i.e. vent feelings. We may not like it, but we see the frustration as an understandable reaction.

However, considerable recent research has been interpreted in such a way as to raise doubts about the value of trying to drain off our anger. First of all, it became pretty clear that watching violent behavior (films, TV, sports) carried out by others *increases* our own aggressive responses rather than draining off our anger (Bandura, 1973). It seems reasonable that seeing aggression acted out on the screen might provide a model and some encouragement to an already angry person. Certainly, watching a film is not the same as a catharsis in therapy, where a painful, personal experience is relived in full fury with the specific intention of emptying the person of toxic venom (anger).

Hokanson and others (Forest & Hokanson, 1975; Murray & Feshbach, 1978) have studied how to reduce anger arising from being shocked by an aggressive partner in an experiment. When given a choice among (1) being friendly to the mean partner, (2) shocking one's self, and (3) shocking the partner back, *only attacking back* (with shock) relieved the subject's

emotional reaction (unless they were depressed--see chapter 6). However, in later studies, where the aggressive partner's behavior (# of shocks) could be modified by being friendly to him or by being self-punitive, both of these actions yielded a "cathartic-like" emotional relief without anger being released. So, there seems to be a variety of ways we can learn to handle our anger, including learning various means of controlling the aggressor.

Again, being "friendly" to someone who has hurt you and shocking yourself hardly seem to be the same kind of emotionally draining experience as a thorough catharsis or getting revenge (see next section).

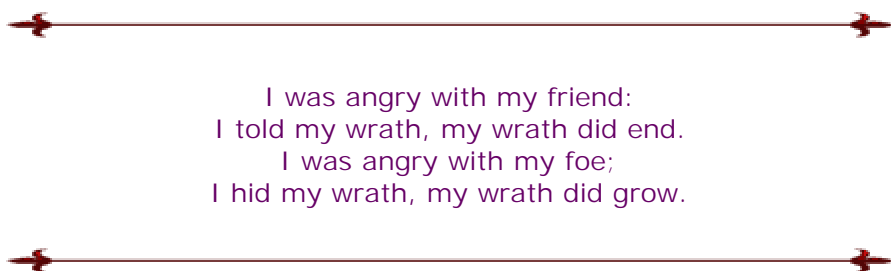
Being aggressive and mean towards someone who has angered us does make us feel better but also makes us *more* inclined to hurt them even more later. Why is this? Probably because being hostile is easier the second time and still easier the 100th time; you've overcome your inhibitions against aggression; you've learned about aggression and its payoffs. But there are other reasons. Aronson (1984) points out that our negative feelings increase towards another person or group as we hurt them. The snowball effect between thoughts and actions goes like this: "We are hurting them. We are decent people. Therefore, they must be bad." So we put them down more, justifying hurting them more, leading to more negative thoughts about them, etc. This mental put down-behavioral violence cycle occurs in abuse and in prejudice, which we will consider in more detail later.

### My conclusions about catharsis

Is catharsis helpful or harmful? The problem is, as I see it, that catharsis can mean many things. Several scientists (Aronson, 1984; Lewis & Bucher, 1992; Bandura, 1973; Tavris, 1984) have sloppily accepted many diverse acts as being "catharsis" and prematurely concluded that all kinds of catharsis are ineffective or harmful. What the behaviorists call catharsis (almost any expression or even observation of emotion) is hardly therapeutic catharsis. For instance, Bushman (2002) suggests that catharsis (or venting) is something like when he had a group of college students hit a punching bag while thinking about another student who had harshly critiqued their essay. When the study found that venting increased that groups' anger, the experimenter concluded that catharsis builds anger, not reduces it. Freud would see it differently. In a similar distorted way, Tavris clearly equates a dirty, abusive, vicious marital fight with catharsis. Catharsis is not just an explosion of emotions. Unfortunately, this equation is naive and implies that therapists using catharsis might even advocate abusive violence.

What is catharsis in therapy? Well, most Freudians would say it was the expression of repressed (unconsciously held back) feelings that are causing problems. Sometimes the initial traumatic situation (often from childhood) is vividly relived, called an abreaction. Most non-Freudian psychotherapists would consider catharsis to be the intense expression (in therapy or alone) of conscious or unconscious emotions for the specific purpose of feeling better, gaining insight, and reducing the unwanted emotion. It doesn't involve watching a model of aggression; it never involves actually hurting someone.

Published descriptions of therapy provide thousands of examples of catharsis. Here's one. In the early 1880's, Josef Breuer, Freud's friend, was treating a bright, attractive young lady, Anna O. Among many other symptoms, she had a phobia of drinking water from a glass. She didn't understand the fear. Under hypnosis, Anna O. recalled being disgusted when she saw her tutor's dog (she hated both the tutor and the dog) drink from a glass. After Anna O. expressed her intense anger about the tutor, she immediately understood her rejecting the water (just like she rejected the tutor) and she could thereafter drink water from a glass. None of the current behavioral research has studied such a "cathartic" experience as Anna O's, probably because this kind of repressed experience can't be scheduled as a 30-minute lab assignment for Intro Psych students; it can be recorded in therapy, however. Furthermore, a straight-forward, easily controlled procedure for venting one's anger is available (see chapter 12) and could be researched readily. It focuses on reducing anger, not learning aggression. The same process occurs when you feel better after letting off steam with a friend.



I suspect intention and expectation of catharsis are crucially important in determining the outcome, e.g. if you beat a punching bag an hour a day thinking how you will punch out people you don't like, I suspect you will become more hostile and aggressive. If you punch the bag thinking that at the end of an hour you will be completely exhausted and cleansed of your hatred and will have a better understanding and more willingness to forgive the irritating person, I suspect you will become less agitated and aggressive. That needs to be proven in the lab.

One final observation about catharsis: many violent crimes are committed by people described as ordinarily being gentle, passive, quiet, easy-going, and good natured. Naturally, this surprises everyone. Likewise, many psychological tests describe persons who have committed violent acts as ordinarily being over-controlled, i.e. not emotional or impulsive and very inhibited about expressing aggression against anyone. Thus, it seems that they may "store up" aggression until it is impossible to contain and, then, they explode. Many of us, who have been parents, have had a similar experience, namely, holding our tongue until we over-react with a verbal assault on the child.

The research about hostility suggests that a safe, appropriate way of releasing our anger is badly needed. Athletics are supposed to serve this function for some people but the data is contradictory. Byrne and Kelley

(1981) say athletes are less aggressive; Aronson (1984) says they are more. In fact, Walker (1990) says calls to domestic violence centers go up after the man's team loses (displacement?). So, watching certain athletics may increase hostility. There is much we do not know about anger, displacement, catharsis, and the means of controlling our anger.

At the very least, research psychologists and psychotherapists should more clearly define "catharsis." It is not playing or watching sports, writing stories about aggression, fighting in a war, shocking someone in an experiment, watching someone hit a Bobo doll, or watching TV violence. It is well documented that watching, fantasizing, or acting out violence increases the probability that you will be more violent in the future. In contrast, the end result of catharsis is, in many cases, peace and calm, not aggression. Averill & Nunley (1993) say expressing emotions in therapy can change a person's view and interpretation of the situation. Also, expressing an emotion, such as anger, can result in finding ways to change the irritating situation. Once the released emotion is discussed with a therapist or friend, you are in a better position to make plans for coping with the feelings and the circumstances. Obviously, some people can calm themselves down, i.e. reduce their anger. Anger control and health seem to be related to *feeling in control* (see self-efficacy in chapter 14), *trusting and accepting* others or at least not seeing them as mean, selfish, and exploitative, and being able to *assertively* express our negative feelings (see chapter 13). These are skills many of us need to learn (Lewis & Bucher, 1992).

### A historical overview of the Frustration-Aggression Theory

When the frustration-aggression hypothesis was proposed and researched by psychologists, Dollard and Miller, almost 65 years ago, it was generally accepted as a statement of clinical judgment at the time and it opened the way to extensive research of these important topics. The theory suggests that frustration creates a readiness and an urge to aggress and it implies that the act of aggression is always preceded by frustration. It sounded like a useable causal relationship: when you see aggression, go looking for the needs and wants that have been frustrated. Or when you want to reduce the aggression, try to reduce the frustration. In the intervening 65 years hundreds of studies have been done. So, today, psychologists recognize the old theory still has some general validity but few would claim this simple theory explains all acts of aggression. There are many causes and reasons for aggression, not just frustration. Some people will be aggressive just for money or other pay offs. Others will do things to make someone feel very uncomfortable just because an authority told them to. In a rather common case, people go to war without being personally frustrated but because politicians urge that radical action (which may end their lives). On the other hand, seemingly real and serious frustration will not cause some people to be aggressive. Facing barriers to reaching an important goal may lead to other responses, not just to aggression; some might respond with useless or helpless responses and others might calmly respond with efforts to remove the barrier.

Great complexity has been discovered in the frustration-aggression situation (Geen & Donnerstein, 1998). When any situation or human response is studied intensely and scientifically, you might expect the outcome to be complex. Humans do not have a fixed specific response to frustration, but an angry, aggressive response, among

others, is common enough that the old hypothesis can still help us try to understand and change behavior in this situation. Frustration may simply involve an arousal of our energy level and this increased drive level may increase the intensity of a host of different reactions, some wanted and some not.

## Social Learning Theory

This theory denies that humans are innately aggressive and that frustration automatically leads to aggression. Instead Bandura (1973) argues that aggression is learned in two basic ways: (1) from observing aggressive models and (2) from receiving and/or expecting payoffs following aggression. The payoffs may be in the form of (a) stopping aggression by others, (b) getting praise or status or some other goal by being aggressive, (c) getting self-reinforcement and self-praise, and (d) reducing tension. The Social Learning Theory also incorporates cognitive processes, like rational problem-solving, "trial runs" in fantasy to see what might happen if I did \_\_\_\_\_, and the self-control procedures of self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement. Even children are able to control their aggression if they have some understanding of why someone else frustrated them (Mallick & McCandless, 1966). We have discussed Social Learning Theory in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

We all frequently face an environment that presents frustrating, unpleasant experiences as well as cues that suggest there would be certain payoffs for different courses of action. Inside us are various emotional responses, such as anger, various motivations and urges to seek certain payoffs, and complex cognitive processes for weighing the pros and cons for different alternative responses, including aggression or violence, passive withdrawal, depression, increased striving to succeed, reasonable "assertive" handling of the situation, and other possible responses. Eventually, the person chooses a response and acts, and then the result of that response is observed and evaluated in terms of its effectiveness. If the response is reinforced, it is likely to be used again.

Tavris (1984), a spokesperson for this point of view, argues that anger is a social event, a way of saying "Hey, I'm hurting and you're in my way." She criticizes (a) the ethnologists' instincts, (b) the Freudians' unconscious motives, (c) the clinicians' unresearched opinions based on sick people, and (d) the therapists' and pop-psych idea of expressing "built up" anger. She says all these views erroneously suggest that anger is beyond our control and overlook the real causes of frustration. Tavris believes in human choice and self-control. She thinks we continue to use our violence because "aggression pays" and because the other theories provide excuses for being angry.

There is no doubt that aggression pays off. Parents who yell and threaten punishment get results. The child who hits the hardest gets the toy. The brother who is willing to be the most vicious in a fight wins. The teacher who gives the hardest tests and threatens to flunk the most students gets the most study time from students. The spouse who threatens to get the maddest gets his/her way. The male who acts the most macho and aggressive gets the praise of certain groups of males.



It is not necessary that the aggressor be especially mean to get his/her way. The slightest overt hint of anger can communicate. Suppose you and your boy/girlfriend want to do different things some evening. The brief frown, the "roll" of the eyes, the comment "Oh, all right" may clearly communicate, "Okay, have it your way but I'm going to be pissed all evening." Such a message is a powerful threat--and often an effective one, proving once again that, unfortunately, "aggression pays off."

### Human nature vs. learned behavior

I'm sure you recognize the old nature-nurture issue in these discussions. The difficulty, as I see it, is that both sides over-simplify and want to claim all the influence; i.e. on the one hand, the genes-instincts-hormones (biological determinism) theorists imply that hostility is "human nature." Indeed, 60% of Americans buy this idea, saying "there will always be wars, it is human nature." How sad that we are not better educated. No wonder the U.S. has used military force 150 times since 1850. There is, of course, a lot of fighting between countries, tribes, religions, spouses, and parents and children. But there is no evidence that we humans have inherited more of a tendency to dislike, fight, be violent, or to make war than to like, trust, be cooperative, or to make friends. Just because humans are biologically capable of being selfish and mean does not mean it is inevitable; we can control our lives. Too many people believe humans are violent because we are naturally and unavoidably aggressive. This widely held theory provides us with harmful expectations, self-fulfilling prophecies, and with excuses for being aggressive (Kohn, 1988).

On the other hand, the currently popular cognitive-environmental theorists emphasize that behavior is a result of a process of learning from observing what actions pay off, what works. This theory over-simplifies human behavior in another way, namely, by neglecting the biological-physiological aspects, the emotions and needs, the unmindful "thought" processes (traditions, habits, unthinking routines), the unconscious processes (perceptual distortion, childhood experiences, unconscious resentments, motives, defense mechanisms--like displacement), and perhaps other significant factors influencing our behavior. For instance, Berkowitz (1993) says sudden unpleasant situations automatically generates negative emotions, including primitive anger feelings and hostile or flight impulses, even *before the person has time to think* about what has happened or what to do about it. Moreover, I am not ready to dismiss the many social-sexual needs that create conflicts for us as being purely "cognitive." And, I refuse to believe that the prejudice, violence, hatred, and greed that abounds in the world (and the love, acceptance, and altruism) are simply a result of our cognitive processes. How do you cognitively explain the raging parent who beats his/her 3-month-old infant to death? By the way, a moderate-to-large percentage of parents have thoughts of hurting their infant or very small children. These intrusive thoughts may be very upsetting to some people but very few of the people who become obsessive about it are dangerous to their children; they know these thoughts are not predictions of what they will do (see discussion in Child Abuse later). Nevertheless, cognitive theory is a very hopeful theory if not a complete one.

Sorry for making things complicated but you need to prepare for a complex world. The good news is that there is overwhelming evidence that humans can, in the right circumstances and with appropriate training, be kinder and gentler by using their higher cognition. But, thus far, we seem to be losing the battle against violence, as we will see in the next topic.

## Aggression and child rearing practices

By the time we are five years of age, we have learned to be kind and caring *or* aggressive. What is associated with an angry, aggressive child? Four factors are: (1) a child with a hyperactive, impulsive temperament, (2) a parent who has negative, critical attitudes towards the child, (3) a parent who provides poor supervision and permits the child to use aggression as a means of gaining power, and (4) a parent who uses power-tactics (punishment, threats, and violent or loud outbursts) to get their way (Olweus, 1980). Once a peaceful or hostile way of responding is established (by 5) it tends to remain stable. Olweus (1979) suggests aggressiveness is about as stable as intelligence.

So, the best way to predict that a young adult will behave aggressively is to observe his/her early behavior. Aggression at age 8 correlates .46 with aggression at age 30! Children who were "pro-social," i.e. popular and avoid aggression, at age 8 were, 22 years later, doing well in school and at work, had good mental health, and were successful socially (Eron, 1987). Children who steal, aggress, use drugs, and have conduct problems with peers, family or in school, and then conceal the problems by lying, are the most likely to become delinquent (Loeber, 1990). Of course, many such children become good citizens, so don't give up. But society, schools, parents, and the children could prevent much of the later aggression if they made the effort to detect the problems early and offered help. It is crucial that we all learn "pro-social" (nice) behavior, starting early in life. Caution: *Physical punishment may teach that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems.*

Aggressive children often come from aggressive homes, in which not only are their parents and others within the family physical with each other but even the child's own aggressiveness has been harshly punished (Patterson, 1976; Byrne & Kelley, 1981). Research has documented similar aggression spreads from grandparents to parents to grandchildren. In addition, outside the family we learn more hostile ways of responding to frustration, such as in schools, on the play grounds, from friends, and especially from TV, movies and books. It has been demonstrated that we can learn to be aggressive by merely viewing a short film that shows aggressiveness as an acceptable response (Bandura, 1973). So, one doesn't have to have hostile parents or be subjected to noticeable frustration prior to becoming aggressive. One can just see aggression and then imitate it. That's why TV is so scary.

The impact of TV has been studied extensively; it makes us more aggressive (Geen, 1978; Singer & Singer, 1981). This isn't surprising considering the average child of 15 has seen about 15,000 humans violently destroyed on TV. Even though the bad guy (like the aggressive child) is often beaten up by the good guy (the parent), the implication is that aggression is acceptable if it's for a good cause (Derlega and Janda, 1981). So, we are all

exposed to a myriad of responses to frustration, but in many ways the message, again, is: "aggression gets results." Examples: the handsome TV star is often quick and powerful with his fists; every night the news documents that the most powerful nations win the wars and that the giant corporations eliminate jobs or do whatever makes a profit and win.

Recent research found that 3,385 children and teens were killed by guns in one year. Guns have a special allure for boys. Marjorie Hardy ( [hardyms@eckerd.edu](mailto:hardyms@eckerd.edu), *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 2003) observed boys, aged 9 to 15, who were told to not touch an air gun when left alone. But many did touch it and then denied they touched it. This was especially true of the younger boys. Bingenheimer, Brennan & Earls (2005) reported that just observing firearm violence and aggression doubles the risk that the young observer will become a perpetrator of violence in the next few years. So, personal experiences in the environment are additional important causes of violence. Male teens with diagnoses of Conduct Disorder or Behavioral Disorder are more likely to break the law and carry a gun. That is a dangerous combination.

Lastly, I'll just mention that violent video games are sold by the millions, mostly to teens and young men. Even the U.S. military uses violent games to entertain and train new recruits. These real-life [violent games increase aggressive behavior and delinquency](#) (<http://www.apa.org/releases/videogames.html>). Likewise, there are many R-rated movies being seen by children and teens. About 28% of 10 to 14-year-olds say they have seen especially violent films depicting rape, sodomy, and brutal killings. The focus of the research is on males but according to [Join Together.org](#) ([www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)) girls are also much more likely to be aggressive after a childhood of watching violence on TV (Dr. Linda Lewandowski, University of Michigan).

## Self-hatred and self-reports describing anger

Theodore Rubin (1975) discusses self-hatred, defined as disliking any part of our selves. It involves all of our distortions of our real self, any self-put down, or any exaggeration of one's goodness or ability. When we distort or deny what we really are, it suggests we don't like ourselves. This dislike of self starts in infancy. Babies have all kinds of habits, needs, and emotions that parents prohibit: sloppiness, anger, greediness, jealousy, self-centered demands, etc. As a child, we all learned that parts of ourselves were bad. This self-hatred becomes automated in the form of depression, which both punishes us and drowns out other feelings too.

Parents who are rejecting, neglectful, overdemanding, overprotective, overly punitive, or overbearing increase the self-hatred in a child. "I'm not good enough" becomes a central part of the self-concept. Such a child may be a "good girl/boy" but fear and rage may exist within, even when feeling empty and lifeless. Sometimes the self-hatred is conscious but the connection between self-criticism and other problems (depression, anxiety, and fatigue) is unconscious. Sometimes the self-hatred is unconscious and we feel badly without knowing why.

James Averill (1983) views emotions as primarily a social phenomenon. He studied self-reports about aggression: most people report getting mildly to moderately angry anywhere from several times a day to several times a week. However, the most common reactions to irritating situations were (1) activities to calm themselves down (60%), (2) talking about the incident to the offender (39%), or (3) talking to a third party (59%) without getting angry. Only 49% got verbally aggressive with the person who made them mad; even fewer--10%--got physically aggressive (1/3 of these incidents were with children). So, anger doesn't lead to much actual aggression; indeed, in 19% of the cases it lead to being "extra friendly." People feel like being verbally aggressive (82%) or physically aggressive (40%) but a wide variety of nonaggressive responses occur instead. So, your extra friendly co-worker may be angry about something!

Over half the time, we get mad at a loved one, relative, or friend, so anger has, in a sense, more to do with love than with hatred. What usually (85%) makes us angry is that we feel the other person has done us wrong. They are at fault; they are to blame for interfering with our plans, our wishes, or for offending or insulting us. So, what are the reported consequences of getting angry? Primarily positive outcomes! 76% of the "targets" of anger said they gained some understanding of their faults and 44% gained some respect (29% lost) for the angry person. 48% of the time anger strengthened the relationship (35% became more distant). No wonder we get angry so often. It certainly has payoffs; however, this research overlooks the misery of constant anger or constant suppression of anger.



"The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who  
can do him absolutely no good."

-----Ann Landers, American Advice Columnist



## Mental processes that can generate anger/aggression

If we perceive and label another type of person or their actions as offensive or dangerous to us, then we are more prone to be aggressive towards that type of person. Just like a hungry person thinks more often of food, if we are angry, we see more signs of aggression and suspect more "enemies." It has been said, "a prejudiced person sees a Jew, a communist, or a 'nigger' behind every bush and beneath every bed."

Our society and our subcultures provide us with stereotypes that direct our resentment, prejudice, and discrimination towards certain types of people. Prejudice tends to grow: if we dislike someone, we are more likely to hurt them, and if we hurt them, we are more likely to come to dislike them even more (Scherer, Aveles, & Fischer, 1975).

For example, prior to the shooting of students (4 killed, 9 wounded) by the National Guard at Kent State in 1970, students across the nation had referred to the police as "pigs" (i.e. stupid, coarse, and brutal) and the police had seen students as "hippy radicals" (i.e. long-haired, drug-using, sexually immoral, dirty, foul-talking, violent ingrates). A day or two before sending in 6,000 troops, the governor of Ohio had called student demonstrators "nightriders" and worse than "communists" and promised to eradicate them; President Nixon called demonstrating students "bums;" Vice-President Agnew commented, "we can, however, afford to separate them [student radicals] from our society with no more regret than we should feel over discarding rotten apples from a barrel." It is easy to see how the stage was set for violence. Furthermore, after the shootings, the National Guard action was supported by many people who made comments such as these: "it's about time we showed the bastards who's in charge" and "they should have shot 100 of them" (Scherer, Abeles, & Fischer, 1975). Obviously, our thinking affects our feelings about people and our actions.

Any time a leader speaks in terms of a negative stereotype or we think in such terms, we are sowing the seeds of violence. Every time we demean another human, we increase the potential for aggression. Every human being has a right to be judged on his/her own merits, not on the basis of a stereotype. Prejudice is discussed more later on.

### Disliking people who are different

Research has shown that, in general, we like people like ourselves and dislike people who are different (Byrne, 1969). We naturally like people who reward us and dislike people who punish us; and, similarity is rewarding. If groups are competitive, critical, and punishing of each other, the dislike and aggression between the groups grow.

Groups and cultures tend to create ingroups and outgroups. Thus, Hitler used the existing hostility against Jews to unite, motivate, and deceive the German people in the 1930's. Likewise, the U.S. and Russia used distrust of each other during the "Cold War" to unite each country into uncooperative, hostile but mighty nations. And each person is expected to conform to his/her group's beliefs. Imagine trying during the 1980's to defend communistic ideas among Archie Bunkers, businessmen, or the Moral Majority. Or try to defend blacks among whites or whites among blacks--and see the hostility quickly rise towards you. In short, ingroups are valued. Outgroups are devalued, stereotyped, and scapegoated.

Sometimes the minority that is discriminated against by the majority culture turns the anger inward, resulting in self-destructive behavior, such as low self-esteem, self-blame (like abused women), alcoholism, drug abuse, and passive-resistance to the dominant culture's ideals of what is success. Certainly for a white northern European culture to believe that African, Chinese, and Indian cultures and histories are unimportant and inferior, is to be ignorant and disrespectful. Being poor is enough to make you mad, but to have your ancestors deceived, neglected, and disgraced is too much. Let's hope conditions improve before the wrath is unleashed outward. More about prejudice later on.

## Hating people for “no reason”

Powerful forces within a group increase the likelihood of aggression. We feel compelled to believe and act the way our family or group does (see conformity in chapter 8). We want to be liked by our ingroup. We are taught to be obedient to authority. Finally, if being in a group relieves us of the responsibility for our group's decisions and if we can act anonymously (without being singled out and punished), we humans are very capable of becoming dangerous and cruel. Every human being should be constantly aware of the potential injustice and maliciousness that lurks within ourselves and our groups. See the Milgram study in the next chapter or the Zimbardo study below if you think I am exaggerating.

In his famous "Prison Experiment," Zimbardo (1973) demonstrated how ordinary, well-adjusted college students could transform themselves--with no directions from authorities--in just six days into authoritarian, brutal, sadistic "prison guards" who enjoyed their power to degrade and punish others. A good description of this amazing study is given in the [Zimbardo site](http://www.zimbardo.com/) (<http://www.zimbardo.com/>), including pictures and a frank admission by the principle investigator of how emotionally involved he became. In another study, Zimbardo (1969) found that in secret normally "sweet, mild-mannered college girls" shocked other girls almost every time they could. He concluded, "it didn't matter that the fellow student was a nice girl who didn't deserve to be hurt."

It is not clear why we are or can be so cruel. In the Milgram study, cruelty was encouraged by an authority, but this was not the case in the Zimbardo studies. Likewise, Berkowitz (1983) believes violence comes from inside us, not from group encouragement. The evidence suggests that we may be mean by following the rules of a violent group *or* the orders of a violent person *or* the urging of a violent feeling inside.

## Pain leads to aggression

If two animals are hurt when close to each other, they will frequently start to fight. This is so common and occurs across so many species, the pain-aggression connection may be unlearned. However, it is quite clear that past learning experience can modify the response--many animals prefer to run or to attack only under certain conditions (Berkowitz, 1983). Berkowitz suggests that all kinds of unpleasant stimuli lumped together, not just pain or frustration, give rise to impulsively aggressive tendencies in humans. An amazing variety of events seem to increase our anger: foul odors, high room temperatures, cigarette smoke, disgusting scenes, unpleasant interactions with others, fear, depression, unattractiveness or handicaps in others, expectation of pain, general discomfort, and merely thinking about punishing someone.

Even though cognition can stop an aggressive impulse (you don't punch out your dentist), much of the connection between unpleasantness and aggression escapes our awareness. We all experience pain, frustration, and lots of unpleasant events and, presumably, as we suffer, we are inclined to be indiscriminately aggressive. But we can recognize how unreasonable our

anger is. We can recognize that all sources of unpleasantness contribute to our aggressiveness, making some of our hurtful, punitive impulses as unreasonable as the rat attacking an innocent cage-mate. Another example, given by Berkowitz, is when we are suffering from depression, we may become more hostile. Perhaps increased awareness of our irrationality will help us be less impulsive, less inclined to blame the nearest human for our suffering, and more able to control our thoughts (away from revenge and irritating fantasies), our actions, and our group's aggression. I wonder if the pain-aggression connection helps explain our high rate of divorce, child abuse, and our national tendency to quickly replace an old enemy with a new one?

## Internal Dynamics of Aggression

### Psychoanalysis

Freud believed the *death instinct* sometimes gets turned outward, and then we hurt and offend others and go to war (the opposite of suicide). Rochlin (1973), another psychoanalyst, believes aggression is our way of recovering lost pride. Given the common human need to feel powerful and to think highly of ourselves, any threat to our self-esteem is taken as a hostile attack. When our pride is hurt, we often attempt to restore our status and self-esteem by hurting the person who offended us.

Toch (1969) found that 40% of aggressive prisoners had been insecure and needed some "victory" to prove they were something special. Other violent men were quick to defend their reputations as tough guys. We, as a militaristic society, need to know more about why our egos are so easily offended and how being cruel and violent can inflate a sick ego.

Erich Fromm (1973) defines *benign aggression* as a brief reaction to protect ourselves from danger. In contrast, *malignant aggression* is hurting others purely for the sadistic pleasure. Fromm believes people feel helplessly compelled to conform to the rules of society, at work, and to authority everywhere. This lack of freedom to make decisions and the inability to find meaning and love in one's life causes resentment and sometimes malignant, sadistic aggression.

How and where does this hostility show itself? Some people get pleasure from hurting, killing, and destroying; Hitler was a prime example: he killed 15 to 20 million unarmed Poles, Russians, and Jews. He reportedly planned to destroy his own country before surrendering. Fromm describes Hitler's life and says, "There are hundreds of Hitlers among us who would come forth if their historical hour arrived." In other cases, there is an underlying feeling of powerlessness which produces a need to be in complete control over a helpless person. Sadists and rapists are like this. Joseph Stalin, dictator of Russia from 1929 to 1953, was a famous example; he enjoyed torturing political prisoners; he killed millions of his own people (when they opposed his policies); he had wives of his own loyal aides sent to prison (the aides didn't protest); he enjoyed being deceptive and totally unpredictable. In milder forms, chauvinists may also be hostile, e.g. the male who puts down his wife and demands she attend to his every need; the angry, threatening, autocratic

boss or teacher who enjoys seeing the worker or student break into a cold sweat.

Boredom is another source of hostility, according to Fromm. When life loses its meaning because we are only a cog in a wheel, our reaction to the senselessness and helplessness is anger. We feel cheated; we had hoped for more in life; the powerlessness hurts. Hurting others or making them mad are ways of proving one still has power, a means of showing "I'm somebody."

### Anger-generating thoughts

In chapter 6, we saw how one might react to rejection with depression or with anger. Our own irrational ideas were the causes of these emotions (Hauck, 1974). It goes like this: I wanted something. I didn't get it. That's terrible! You shouldn't have frustrated me; you're no good! You should be punished; I hate you, I'll get revenge!

Hauck described a woman who had been insulted and abused by an alcoholic husband for 30 years. She hated him. He had wasted enormous amounts of needed money on drinks. He was self-centered. When she sought help from a Rational-Emotive therapist, he told her, "Your husband is sick. You are demanding that he change, but he can't." With the therapist's help she started to see her husband as emotionally ill instead of mean. She stopped getting upset and critical or nasty with her husband. As a result, the husband stopped fighting (but not drinking). The woman realized she had been insisting that the world (especially her husband) be different than it was. She had created her own angry misery by saying, "Ain't it awful! Things must be different." (See chapter 14 for more.)

### Anger-generating fantasies

First, something happens to make us mad--someone cheats or insults us, a child rebels, our lover shows a lot of attention to someone else. We think about it a lot; we talk about it; it becomes an obsession, like a movie played over and over. The more we think about it, the angrier we get. Research supports this notion. Ebbesen, Duncan, and Konecni (1975) interviewed recently fired employees and encouraged them to talk about their hostility towards the company. This talking increased their hostility.

Zillmann (1979) has summarized several studies showing that aggressive fantasies interfere with the reduction of anger. Moreover, just waiting five minutes helps women get over their anger, but not men. Zillmann speculates that men may be more prone than women to ruminate about the mistreatments they have suffered and/or about their inability (or wished-for ability) to retaliate against their annoyer. Thus, men hold anger longer than women.

It is not uncommon to meet a person who is still, years later, seething with anger towards a former spouse or a tyrannical parent or boss. Presumably the unpleasant memories maintain the hostility which, in turn, fuels more aggressive fantasies and perhaps ulcers, distrust of others, and so on.



There seem to be two elements in anger-building: (1) obsessive hostile fantasies and (2) a lack of creative imagination or fantasy. For example, extremely violent persons often ruminate almost continuously about how awful the hated person is. Also, they think of only violent solutions to the problem. Sirhan was obsessed with killing Robert Kennedy. On the other hand, research has consistently shown that people who are frequently aggressive have a very limited ability to think of different or more creative ways of handling the angering situation or person (Singer, 1984).

Tavris (1984) says by talking with friends (or a therapist?) about being upset with someone "you aren't ventilating the anger; you're practicing it." That isn't necessarily so but it is possible. If the talking (or daydreaming) reinforces your beliefs of injustice, blame, and evilness in the other person, your anger increases. If the talking (or thinking) provides more understanding of the disliked person and more ideas about how to cope, your anger decreases. Also, if you believe talking calms you down, it probably does.

### Put-down games and psychological put-downs

Eric Berne (1964), founder of Transactional Analysis (TA), wrote a very popular book, *Games People Play*. One kind of game is to put-down others, which certainly is aggressive. The payoffs of such games are building one's ego, denying responsibility for one's problems, reaffirming one's opinion that other people are "not OK," and expressing some of one's anger. Some of these put-down games involve blaming others ("If it weren't for you"), demeaning others ("I know your blemish," "Rapo--men only want sex," "Yes, but you're wrong"), and revenge ("Now I've got you, you SOB"). See chapter 9.

According to TA, it is the "child" part of us that enjoys playing these hurtful games, which are carried out unconsciously. The rational "adult" part of us may never become aware of the destructive, hostile games being played by the "child" part. But if the "adult" part can gain some insight, it could stop the games. If insight happened, however, there would surely be an internal struggle between the "adult" and the "child," resulting in stress and irritability. Let's suppose your "child" part likes to flirt, partly because the flirting (if you are a woman) reaffirms your belief that men are unfaithful animals or (if you are a man) that women are suckers for a smooth "line;" both are hostile put-down games. If your logical "adult" realizes your "child's" motives and stops the "child" from playing these games, the "child" is likely to resent losing some of its fun. But at least the aggression-generating thoughts and experiences of the game are eliminated.

Games are unconscious but we may consciously put-down or degrade or insult another person by "mind reading" or "psychologizing," i.e. attempting to analyze and explain their behavior. First of all, most people resent someone else (unless it's their therapist) telling them what they really think or feel and what their unconscious motives really are. Secondly, many of these psychological speculations are negative (saintly motives don't need to be repressed). Alan Gurman and David Rice, well known marital therapists, provide many examples:

- Psychological explanations: "He is still a baby and wants to be cared for." "She needs attention all the time, she flirts with everyone." "He is afraid I'll be more successful than he is, that's why he wants me to stay home." "You're just trying to make me mad so you'll have an excuse to go drinking."
- Psychological name-calling: "You're paranoid." "You're a latent homo." "You're a hypochondriac--it's all in your head."
- Accusations about the other person's ability or desire to change: "You're sick, you must want to be unhappy." "You don't care about me, you don't want to change." "You just don't care how I feel."
- Accusations of poor insight: "I have more and more to do at work, why can't you understand that and stop bitching?" "Can't you see I'm upset and want to be left alone." "You just don't get it, do ya?"
- Blaming permanent characteristics (or human nature) in the other person: "He has a terrible temper." "She is super sensitive." "All women are scatterbrained." "Men are so insensitive." "Boy, are you stupid!"

Psychological concepts are often misused. These aggressive remarks are likely to hurt others and harm relationships. The attitude underlying such statements is not acceptance, tolerance, understanding and unconditional positive regard. It is anger and hostility. One of the major tasks of a student of psychology is to, first, recognize these resentments and pet peeves, then learn to understand the causes of the resented behaviors. To truly understand is to forgive.

### Anger and anxiety, guilt, depression, dependency, and sex

There are very complex interactions between anger and several other emotions. Examples: Most of us feel anxious or scared when we get angry. We know there are risks involved; we might lose control and others might retaliate. Also, whether we are angry or not, it is scary when someone becomes angry at us. Yet, in some situations we would never express ourselves unless we got angry, so aggression can also help us overcome fear. So, we actually need to be intolerant of injustice.

Hostility and abuse can cause painful guilt; the pain of being an abuser or abused can cause more anger; two aggressive people are likely to form a "vicious circle." We have already seen that feeling put-down may cause us to aggress in order to inflate our ego.

It is a classical assumption in psychiatry that a weak, submissive, dependent person is resentful of this situation (chapter 8). How many subservient wives and selfless mothers have experienced resentment when the women's movement increased their awareness? Millions. However, the "super nice" giver, who often feels guilty for not giving enough, hardly has time to recognize his/her resentment for not getting enough appreciation or attention.

Another classical substitution of one feeling for another is when a person cries, a sign usually of sadness, instead of showing anger. My experience in counseling is that when a woman cries, she is really mad (about 75% of the time). Check this out.

Anger turned inward on the self is another classical dynamic explaining depression (chapter 6). Some psychologists have suggested the reverse, namely, that the pain of depression causes anger. All these connections are likely.

There are some interesting, often tragic, relationships between sexual feelings and aggression: bondage, sadism, rape, masochism, and the use of sexual swear words when angry. Impotence and frigidity commonly reflect anger. Pornography and prostitution are usually for men's pleasure and profit, but these activities degrade and abuse women. It has been shown, for instance, that males are more aggressive towards females than males, after watching an erotic film. The relationship between erotica and aggression is complex, however. Mildly sexual pictures, like in *Playboy*, or in movies that are seen as pleasing, seem to distract us and reduce our aggression. Disgusting or crude pornography increases our aggression (Byrne & Kelley, 1981).

Yet, there are some couples who report their best sex is after getting angry. Bry (1976) suggests that many sexual activities are aggressive-- "love bites," hickies, scratching, and vigorous intercourse. She recommends, among other things, that married couples try going to bed to wipe out their anger; it may work for some people but not everyone.

Lastly, it is commonly believed by therapists that one emotion can hide or replace another. Examples: Transactional Analysis describes a game called "Uproar," in which one person starts an argument to avoid intimacy or dependency or sex. Likewise, a partner, who expects to be rejected, may fight and dump the other person first. A teenager and his/her opposite sexed parent may deny the dependency, closeness and/or sexuality between them by fighting. It may also work in the opposite direction: the child would rather be fighting with a parent than be neglected. In some relationships, complaining or arguing becomes a pastime, a way of getting attention from the partner who otherwise might take you for granted.

### The effects of gender roles and cultural differences

Boys have far more temper tantrums than girls, and their tantrums last longer. Boys and men, in general, recover from an irritating experience more slowly than females, partly because they have stronger physiological reactions to frustration than women. It is the action that differentiates males from females, i.e. men and women apparently *feel angry* about the same things and to the same degree (Averill, 1983). However, beginning at age 3 or 4, boys are more *aggressive* than girls. Boys are also aggressed against and punished more than girls. For example, women who cut into line receive less hassle than men. Men kill and are killed four or five times more frequently than women. Boys, but not girls, are encouraged to be physically

aggressive. About 70% of parents say it is good for a boy to have a few fights as he grows up. How many parents think that about their daughters?

As culturally prescribed sex roles fade in our culture, however, the gender differences in aggressiveness may decline. But will men become less aggressive or women more aggressive or both? The crime rate for women is increasing much more rapidly than for men. Also, experimental studies of punishment show women administering just as much electric shock to victims as men do (Byrne & Kelley, 1981). Women seem to have a different reaction than men to being aggressive. Apparently, boys and men expect acting aggressive to pay off, girls and women don't. Women experience more anxiety and guilt after aggressing than men do; they also are more empathic with the victim afterwards.

Some studies show that about 50% of college students (both males and females) report having been physically aggressive to some extent (from throwing something to beating up on someone). Yet, college males are far more likely than females to get into a fight in the local bars. And, when asked about going to war against Iraq over Kuwait, 48% of men favored war in late 1990 but only 22% of women did. We will discuss violence with intimates (spouses and children) soon.

It is generally believed that anger is power. Thus, women are at a disadvantage because they are uncomfortable showing their anger. Indeed, their anger is more disapproved than men's anger. That makes displaying your anger, if you are a woman, more dangerous. But, showing weakness is dangerous too. Certainly, if a female manager or leader is seen crying and emotionally disabled in a situation that might be handled aggressively by a strong male, she will lose prestige in the eyes of many people. Therefore, some people have begun to encourage women to show their anger and utilize it skillfully as a tool for getting important changes made. Here are some guidelines for using anger constructively: (1) Don't react impulsively, be sure your anger is justified and have clearly in mind exactly what needs to be changed. (2) Decide in advance how far you will go, e.g. can you and will you fire someone over this issue if it isn't worked out? Are you willing to quit over this issue? Will you demand a hearing or press charges? (3) When ready, state specifically and firmly what you want changed. Don't accuse or blame others. Show anger and strong determination but don't get overly emotional. (4) Expect to get some flack and opposition. (5) Sit down with others involved and work out detailed plans for making the changes needed. Note: this is similar to "I" statements (method #4 in chapter 13) but in a work setting there is more emphasis on demanding reasonable changes.

Valentis & Devane (1993) discuss anger that uniquely characterizes women and suggest ways of utilizing the energy from anger in positive ways.

The following analysis of cultural factors is taken primarily from Scherer, Abeles, and Fischer (1975). The rate of homicide in the US is four to eight times greater than in most European countries or in Japan. Obviously, that can't be due to inherited factors and it seems unlikely that there are that many more frustrations in the U.S. There must be something about our society that makes us more prone to violence. First of all, there is a high

value placed on success which may lead to more frustration. Secondly, if you can't succeed by legitimate means, you might consider illegal, more violent means. Thus, lower socioeconomic classes are more prone to crime. Thirdly, there are subcultures within our country, such as gangs, crime families, and macho groups, that encourage violence.

Fourthly, several other factors within certain subcultures create stress: (1) having strong conflicts between values, such as believing in white or male superiority *and* equal opportunities, (2) feeling unjustly treated and deprived, (3) experiencing economic, racial, sexual, or other prejudices, and (4) believing the "establishment" (e.g. police or courts) is handling some local situation badly. In summary, if you are poor, discriminated against, stressed, oppressed, within a subculture of violence, and have little hope of improving your situation, your chances of being angry and aggressive go up.

### Psychological excuses for aggression; anger may pay off

Anger is destructive and it drags us down. Yet, we may, at times, become obsessed with misery-causing resentment in order to avoid some even more horrible misery. What could that payoff be? Theodore Dalrymple (1995) says that our resentment of others and of past events *helps us deny our own responsibility for our failings and unhappiness*. If we think of ourselves as the innocent victim of circumstances, we are not bad people or a failure, indeed, we deserve sympathy and help. We may see our parents as the cause of our suffering and failures (accurately in some cases, falsely in others). Some people obsess over and over again that a critical parent destroyed their self-esteem or an alcoholic parent made them totally ashamed or a busy parent made them feel worthless... Poor parents are made responsible for our lives and we are relieved of any responsibility. That's a big payoff.

If we portray ourselves as mistreated by a cruel world, we appear to be a righteous person, totally blameless, and it seems unnecessary for us to change or do anything about it. We become a helpless victim, which gives us some status. As Dalrymple points out, however, if we, as a victim, actually took action and overcame or corrected the unfair situation, it would suggest that perhaps we never needed to be a victim, that we could have helped ourselves much earlier than we did. So, we often resist trying to change our miserable situation in any way. Who wants to know that *they* have messed up their own lives? Criminals usually have tales of a wretched childhood and bad influences which account for their stealing, attacking people, and killing others. Our resentment of our past glosses over our possible failures in self-direction.

One reason for our own aggression is that we excuse it or rationalize it. We may even get an ego boost from it--being a tough, fearless, macho man. How can guilt about our aggression be reduced? See chapter 3 for more discussion of the excuses we use when we are inconsiderate of others. Briefly, Bandura (1973) describes several ways that we, as aggressors, avoid blaming ourselves:

1. *Emphasize the goodness of our cause*. Our violence is often thought of as necessary to stop an evil force.

When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you will find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience (to a national or religious cause) than in the name of rebellion.

-C. P. Snow

2. "*I'm just following orders.*" This is said by soldiers. Hitler's SS Troops said it. It was said by subjects in Milgram's study of obedience (see chapter 8).
3. "*I just went along with the crowd.*" Individual persons in a rioting crowd or a lynch mob feel little responsibility.
4. *Degrading the victims.* Jews were seen as inferior and despicable in Hitler's Germany. The victim is portrayed as evil, stupid, animalistic, or greedy, and deserving to die.
5. *Blaming the victim* (see Ryan, 1976). This is a situation where the victim--the raped, robbed, insulted person--is blamed for the incident, e.g. "she was asking for it dressed like that." Example: In My-Lai, Vietnam, American soldiers thought the villagers had cooperated with the enemy; children in the village sometimes betrayed or were violent towards our soldiers; "C" company had just lost 20% of its men in a minefield outside the village. All Vietnamese were feared, hated, called "gooks," and were hard to tell from enemy soldiers. One day, Americans herded 400 villagers--mostly women, children, and babies--into a ditch and shot them. It seemed to some of the soldiers as though the villagers deserved to be shot. Similar events have happened many, many times throughout human history.
6. *Becoming accustomed to violence.* In families, a raised voice becomes a verbal attack which escalates to a raised hand which leads to a shove, then a slap, and finally increasingly severe beatings. Likewise, soldiers are gradually trained to kill: first they see war movies and are told why they must fight, then there are many training exercises where killing is simulated, and finally they hear horror stories about the enemy. The more mutilated bodies one sees, the easier it is to kill. As one soldier said, "If you see their villages bombed and shelled every night, pretty soon the people just don't seem worth very much."
7. *Denying the harm done by our aggression.* "They are probably covered by insurance." "I just slapped her around a little." In war, we forget the life-long pain suffered by the loved-ones of the deceased; we forget the loss of a creative mind or loving heart of a 18-year-old.

Read the pacifists' reasons for opposing war and violence under all conditions (Nagler, 1982). See the movie *Gandhi*.

## Anger in Intimate Relationships

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### Marital conflict

The traditional marriage vows are emotionally moving and express a noble commitment: "I take thee, for better or for worse...until death do us part." However, we often come to dislike many things about our partner, leading to serious conflicts. Indeed, although all start with sincere intentions, almost 50% of all marriages end in divorce, in spite of enormous pressures to stay married. Why the pressures? If marriage is considered a sacred public pledge or even "a union made in heaven," then divorce might be regarded a sin (like in the Catholic Church) or, at least, a violation of a solemn promise. In addition to external pressures from family and divorce courts, there are also intense personal needs to "make it work" because it seems as though "you have failed" if your marriage fails.

Many marriages fail but do not end in divorce--the so called "empty shell" marriage. These marriages may not have intense conflicts; indeed, they may be void of feelings. There must be disappointment in such marriages, however. Let's look at some of the sources of conflict in the traditional marriage (see chapter 6 for a discussion of the sadness of breaking up; see chapter 14 for generally unhappy and dissatisfying marriages; this chapter deals specifically with anger, abuse, scorn, and disdain).

Most married people initially try to build a smooth, close, safe relationship, preferably one without friction. In this process, sometimes the roles for husband and wife become very rigidly defined; there is no freedom, no room for growth or change. Sometimes people think they need to pretend to be or feel some way to appeal to their spouse; there is little honesty and intimacy if you think your spouse may not accept you as you really are, i.e. for better or for worse.

Fullerton (1977), in the mid-70's, explained how "the perfect wife" becomes sad and angry. A woman with self-doubts may be unusually anxious to please her new husband. She tries to do everything the way he would want it done. She believes: "if I'm the good, perfect wife, I will be loved." Eventually being perfect with housecleaning and diapers and children gets tiresome and boring. She becomes resentful. Some evening when her husband arrives home from work late and finds her still mopping the floor, he asks, "Are you *st///*cleaning?" She bursts into tears. She cries because the only ways she can vent her frustration are either to go into a rage against her husband (which she--the perfect wife--can't do) or turn her anger inward on herself. Her self-criticism increases, she clings more desperately to the husband, and feels more and more like crying.

The 1970's "perfect wife" was also prone to be jealous. According to Fullerton, a female was likely to get her sense of worth from a male--her father, her boyfriend, her husband, and later her sons. She may have gone from being Daddy's little girl to being someone's wife without ever becoming a person. She was dependent on her looks and on being a "good girl" and "perfect wife" in order to be loved. She saw her husband as having strength and purpose; he was her whole life. Even when he was at work, she carried on an inner dialogue with him. She made her decisions in terms of what he would want and expect. Being so needy and unsure of her worth,

naturally she would be jealous of anything that took his time--his work, his friends, his interests, etc. She was too insecure and too "perfect" to confront him, but eventually the jealousy may burst through, especially if she imagined another woman was involved. Once a jealous rage has occurred, it tended to reoccur. If he was innocent, it would be hard for him to persuade her that her suspicions were groundless. If she found out there is another woman, she was crushed. She felt betrayed, lost, scared, worthless, and angry. She might decide that all men are no good or she might look for another one who desires her. Women are changing but any woman over 40 can remember those times. (Divorce is discussed in chapter 10.)

Husbands can become angry, threatened, and jealous too. An insecure male may become dependent on his wife's adoration. She makes him feel good about himself. He may want her to "stay home" (feeling fearful that other men in the work place might take an interest in her). He may be jealous of anyone or anything that gets her attention. Tragically, that sometimes includes their own first born child. The man may be ashamed to admit feeling resentful of his own child. Yet, he feels left out and betrayed; the wife is bewildered and unable to relieve his pain because the problem is inside him--his self-doubt (Fullerton, 1977). Men still want to be in control; they haven't changed as much as women have since the 1970's. This causes more problems--girls/women are becoming more independent, boys/men are remaining dependent, tough, macho, and violent. Our culture is still inclined to say, "Boys will be boys." Male possessiveness, dominance, and violence have continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Statistics will testify to the suffering caused by the remaining male dominance and unfairness that takes place even in progressive countries. The atrocious violence and degradation that women continue to experience in male-dominated countries is much worse and intolerable (Chesler, 2005).

In some families the frustration experienced by marital conflict is denied but gets expressed against another family member, often the oldest or the second child. This displaced hostility is very harmful to the child since he or she has no way of dealing with it (since the child has no control over the real source of the anger). The child may be accused of bad traits a parent has (projection) or of bad traits one parent resents in the other partner. For example, if the wife feels the husband is a liar and a cheat, she may accuse the son of these traits and ask her husband to punish the son (indirectly letting the husband know how much she resents those traits). The husband's shame may get turned into self-righteous wrath towards the son. The parental expectations of the son to be dishonest may also become self-fulfilling prophecies, with the son saying to himself "if they never believe me anyhow, I might as well lie."

No one expects his/her marriage to be like this. And, in fact, the problems of a two-career marriage without children would be quite different. But, even though financially better off, the dual-career family has its own unique problems.

### Dealing with the "intimate enemy"

Like scapegoating, many marital or lovers' quarrels serve the purpose of concealing the real conflict. Arguments over money may really be about who has the most power or about not getting enough attention or recognition. In the last section of this chapter we will learn about the possibility of honest, open "fair fighting" with *The Intimate Enemy* (your spouse), according to Bach and Wyden (1968). This kind of "fighting" can confront us with the truth, stripping away phoniness and deception,



and giving us a chance to deal with the real problems realistically. (It may also encourage criticism and the expression of raw emotions that damage the relationship, depending on the personalities involved. The pros and cons of "fair fighting" are considered in method #5 of chapter 13.)

All close relationships experience some friction. No thinking person will always agree with us. The thrill of being with your lover wears off. Certain wishes and dreams about marriage will not come true. Partners want things from us we can't or won't give. Criticism and resentment tend to be expressed in irritating ways. So many human traits annoy us; we tell ourselves that people and things should be different. It is frustrating when we can't understand why someone does what they do. What was "cute" when dating may become very irritating, e.g. a partner's loudness or bossiness or indecisiveness. Even good traits, like being very understanding or always rational or even-temper, can be irritating to a partner who is ashamed of his/her emotionality. A partner may accept one of your traits, say shyness, until he/she meets a good-looking, outgoing person, then he/she may suddenly resent your quietness and nervousness.

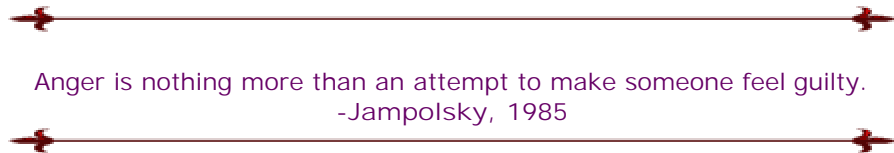
Maslow (1971) had a "Grumble Theory" that says "the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence *and* dead on our side." He felt life was a series of ups and downs; accomplishments and relationships only give us a temporary high, soon we are taking them for granted and grumbling again. Marriage is an example: John and Jane were in love, got married, and had two beautiful children. They were supposed to be blissfully happy, but after several years they take each other for granted--their grass looks brown and uninteresting. So, John is attracted to other women who tell him how talented and interesting he is. Jane is also attracted to successful, attentive males and to a challenging, exciting career. The risk is that John and/or Jane will turn the unexciting "taken for granted" feelings into active dislike or disdain "I can't stand Jane" or "I hate being at home." Maslow observed that high level self-actualizers focused on getting on with living, according to their values and avoided blaming and resenting others or discounting the past. Few of us are self-actualizers, however.

When hostility builds inside, eventually it gets released--sometimes on the wrong person or issue. Often the tirade is a repetitive emotional harangue, obviously venting the anger rather than communicating. It may include vicious, nasty, cutting, insulting, offensive accusations. Both people are likely to become hostile and start playing "hard ball." In addition to the release of their poison--which may be hard to forgive--the fighters are usually trying, albeit ineffectively, to change each other. Have you ever noticed how hard we work to change others and how little we work on changing our expectations of others?

### Trying to get our way

There are two major tactics for getting our way: (1) reasoned arguments and (2) manipulation via bargaining, hinting, and use of emotions, deceit, or coercion. According to Johnson and Goodchilds (1976), 45% of women use emotions (usually sadness), as do 27% of men (usually anger). Four times as many women as men use helplessness as an appeal. However, you lose self-respect and the respect of others when you use weakness to manipulate others. Three times as many men as women use knowledge and present facts as a basis for winning an argument. Androgynous women are more like men. Unfortunately, the woman who takes a

direct, rational, factual approach to make her point is often considered "pushy" while a male taking a similar approach is often seen as competently assertive. Fortunately, this is changing as we get into the 2000's. See the no-lose method #10 in chapter 13 and see later in this chapter for more about arguments in marriage. I'm working on the assumption that you will be less likely to fall into the psychological pitfalls of using manipulation, if you know the pitfalls exist.



### Finding better ways to resolve anger

Lerner (1985) points out that anger is often a signal that something is wrong in a relationship. Often it is true, we may be angry because we are feeling put down, neglected, and dealt with unfairly, infantilized, insulted, or cheated in some way by our partner. But sometimes past experiences or outside irritants and frustrations in life, having nothing to do with our partner, set off our angry response. Therefore, the real problem may or may *not be* within the relationship. The first step is to find out where and what is the problem. Then solve the problem. Lerner's main theme is that the usual ways of handling irritating circumstances in a relationship--either being "nice" or being hateful--do not ordinarily change the situation or solve the problem. For example, the suppression of negative feelings (being "nice") usually means being weak, passive, uncommunicative, and compliant, which builds up more and more anger and eventually results in an ineffective hateful "explosion" or in "emotional distancing." On the other hand, the 1960's notion of "letting it all hang out" (and fully venting your anger), whenever you feel like it, is not only ineffective but has its hazards too, such as increasing the animosity, lowering self-esteem, feeling guilty and unable to relate. Thus, neither the nasty attacks nor the hateful bitching of unfair fights, as we've seen, nor the uncommunicative empty shell marriages are capable of solving the underlying marital problems. They only make things worse. OK, what will help?

Lerner lists four useful approaches: (a) finding out what is really bugging you (your needs, frustrations, regretted choices, blocked dreams, etc.), (b) learning to use new, better communication skills (such as "I" statements in chapter 13), (c) gaining insight into your "dance of anger" and adopting new "dance steps" out of the old routine, and (d) recognizing both parties' efforts to maintain the status quo of destructive fighting or passive withdrawal, rather than maturely resolving the underlying problems.

Resistance is a common barrier to changing the anger "dance." When desirable changes are initiated by one person in a relationship, Murray Bowen, a family therapist, says the partner frequently opposes the changes. For example, if the wife decides to develop her own social life, rather than beg and badger her reluctant husband to go out more, the husband's opposition to change often takes these forms:

- "What you are doing (or about to do) is wrong."
- "Stop being this way and it will be okay."

- "If you don't change back, some serious things will happen."



It takes courage to stand up to these challenges and threats, and proceed with improving your life, rather than keep on dancing the anger waltz.



There are various dances of anger. There may be disagreements--how much to socialize, spend, see relatives, watch TV, have sex, etc.--and anger flares, but nothing changes. One may seek more attention and love over and over, while the other is emotionally unresponsive; both may get irritated, but nothing changes. One partner may be over-involved with the children; the other is under-involved, and both complain, but nothing changes. One partner may try a variety of ways to change the other person but little changes. Actually, the frustrated partner could change his/her own behavior and meet his/her own needs in other ways, but too often this independent action is not seriously considered and/or the partner strongly resists such changes. To meet your own needs requires a clear sense of purpose, confidence, independence, and persistence.

This willingness to be our own person and to move in our own direction, alone if necessary, is important but very scary (even in this age of equal opportunity and sexual equality). These fears stop us from clearly expressing our basic disappointments in a relationship--so the troubles never get resolved. Also, we are often afraid of unleashing our own anger, as well we should be, but the fear frequently inhibits our clear thinking about alternative ways of resolving the problems, including tactfully asserting our rights and preferences in that situation. The anger and these fears (of separation and failure) also interfere with our exploring the sources and background of our own anger. This lack of self-understanding also reduces the keenness and flexibility of our problem solving ability. Some quiet contemplation of our history, our rights, our situation, and our true emotions might help us see solutions.

Triangles often play a role, without our awareness, in the creation of conflict and anger with a person. That is, we suppress anger towards one person (a boss or a spouse) and displace it to a scapegoat (a supervisee or a child). The scapegoat often never suspects that the anger that certainly seems directed towards him has been generated by someone else and is displaced to him; he/she just feels disliked and persecuted. This arrangement permits us to use displacement to avoid facing and working on our own interpersonal difficulties. Whenever anger becomes a chronic condition--an unending dance--ask: Where might all this emotion come from? Is it a "left over" from your original family? Is this displaced anger yielding a pay off to someone, e.g. do you and your spouse get to work on a "problem child" together? Is over-involvement between two people (say, father and daughter) a cause for mom and dad to fight? What would happen if the third party avoided forming a triangle and stayed out of any conflict between the other two people, e.g. if mom let father and son resolve their own fights? Does constantly worrying and working on relationship problems (yours or someone else's) divert your attention away from running your own life wisely?

The major unhealthy roles we tend to act out under stress and when angry are (a) the blamer, critic, or hot head, (b) the withdrawn, independent, or emotionally unreachable person, (c) the needy, "let's talk," or overly demanding partner, (d) the incompetent, "sick," or disorganized one, and (e) the know-it-all, "I have no problems; I'll handle yours" rescuer. Do you recognize yourself and the people you have conflicts with? Try to avoid these roles. Start to change in small, carefully planned ways using good assertiveness (chapter 13). Also, avoid talking to anyone (beyond a brief factual consultation--no gossiping) about a third person who is upsetting you; if your underlying purpose is really to recruit support for your side, it may set up a triangle which is unhealthy. Deal directly with the person who is bothering you; keep others out of it (unless you seek therapy). Of course, older children or relatives can be told that you are having marital problems, if that is needed, but don't ask them to take sides.

### Psychological abuse in intimate relationships

The recent large National Violence Against Women survey (Coker, A. L., 2002, in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*; See (<http://www.healthscout.com/news/1/509827/main.html>) found that 29% of 6,790 females and 23% of 7,122 males had been physically, sexually or psychologically abused by an intimate partner. Psychological abuse was *more common* than sexual or physical abuse. All three forms of abuse are associated with the later development of chronic physical and mental health problems. Good reason to take abuse seriously. But exactly what is psychological abuse? It is hard to describe because the same comment could be devastating to one person but might just seem funny or insignificant to another target. How the denounced person responds is a crucial factor. Whether or not a remark causes abuse isn't determined by just the criticalness of the words used by the would-be abuser, the degree of hurt or abuse is determined by whether or not the person being addressed feels hurt, belittled, and degraded by the comments.

How the target responds depends on the circumstances, how the critical comments are said, the intended purpose and the personality of the abuser. and on the resilience and psychological defenses of the target, etc., etc. To be psychologically abusive the comments or acts have to be seen as hurtful and/or actually do harm. It is important to have a good understanding of the intentions of the critic and the reactions of the target to the psychological or emotional abuse.

Howard University psychologist, Linda Berg-Cross (2005), describes four types of psychological abuse: (1) the most devastating comments are demeaning and critical of a person's personality, basic characteristics, and core values ("you are really stupid" or "I don't trust you"). These actions or intimidating remarks may be subtle but they undermine one's self-confidence and make one feel psychologically weak or abnormal. (2) It can also be hurtful when an intimate partner withholds support and praise when you most need it, e.g. after making a speech, your partner points out a long list of mistakes you made. (3) A controlling partner sometimes restricts who you can talk to, where you can go, what you can do, often they claim that these restrictions are strictly for your own good. (4) Other ways a partner may instill insecurity and self-doubts are to restrict your influence in decision-making, to limit your access to money, to assign you jobs to do, to select your friends and social activities, and to do anything that makes you feel inferior. These four kinds of

actions do not belong in relationships among equals; they are verbal abuse or psychological putdowns.

There are appalling statistics about psychological abuse (see Berg-Cross, 2005 and Follingstad, 1990): among physically abused women almost all of them are also verbally/psychologically abused. 72% of battered women believe the psychological harm, especially emotional ridicule, was worse than the physical harm. Three times as many black women were physically abused as white women (Mouton, C., April, 2004, using data from the Women's Health Initiative in *American Journal of Public Health*) but white women reported more verbal abuse. About 11% of the 92,000 50 to 79-year-old women reported some kind of abuse *in the last year*. While we do not know much about the level of abuse in different regional and ethnic situations, there is a sobering report by WHO in the July, 2003, issue of its *Bulletin* in which over half of Zimbabwean women (especially younger, poorer, uneducated, rural women) believe wife beating is justified. Doctors, therapists, and other helpers, as well as whole societies, need to know that all three kinds of abuse (physical, sexual and psychological) are so common and to appreciate how wrong they are. There is a lot of educating to do (reminds one of the gradual learning by cultures, by parents and by schools that physical slapping, shaking, and whipping are usually inappropriate ways to teach or discipline).

Since the mid-1990's, research has made it clear that women are also capable of all three kinds of abuse. When I started writing this book in 1970, the concern was about males hurting and dominating women. Our society up to 30-40 years ago provided males with patriarchal norms and peers supporting strong male control of women. But hidden behind closed doors and not discussed at that time was abuse of males by females. Females can be critical and controlling too. Even among male college students 20% felt isolated or emotionally controlled by a relationship and 15% experienced an effort by their partner to reduce their self-esteem. Of course, if the definition of psychological abuse is expanded to include a little restriction of social contacts, some jealousy, mild criticism that lowers self-confidence and just moderate verbal abuse, then the percent of relationships that could be called "abusive" becomes quite high. When a relationship becomes unhappy (depressed, stressed, low self-esteem), it is reasonable to look for possible abuse, especially *psychological* abuse.

Abuse comes in many forms. Here is a simple list of abusive behaviors:

Being yelled at, called names, nagged at, called racial slurs,  
 called "stupid," told "no one else would want you,"  
 talked to as a child, constant put-downs, ridiculed appearance,  
 threatened to kill me, threatened to take the children,  
 belittled important things I accomplished, told me I was fat, ugly, dumb,  
 said I was an unfit mother, embarrassed me in public, told the children I was  
 disgusting, said I was a bad sex partner, always screams at the children, puts down  
 my relatives.

This checklist can be found at [www.actabuse.com](http://www.actabuse.com).

Berg-Cross provides some excellent questions that clarify more precisely what emotional abuse may involve. Perhaps these questions can help you self-assess your and your partner's tendencies to inflict psychological hurts:

A good relationship grants behavioral freedoms—Does your partner reduce your freedom? Examples: Does he/she criticize your religious beliefs or activities? Does he/she prefer that you not express some of your opinions in public? Does he/she influence your choice of friends? Does he/she express (subtly or bluntly) what you should wear, where you work, who you see? Does he/she discourage you from doing certain new things?

A good relationship allows lots of interpersonal freedoms—Does your partner discourage you or play down your successes? Does he/she dismiss or ridicule your strengths? Does he/she make you feel dumb or unattractive? Does he/she cause you to feel less important than himself/herself? Does he/she disapprove your life goals? Does he/she seem to like it when you are insecure or don't do well? Does he/she tend to avoid sharing intimate thoughts or resolving problems? Does he/she talk about having sex as though it centers around him/her satisfaction? Does he/she arrange the house, the food, the thermostat, the bed to please him/her?

A good relationship allows existential freedoms so both guide their own lives—Does your partner disapprove your taking on responsibilities, going into debt, working late? Does he/she discourage your spending time with hobbies, your reading material, and volunteer work? Does he/she resent you having your own free time? Does he/she seem grumpy when you don't feel well or want help doing some chores?

A good relationship avoids manipulation, subtle pressuring or threats, blatant bargaining, deceit, coercion, intimidation, putting down and other controls. Do you and your partner grant each other about the same degree of freedom? Does he/she agree? Does he/she realize the freedoms you would like to increase? Do you know his/her wants? Does he/she protect his/her freedoms more vigorously than you do? Why? Can both of you share those wants? Do you want to negotiate these matters with him/her? Can you get your freedoms without unduly encroaching on his/her freedoms? Would you like to work on these issues with a counselor?

The closest Berg-Cross comes to giving self-help advice (beyond the questions above) is when she describes four methods for *preventing* psychological abuse: (1) Accept the separateness of both parties in an intimate relationship, although there is a tendency to "become one." When we get too tight or have been together a long time, we tend to forget our partner's freedoms and when he/she decides to seek more freedoms it may seem like a "breach of contract." We take them for granted. Be aware of this and avoid being too controlling. (2) Be aware of the defense mechanism of projection, e.g. if you have some urges to build a relationship with another attractive person, instead of becoming uncomfortably aware of your own temptations, you might start worrying that your partner is "looking." Other traits and needs can be projected by you to your significant other, such as carelessness with money, lack of organization, procrastination, and so on. (3) Learn as much as you can about changing yourself. Keep a close watch on your most important relationships, then start early and work hard to correct any problems, especially psychological or emotional abuse. This kind of abuse is not always easy to recognize; we can always deny our inner thoughts and motivations. In contrast, serious physical abuse is undeniable by the perpetrators and often visible to everyone. (4) There is so much anger and unhappiness in the world, which often comes from our early family lives. By confronting the current psychological abuse in your life, you are taking a small step towards improving your part of the world and the future.


Psychological abuse needs to be treated if reading and self-help doesn't reduce the abuse. Why is treatment by a professional needed? Because, as mentioned, psychological abuse has a way of evolving into physical abuse. Thus, it provides a possible warning sign of coming physical aggression. Psychological abuse users, both men and women, need to seek therapy also because it continues to be extremely destructive to the emotional quality of the relationship, to the emotional health of both people, and to the welfare of their children. It has been found that psychological aggression in the first 18 months of marriage often foretells physical aggression within the next year and is associated with abuse of children later.


A variety of therapies can be used with psychological abuse: Angry thoughts of the psychological abuser are principle causes of abusive behaviors and their negative emotions. Cognitive-Behavioral techniques challenge these problematic thoughts, expectations and needs by using psycho-education methods, such as explaining that abusive actions stem from the abuser's needs for power and control and by teaching several communication skills—empathy responding, "I" statements, assertiveness, conflict resolution, anger management, and so on (see chapters 13 & 14 as well as later in this chapter). Berg-Cross also advocates a Psychodynamic approach where the connection is made conscious between underlying emotional needs of the abuser, such as low self-esteem, fears and dependency, compulsiveness, narcissism, etc, and their abusive actions. Other approaches can be helpful, especially assistance rebuilding trust in the relationship, therapy groups (for physical abuse in particular), and supplemental drug or alcohol treatment if either partner also has such a problem.

Berg-Cross finds some similarity between unhappy, abusive, hopeless marriages in which the abused partner refuses to leave, and a situation where a violent criminal, such as a robber, a child molester, or an abusive mate, holds a hostage. The captured or abused partner (or prisoner) often feels totally dependent on the strong dominant, sometimes ruthless, abusive person. Their life depends on the violent person. Feeling helpless (and afraid), the threatened, desperate prisoner may show some friendliness or appreciation to the abusive criminal in hopes of receiving some favors or leniency in the future from the captor or abusive partner. In his/her desperation the hostage develops some hopes for some sign of care and sympathy from the abusive controller. Thus, the abused and tortured person hangs on in hopes, usually illusory, that they will be treated better. This is called the Stockholm Syndrome because several years ago the hostages of bank robbers became supportive of the thieves during their five day capture.

A thorough understanding of psychological or verbal abuse is very important because the development of abuse is a long process and psychological, verbal, or emotional abuse is usually the start of the escalating violence. Nipping the verbal insults in the bud is very wise. Otherwise, more and more violent harm is done to the partner...and love is diminished in the process. An entire book by O'Leary and Maiuro (2001) deals with Psychological Abuse in domestic relations and Gafner and Mantooth (1999) describe a Psychoeducational Approach to partner abuse. Beverly Engel (2002) focuses on emotional abuse by one or both parties and has published several books in this area that are recommended highly.

## Physical abuse of spouses and children

  
 I will permit no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making  
 me hate him.  
 -----Booker T. Washington


 Many of our conflicts are hand-me-downs from our original family, our grandparents, and even further back. A generation or two ago most parents whipped their children. Just a few generations ago there was a "Rule of Thumb:" you may beat your wife with a stick if it is smaller than your thumb. If your grandfather beat your father, it is not surprising that you are beaten. If your mother was always envious and angry with her brilliant, perfect older sister, it is not surprising if mother is very critical of you, if you are her oldest daughter. If your dad's youngest brother was thought to be emotionally disturbed, he may watch carefully for problems in his youngest son...and find them. Know your history to know yourself and to understand others' reactions to you. Messina (1989) has a series of workbooks for adult children from dysfunctional families. The workbooks help you become aware of your abusive history and find ways to get rid of the anger.

These clinical observations are fairly well documented by recent research (Ehrensaft, Cohen, Brown, Smailes, Chen, & Johnson, 2003). Children who have seen their parent(s) physically assault the other, who have been abusively punished, and who have had behavior problems (conduct disorder) when growing up, these are the people most at risk of partner violence as adults. These researchers believe effective prevention programs need to be started *before* the high risk children reach adolescence. So, if you have a history of any of those problems, watch for any tendencies to be physically or, more likely, psychologically aggressive and learn how to handle your escalating emotions.

### What backgrounds and conditions lead to abuse?

Battered women tend to be less educated, young, and poor with low self-esteem, from an abusive family, passive-dependent, and in need of approval and affection. If women are violent against their husband, they tend to have a history of violent acts against others. Abusive men often have a need to control their partner and tend to be under-employed or blue-collar, a high school drop out, low paid, from a violent or abusive family, between 18 and 30, cohabiting with a partner with a different religion, and occasionally use drugs. Don't let these specific findings mislead you, however. Abusers come from all economic and educational levels. Most hit their wives only occasionally and feel some remorse; a few are insanely jealous and a scary few simply appear to coolly relish being violent.

Dr. Nicki Crick and Dr. Nelson (2003) and their co-researchers at the University of Minnesota have greatly extended the study of victimization by peers from mostly physical aggression against boys to girls and relational



aggression in elementary school. This is very important research underscoring the anger and nature of aggression by young girls. Relational aggression or victimization involves hurtful social acts, such as peer rejection or isolation, making fun of, badmouthing, spreading embarrassing rumors, getting peers to dislike you, etc. Both boys and girls do these things but girls are more victimized in these ways than boys. Some girls (up to 20%) are reported to be very adapt with this aggression by the time they are 3 or 4 years of age. Boys are more physically hurt and threatened. There are psychological adjustment problems resulting from relational meanness—such as emotional distress, shame, loneliness, anger and difficulty controlling one's anger and impulses. These emotional reactions and self-perceptions often continue to have an impact on personal and social adjustment several years later.

For instance, a University of Florida study (Noland, 2004) found that siblings who have had a violent relationship (shoving, punching, insulting and manipulating) while growing up usually between ages 10 and 14 are more likely to become violent in dating relationships in college. A little more than 50% of the males and females in their study had punched or hit a sibling with an object that could hurt. About 75% of the siblings had shoved or pushed a brother or sister. Apparently fighting with a sibling while growing up sets the stage for getting physical or even battering their dates in college.

You commonly hear it said "You inherited your quick temper from your Dad...or your Grandma Smith." Researchers at several Canadian universities have studied the genetic vs. the environmental source of one's physical and relational aggression. They concluded that genetic factors could explain only about 20% of social or relational aggression, while 80% is probably due to environmental influences, such as observing parents and sibling or peer influence. On the other hand, our genes are thought to determine for more than half of the individual differences in physical aggression. Some think the genetic inheritance shows up first in young children who then later learn social aggression if the social environment (family and peers) supports acting in those ways. Thus, if one can discourage a child's physical aggression early, that may reduce the later development of relational aggression (Contact Andrea Browning [abrowning@srcd.org](mailto:abrowning@srcd.org)). This theory has not been proven.

Studies done mostly by Chicago's Parent-Child Centers have shown that school based educational programs with intense parental involvement have reduced child abuse and neglect at home (52% less mistreatment), lowered the student's later record of delinquency, and increased educational achievements for several years. ( [Chicago Longitudinal Study](http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/) at [http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/.](http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/)) In other parts of the country, between 10% and 20% of students report feeling unsafe in their schools. The unsafe feelings are due to strains between groups of students, bullying, individual aggressiveness, and the administration's lack of control.

Craig Field ( [craig.field@utssouthwestern.edu](mailto:craig.field@utssouthwestern.edu)) recently reported on research done with US couples and found that black and Hispanic couples were two to three times more likely than white couples to admit committing physical violence, both male-to-female and female-to-male abuse. Two factors that were associated with increased domestic violence are impulsiveness in one or both partners and alcohol consumption. Another interesting study

( [http://www.caepv.org/membercenter/library/docDetail.asp?doc\\_id=259&cat\\_id=1](http://www.caepv.org/membercenter/library/docDetail.asp?doc_id=259&cat_id=1)) found that economic factors, such as income and education, are important determinants of a women being abused (the lower her income and education, the more likely she is to be a victim). If a woman is abused, she is likely to become less productive at work. So domestic violence has an impact on the victim's job security and on the employer's productivity or profit as well.

### How do we start being physical?

The common belief that abusers (of children) were themselves abused as children may only hold true in general for males, not females. In fact, physical abuse may mean different things to women and men. In a dating or marriage situation, the beginning steps toward severe abuse may involve psychological/verbal/emotional aggression--yelling, swearing, threatening, spitting, shaking a fist, insulting, stomping out, doing something "for spite"--and slapping, shoving, or pinching (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). There is some evidence that early in a relationship, women do these things as often as men, maybe more so, but men eventually cause more physical damage than women. There is a great difference between an opened female hand slap to the cheek and a hard male fist crashing into the face, knocking out teeth, and breaking the jaw. The slap expresses hurt feelings; the blow reflects raw destructive, intimidating anger. It would be wise to never start the cycle of abuse; so, try to avoid psychological aggression, such as name calling, insulting, and yelling (Evans, 1992). The evidence is clear that once mild physical aggression of pushing and slapping has started, it frequently escalates into fist fights, choking, slamming against the wall, and maybe the use of knives and guns. *Psychological* or *verbal* aggression by either party must be considered *an early warning sign* that physical abuse is possible in the near future. Thus, take verbal assaults and rages very seriously. See the Psychological Abuse section above.

### Steps taken to build anger... or to stop it

It is helpful to think of 5 steps (choices!) taking us from the initial frustration to intense anger in which we feel justified to express primitive rage: (1) deciding to be bothered by some event, (2) deciding this is a big, scary issue or personal insult, (3) deciding the other person is offensive and evil, (4) deciding a grave injustice has been done and the offender must be punished--you must have revenge, and (5) deciding to retaliate in an intensely destructive, primitive way. By blocking these decisions at different levels and thinking of the situation differently, we can learn to avoid raging anger. Examples of helpful self-talk at each step: (1) "It's not such a big deal," (2) "Calm down, I can handle this rationally," (3) "There is a reason why he/she is being such a b\_\_\_\_," (4) "Let's find out why he/she is being so nasty," (5) "I'm not going to lower myself to his/her level... is there a possible solution to this?" When you practice these self-control responses in fantasy, you are using stress inoculation techniques (see method #9 in chapter 12).

When the right juices flow, we humans tend to pair-off, one man and one woman with the intention to have children. That is how we survived and

evolved. That pairing and birthing process involves massive investments of time, work, and deep emotions. To keep the relationship healthy each partner faces a major problem: (1) the male must keep other attractive males away and (2) the female must keep the male from straying. Evolutionary psychologists (Buss, 2003) call this "human mate guarding." Whenever there are competitors for your partner, these threats may trigger powerful reactions of vigilance and, if necessary, violence. Therefore, certain actions by one's partner can be useful forewarnings to females and males of possible violent reactions. Examples: if your partner is overly concerned about where you are, what are you doing, who you are talking to, etc. and if he/she declares he/she "would die" if you ever left him/her and if he/she threatens to punish you if you are ever unfaithful, all spell trouble. Other behaviors are also danger signs, such as coming by to see what you are doing...or calling to see if you are where you said you would be. These are all signs of over-vigilance which have been shown to be associated with becoming upset and reacting violently (Buss, 2003; Shackelford, Buss and Bennett, 2002).

### Physical abuse follows a pattern

First, there is conflict and tension. Perhaps the husband resents the wife spending money on clothes or he becomes jealous of her co-workers. The wife may resent the husband drinking with the boys or his constant demands for sex. Second, there is a verbal fight escalating into physical abuse. Violent men use aggression and fear as a means of control (Jacobson, et al, 1994). When the male becomes violent, there is little the woman can do to stop it. Actually, women in violent relationships are as belligerent and contemptuous as their husbands but their actual violence tends to be in response to the man's aggression. Nevertheless, over half of abused women blame themselves for "starting it." Third, a few hours later, the batterer feels guilty, apologizes, and promises it will never happen again, and they "make up." Sometimes, the couple--or one of them--will want to have sex as a sign that the fight is over. The sex is good and they may believe (hope) that the abuse will not happen again, but almost always within days the cycle starts over and the tension begins to build.

### Statistics about abuse of "loved ones"

The O. J. Simpson case stimulated interest in spouse abuse, including death. About 1400 women, 30% of all murdered women (world-wide it is up to 70%), are killed by husbands, ex-husbands, and boyfriends each year; 2 million are beaten; beatings are the most common cause of injury to 15 to 44-year-old women. The statistics are sobering and truly scary (Koss, et al, 1994). A 1983 NIMH publication says, "Surveys of American couples show that 20 to 50 percent have suffered violence regularly in their marriages." In 1989, another survey found physical aggression in over 40% of couples married only 2 1/2 years. 37% of 11,870 military men had used physical force with their wives during the last year (Pan, Neidig, & O'Leary, 1994). Walker (1979, 1993) says 50% of women are battered. Recent research (O'Leary, 1995) shows that 11% to 12% of all women were physically abused during the last year. Among couples seeking marital counseling, 21% were "mildly" abused and 33% were severely abused in the past year. Yet, they seldom volunteer this information; therapists must ask.





## Spouse abuse dynamics

Why does wife abuse occur? Many writers believe the cause is *male chauvinism* -- a male belief that men are superior and should be the boss, while women should obey ("to honor and *obey*"), do the housework, and never refuse sex. Those are ridiculous ideas. A male abuser is also described as filled with hate and suspicion, and feels pressured to be a "man." That sounds feasible but new findings (Marano, 1993; Dutton, 1995) suggest that the chauvinistic facade merely conceals much stronger fearful *feelings in men of powerlessness, vulnerability, and dependency*. Other research has found abusive men to be dependent and low in self-esteem (Murphy, Meyer & O'Leary, 1994). Many of these violent men apparently feel a desperate need for "their woman," who, in fact, is often more capable, smarter, and does take care of their wants. These relationships are, at times, loving. The husband is sometimes quite attentive and affectionate. Often, both have found acceptance in the relationship that they have never known before. Then, periodically, a small act of independence by the wife or her brief interaction with another man (perceived as intended to hurt her partner) sets off a violent fight. The abusive man becomes contemptuous, putting the woman down in an effort to exercise physical-emotional control and build up his weak self-esteem. Of course, the insecure aspects of many abusers are well concealed within the arrogance.

Likewise, battered women have been thought of as weak, passive, fearful, cowering, self-deprecating partners. Of course, some are, but recent findings (Cordova, Jacobson, Gottman, Rushe, & Cox, 1993) suggest that many battered wives, during an argument, are outspoken, courageous, hot-tempered, equally angry and even violent, but they are overwhelmed by the husband's violence. They don't back down or de-escalate the argument; they respond with verbally aggressive, offensive comments. Such women were often "unmothered" as children. The male abuser often grew up in a violent environment, where he was sometimes (30%) abused himself or (30%) saw his mother abused. So, we often have a situation in which two insecure but tough, angry, and impulsive people are emotionally compelled to go through the battering ritual over and over (Dutton, 1995).

Researchers are just now studying the complex details of battering by males. There are many theories about male violence: hormonal or chemical imbalance, brain damage, misreading each other's behavior, lacking skills to de-escalate or self-control, childhood trauma, genetic and/or physiological abnormality, etc. Also, beneath the abuser's brutality, therapists look for insecurity, self-doubts, fears of being "unmanly," fears of abandonment, anger at others, resentment of his lot in life, and perhaps a mental illness (Gelb, 1983). Several TV movies, such as *The Burning Bed*, have depicted this situation. There seems to be three stages: tension & anger, words & battering, and contrition & promises. Yet, we don't know a lot about the causes of wife abuse; it is a safe bet that they are complex.

During the last 10 years, University of British Columbia psychology professor, Donald Dutton has run the Assaultive Husbands Program in Vancouver and written several in depth and scholarly books about understanding and treating abusive men. The books include *The Batterer: A Psychological Profile* (1995),

The Abusive Personality: Violence and Control in Intimate Relationships (2002), and Intimate Violence: Contemporary Treatment Innovations (2003). These are sophisticated analyses. The most important finding is that the abusive husband is often mentally tormented and self-loathing. Many batterers have a fragile sense of self stemming usually from a shaming father, an emotionally detached mother, and an early home environment ruled by violence. The abuser's childhood experiences produces a post-traumatic stress disorder in a man who has identified with a critical, demanding father and who now has a strong fear-laden attachment to a woman whom he batters but needs badly. Several therapists have described different dynamics within different kinds of batterers: (1) the psychopathic or generally violent/antisocial type, (2) the emotional/borderline & impulsive type, and (3) the aloof/over controlled type, (4) the family only aggressor, (5) the cyclical hot and cold type, and others. There are a lot of ways to be a batterer. If you are going to read only one text, read one of Dutton's (2003) latest books. But there are several new books about physically violent men and women (see the Books & Websites section below.)

The mental picture of spouse abuse is often a big, tough, burly enraged male beating up on a small, trembling, totally dominated female. Some writers in the domestic violence field seem to imply that within all males there is a latent abuser just waiting to hit his wife or girlfriend if she does anything wrong. Even among men there are tendencies to think of men who are supportive of the Women's Movement as being weak, henpecked, or castrated. Men are expected to be quiet and "handle aggressive women like a man, meaning say nothing." Only since the early 1990's has research results been showing rather clearly that men are psychologically degraded, shamed, dominated, insulted, victimized and physically injured about as much as women are. Male abuse is often hidden, just as female abuse is. Interesting Department of Justice statistics currently show that 35% to 40% of all domestic violence victims are males. Moreover, recent studies suggest that younger, college-aged women are at least as violent as younger men and perhaps up to twice as violent as their partners. It certainly appears that the two genders are about equally abusive (considering all kinds of abuse), although the common opinion, I believe, is that women suffer more injuries than men. But this is open to question: one study of hospital Emergency Rooms in 2004 found that more men than women had injuries of a serious nature from domestic violence. Perhaps our views of gender roles in domestic violence need to be revised.

Okay, then why does husband abuse occur? One of the best sources of information about abuse of men is in a book by Philip Cook (1997) the subtitle of the book is The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence. This is an excellent description of the other side of family fights...the role of female anger, aggression, and violence. Cook provides case studies and some insight; he give some self-help suggestions for victims but avoids gender bias in which men or women are seen as villains. Who commits the violence is an important issue, even if the answer is usually "both of them," e.g. consider how often accusations of violence are verbalized in divorce hearings—one partner tries to get custody of the children by claiming the other parent abuses them or the children...or one parent tries to keep the children from seeing the other parent by vilifying the other parent. We know so little about husband abuse. Some women probably have the same fears, needs, and



weaknesses as battering men and are in a situation where they can physically abuse their partner. In the 1990's it was known that women are victims of 11 times more *reported* abuse than men (Ingrassia & Beck, 1994). That may be changing. But, as mentioned, men may be hesitant to label themselves as "battered husbands." Spouse abuse occurs in all social classes and with independent as well as dependent women and men. Society, relatives, strangers, neighbors, and the police don't know how to deal with family fights but society pays the bills in the emergency rooms, in marriage counseling, and in divorce court.

Abuse should not happen but no treatment is a sure cure; in fact we don't even have a good cure. About half of male batterers will not get treatment and half of those that do, drop out. Little has been written about treatment for female batterers. In most cases, it is wise to report male batterers and their abuse to the police. Most police have had some training in handling "domestic violence" cases; however, officers in New York, which has a mandatory-arrest law, arrest only 7% of the cases and only report 30% of the domestic violence calls (Ingrassia & Beck, 1994). Police are supposed to provide the victim some protection (of course, this is hard to do and can't be guaranteed). Recent research confirms the benefits of pressing charges in abuse cases. *If the abuse is not reported* to the police, about 40% of the victims were attacked again within six months. *If the abuse is reported* by battered wives, only 15% were assaulted again during the next six months. So, protect yourself.

Almost no one asks the question should women who batter their husbands be reported to the police? Well, it seems fair that women batterers should be reported to police like men are...but women do not kill partners at the same rate as men do. And there are other buts: what would this reporting do to the already shaky relationship? And how would Police handle that task? Police have enough trouble taking male batterers seriously; do we know how they would deal with female batterers?

### Why do women stay?

To the outsider the real question is: Why do they stay together? Why doesn't she leave? Or, why doesn't he leave? Why should she have to leave instead of him? If they stay together, there must be varied and complex dynamics which tie an abusive couple together. We have much speculation; we need more facts. Clearly, there are likely to be emotional bonds, fears, shame, guilt, children to care for, money problems, and hope that things will get better. Many abused women are isolated and feel unable to find love again. Some women assume abuse is their lot as a woman; this is—for them—an expected part of life. A few women even believe a real, emotional, exciting macho "man" just naturally does violent things and feels superior to women. Some violent men are contrite later and even charmingly seductive. Some women believe they are responsible for his mental turmoil and/or are afraid he will kill himself or them. She may think she deserves the abuse. Many believe he will beat them more or kill them, if they report the assaults to the police. Of course, injury and death do occur. The abused woman often becomes terrorized and exhausted, feeling totally helpless. Walker (1979, 1993) says the learned helplessness (within a cycle of violence and making



up) keeps women from breaking away from the abuser. Celani (1994) suggests that both the abuser ("she can't leave me") and the abused ("I love him") have personality disorders, often originating in an abusive childhood.

There are many sources of information about "why women stay," but a couple of the best and most comprehensive books are *It Can Happen to Anyone* by Alyce LaViolette (2000) and Broder, M. S. (2002). *Can your relationship be saved? How to know whether to stay or go*. Also, do a search for "why women stay" on Google. I'd like to add one more factor: breaking up, failing at marriage, getting a divorce, and living alone are all viewed negatively, almost as if people think there must be something wrong with you. It seems like people expect divorced person to be miserable, poorly adjusted, and a failure in many ways. Of course, if that is single-ness people would dread making such a move. But my impression is that being single is a much happier state than people expect it to be. I've heard it expressed that single-ness involves feeling "I can stand on my own," "I'm free to do what I damn please today," and "taking care of myself is better than having to meet someone else's needs." Those feelings sound great...and one can still have wonderful, close, caring relationships.

Abused women leave an average of 10 times before they successfully break away. It is hard for many women to permanently leave. Perhaps the main reason women stay in an abusive relationship or come back to it is because they have hopes it will get better. They also sometimes return to a bad relationship because some fear for their lives. It is not uncommon for women to be stalked, harassed or threatened (or have their children threatened) as they are leaving or after they have left. There are, in fact, serious dangers to be guarded against.

At best, "breaking up" is very stressful. I consider it very important that everyone thinking about leaving a relationship get a therapist...or at least have a close, dependable friend to talk to. If you don't have a therapist or a good friend, please seek help (bluntly ask for it) from someone who has been through a divorce and has the time/interest to help you through the process, starting ideally some months before the break up and continuing for months after separating. I emphasize having someone to talk to because everyone's situation is different and the decisions you need to make are unique to you (hardly something I could write to you in a book). For example, you may need to accumulate some money before leaving, to arrange a place to stay or for transportation, to know where you can hide if physical harm is threatened, etc.

### Can abusers change?

Gondolf (2000) did a long-term follow up of a treatment program for male batterers to find out what techniques seemed more effective in reducing assaults. About 53% of the subjects reported using "interruption methods" (stopping arguments or fights) to prevent further abuse, 19% relied on "discussion methods" (turning to a less intense and more constructive talking) to aid anger control, and a small 5% relied on increasing their "respect for women" to increase their self-control. That 5% seems like a very low number considering the follow up lasted for 15 or more months; however, 20% of the

participants reported gaining more positive attitudes towards women and 33% of their wives reported their husbands had become more respectful and had "changed a great deal." With a lot more research, perhaps domestic violence can be markedly reduced, but we have a long way to go with a tough problem.

### The long-term effects of abuse within a family

There is ample evidence that psychological abuse and physical abuse by a partner are *both* associated with developing mental health and physical health problems (Coker, 2002). Using the National Violence Against Women Survey of 16,000 American adults, these University of Texas researchers found that 29% of women and 23% of men had been abused by a partner (more psychological abuse than physical or sexual). The abused partners (both men and women) had developed more chronic physical or mental health illness and had poorer general health, more depression, more anxiety, more injuries, and more drug/alcohol addiction than partners who had not experienced abuse. This study draws special attention to the heretofore neglected effects of psychological abuse on men and underscores that a good diagnostician will investigate these historical factors in both sexes.

Domestic violence affects perhaps 8% to 14% of our population. However, less than 20% of physicians screen new patients for it, while 98% ask patients about smoking, 90% about alcohol use, and even 47% inquire about HIV and STD. This is partly because doctors know less about screening for abuse. We don't expect primary care physicians to treat domestic violence but they should ask about it and make appropriate and quick referrals.

### Books and websites about domestic violence

No person should ever physically hit, slap, or shove another person, certainly not a person you are supposed to love. Physical threats should not be made either. Yet, the frequency of physical/emotional aggression (see statistics given above) is horrible. Lenore Walker (1979, 1993) described the victim as traumatized and cruelly dominated to the point "she" feels helpless and, often, worthless. The abused may become so unable to confront the abuser that "she" can not walk out. The most dangerous time is when "she" is walking out. Walker's work is regarded as one of the best self-help books for battered women (Santrock, Minnett & Campbell, 1994; Norcross, et al, 2000 and 2003). The two reference books just cited about self-help resources, along with many other sources, suggest many pre-2000 helpful books: (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Geller, 1992; Martin, 1989; Strube, 1988; Follingstad, Neckerman, & Vormbrock, 1988; Deschner, 1984; Fleming, 1979; NiCarthy, 1982, 1987, 1997). NiCarthy is especially good for women still in the abusive situation.

There are many very recent additional books about domestic violence (look up the reviews on Amazon): David Wexler (2004), *When good men behave badly: Change your behavior, change your relationship*; Cook, P. W. (1997). *Abused men: The hidden side of domestic violence (the female side)*; Gentry, W. D. (2004), *When someone you love is angry (spouse, parent, relative, or child)*; Weiss, E. (2003). *Family and friends'*

*guide to domestic violence*, Bancroft, L. (2003). *Why does he do that? Inside the minds of angry and controlling men*, Kubany, E. S., McCaig, M. A. & Laconsay, J. R. (2004). *Healing the trauma of domestic violence: A CBT Workbook for women* (with PTSD); Dugan, M. & Hock, R. R., (2000). *It is my life now: Starting over after an abusive relationship or domestic violence*; Roberts, A. R. & B. S. Roberts (2005). *Ending intimate abuse: Practical guidance and survival strategies* (describes levels of abuse, lists dv hotlines, gives rape prevention guidelines); Logan, T. K., Walker, R., Jordan, C. E. & Leukefeld, C. G. (2005). *Women and victimization: Contributing factors, interventions, and implications*. (comprehensive review of the psychological literature); Schewe, P. A. (2002). *Preventing violence in relationships: Intervention across the life span*. (school, dating, sexual, domestic, & elderly violence...and recognizes twice as much violence is perpetrated by friends, relatives and partners as by strangers!); Broder, M. S. (2002). *Can your relationship be saved? How to know whether to stay or go*; Fisher, E. A. & Sharp, S. W. (2004). *The art of managing everyday conflict: Understanding emotions and power struggles*.

Note: Reviews of these books can usually be obtained at Amazon.com or from the publisher.

Clearly abuse comes in several forms. Emotional abuse is important to understand because it is usually the starting point—see Berg-Cross (2005) above as well as two older but well written books that address verbal/psychological abuse (Evans, 1996; Elgin, 1995). There have been books specifically for violent men (Sonkin & Durphy, 1992; Paymar, 1993), but, abusers often resist therapy, so how many would read and faithfully apply the ideas from a book? There are new books for male abusers and a few for female abusers. There are also books for partners of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Davis, 1991); more will be cited later in the chapter. The Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire publishes a large bibliography covering all forms of family violence. Get informed. It will help you get out of this situation.

Books aren't the only source of help. There are many Web sites. For general information, check out [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](http://www.nsvrc.org) (<http://www.nsvrc.org>) (1-800-877-739-3895), [Violence Against Women](http://www.vaw.umn.edu/library/) (<http://www.vaw.umn.edu/library/>), [Office on Violence Against Women](http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/) (<http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/>), [Blain Nelson's Abuse Pages](http://www.blainn.com/abuse/) (<http://www.blainn.com/abuse/>) (he is a former abuser), and [Feminist Majority Foundation](http://www.feminist.org/other/dv/dvhome.html) (<http://www.feminist.org/other/dv/dvhome.html>). Moreover, there are many sites that focus on a more specific problem or on a special population. One Web site, for instance, counsels young girls and women who might be experiencing [When Love Hurts](http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/) (<http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/>). It describes how unhealthy abuse subtly infiltrates a "love" situation. Since the abuse victim is unable to defend herself or escape, it is crucial that the community provide help and protection. The Nashville Tennessee Police Department has a model program for [Domestic Abuse](http://www.tcadsv.org/) (<http://www.tcadsv.org/>). In addition, there are hotlines [1-800-799-SAFE or 1-800-FYI-CALL or 303-839-1852] and specialized groups, like Domestic Violence (415-681-4850) and Batterers Anonymous [909-355-1100]. Many online support groups exist; see several at [Abuse-Free Mail](#)

[Lists](http://blainn.com/abuse-free/) (<http://blainn.com/abuse-free/>) and at [Violence Against Women](http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/) (<http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/>). Most communities have Women's Centers, Domestic Violence shelters, and Mental Health Centers where help is available. Please get help. In some extreme cases, getting out is a life or death situation.

There are several sites that advise women (mostly) about protecting themselves: ["Is Your Relationship Heading into Dangerous Territory?"](http://www.google.com/u/universityoftexas?domains=utexas.edu&site=search=utexas.edu&q=Relationship+violence&x=14&y=6) (<http://www.google.com/u/universityoftexas?domains=utexas.edu&site=search=utexas.edu&q=Relationship+violence&x=14&y=6>), [A Community Checklist](http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/) (<http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/>) then click on publications, and [Why Women Stay](http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/domviol.htm) (<http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/domviol.htm>). Another source of advice is [Helpguide](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_help_treatment_prevention.htm) at ([http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic\\_violence\\_abuse\\_help\\_treatment\\_prevention.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_help_treatment_prevention.htm)). [The National Domestic Violence Hotline](http://www.ndvh.org/) (<http://www.ndvh.org/>) [800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224] is a source of information and place to get referrals to a local clinic or shelter for women.

There are, of course, sites attempting to help abusers: [Treatment for Abusers](http://www.edvp.org/AboutDV/forabusers.htm) (<http://www.edvp.org/AboutDV/forabusers.htm>), [Domestic Violence Resources](http://www.daniel-sonkin.com/) (<http://www.daniel-sonkin.com/>), and others. Counselors working with abusers have compiled long lists of excuses and rationalizations often used by the out-of-control partner. Such a list of excuses can sometimes dramatically illustrate to the abuser how many ways his mind distorts and denies reality. (See other books and groups above.)

Finally, there are sites about many different kinds of abuse: [Online Abuse](http://www.haltabuse.org/) (<http://www.haltabuse.org/>), [Child Witness Domestic Violence](http://www.acadv.org/children.html) (<http://www.acadv.org/children.html>), and [Help Overcoming Professional Exploitation](http://www.advocatweb.org/hope/default.asp) (<http://www.advocatweb.org/hope/default.asp>). Remember, books about verbal and emotional abuse are cited above. Norcross, et al. (2000) also provide several additional sites concerned with abuse by a priest, therapist, lesbian or gay partner, religious leader, self, elder caretaker, etc.

Two older publications can help you understand anger and marital fights (Wile, 1993; Maslin, 1994). Both books suggest ways to resolve the cognitive origins of anger and reestablish love in the marriage.

McKay, Paleg, Fanning & Landis (1996) have studied the effects of parents' anger on their children. It is a serious problem that parents can hopefully handle with better self-control, especially by giving up false beliefs that fuel anger and by learning problem-solving or communication skills (see chapters 13 and 14). The effects on children of domestic violence are covered in detail in the next section.

Child abuse is our next topic. There is ample evidence that a degrading, hostile, violent family has negative influence in many ways on a child throughout life (more later), that is true even if the child him/herself has not been physically abused. Rape will be dealt with later in this chapter, because the act of rape is a hostile, cruel, aggressive, demeaning act, not primarily a sexual experience. In chapter 9, child sexual abuse, such as incest, is briefly discussed. It is located there because sexual abuse is often a family

affair. In chapter 10, date rape is covered as unfortunate part of the dating process. As you can see, abuse truly comes in many different forms.

## Child abuse

Please note that most young parents (maybe 90%) have occasional thoughts about hurting, dropping, or mistreating their infant or young child. Most parents realize these are just passing thoughts—sort of “mental noise”—that prompt them to be more attentive and careful with their baby. Some parents, however, become very concerned about these thoughts, which may become obsessive, especially if the new parent tends to be “obsessive-compulsive” anyway. For a worried new parent, this is a dreadful condition, but actually, while the worries about possibly hurting your child may become obsessive, distressing, and can't be stopped, such parents are usually not likely to harm their infant, especially if it is their biological baby. Of much higher risk of doing harm is the parent who becomes seriously psychotic, such as with postpartum depression or a bipolar disorder with delusions. The psychotic mother, like Andrea Yates, may not think their disturbed thoughts are abnormal and may believe the thoughts are real, i.e. that God is telling them to hurt their child or that their fantasies of harming the child are really happening, not delusions. It is critical that a mother suffering a serious psychosis get professional help right away and stay in therapy until the situation is well under control. A self-help organization provides information and groups: [Postpartum Support International](http://www.postpartum.net/) (<http://www.postpartum.net/>). (Colino, S., Scary thoughts—It's normal for new parents to worry their baby may face harm. Washington Post, March 7, 2006)

Based on a large sample (over half of all crimes reported in Canada between 1998 and 2003), children and teens were the victims of 21% of all 28,000 physical assaults. Three fifths of all 9,000 reported sexual assaults were on a child or youth under 18. The most dangerous year (in terms of homicide) for a child was his/her first year. Two thirds of their murderers were family members; more than 50% were their fathers; 32% their mothers; and 9% other family members. About 1,300 of the younger ones (US infants less than 1 year) died from brutal physical force, often Shaken Baby Syndrome (more boys than girls). The killers' motives for aggression with the younger children were “frustration” and with teens 14 to 17 the circumstances were “an argument.” Violence at home often runs young people into the streets, where even more violence awaits them. Between 14 and 17, youth are more likely to be assaulted by a peer or a stranger. Between 6 and 13 the most dangerous time of day is 3 PM to 7 PM. The report says the best way to reduce violence against children and youth is by teaching non-violent parenting. (Mascoll, P., April 21, 2005, in *Toronto Star*, Sex abuse usually targets children; 60% of the time victims are *under 18*, StatsCan reports.)

Physical abuse, as it is written about in classic myths, is meted out by an evil step-parent or by a cruel stranger. Many people also believe sexual abuse is the most common kind of abuse. Research (Mary Marsh, National Council for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children--Nov, 2000) shows that those myths are wrong. Actually, serious physical abuse is seven times more common (1 in 14 children) than sexual abuse (of course, sexual abuse may be easier to hide). Also, birth parents are more likely to be violent than step-parents; however, live-in boyfriends pose a high risk to the child. Mothers are more likely to be

abusive than fathers (however, they are with the children more). Siblings and playmates are even more physically (and sexually) abusive than adults are.

Research done in Missouri of all children under 5 who died between 1992 and 1994 has shown that children living with a single parent are not at higher risk of dying from abuse, but children living with a biological mother and an unrelated adult are 8 times more likely to die from abuse (Stiffman, 2002). Living in a household where child neglect or abuse has previously been reported also increases the risks. It is not a myth that children are in danger when a parent or a parent-substitute has an anger problem. Here are more facts.

### The consequences of child abuse or severe punishment

The [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace/publications.htm) publishes extensive research showing a large number of connections between child abuse (of all types) and various physical, mental, emotional, and social difficulties. (See <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace/publications.htm>). A brief [summary of the findings](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace/findings.htm) can be seen at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace/findings.htm>. Child abuse and neglect have been associated with addiction as a teen or adult, depression, drug use, heart disease, liver disease, and abuse by a partner as an adult, Sexually Transmitted Disease, smoking, suicide attempts, and unintended pregnancies.

There is more evidence of links between being abused as a child (including witnessing domestic violence) and experiencing panic attacks as an adult (Goodwin, Fergusson and Horwood, 2005). This research was done with a large sample in New Zealand; the next study was a large sample, long-term study of 1004 children in Finland. Unhappy-with-life Type A (ambitious, competitive, impatient, pressed for time) parents of 3 to 12-year-old children tended 15 years later to have hostile, angry, critical children. [Happier Type A parents and ordinary non-Type A parents](http://www.hbns.org/news/typea11-12-03.cfm) did not have as many angry children (Keltikangas and Heinonen, 2003; <http://www.hbns.org/news/typea11-12-03.cfm>). Canada's National Survey of Children and Youth, a long-term study of 4100 children, found in 2005 a simple relationship, namely, parents who hit, yelled at, and threatened their children have more aggressive children and eight years later more aggressive pre-teens. Non-punitive parents had 2 to 5-year-olds who hit and yelled less and 10 to 13-year-olds who had fewer fights and bullied less (Statistics Canada study: Kids mimic 'punitive' parents).

Along the same line, Lansford et al (2002) studied the long-term effects of abuse on 69 children during the first five years of the children's lives. There were a total of 500 subjects in the study. The mistreated children missed 1.5 times as many school days and were less likely to expect to go to college. The abused children also were more aggressive, more anxious, more depressed, and had more social problems. The wide-ranging effects of abuse had lasted at least 12 years. The researchers believed that the effects of abuse were worse on girls than on boys.

Children who have been abused are actually at risk of being harmed again. Harriet MacMillan at McMaster University found that more than 50% of abused children who remain in the same home continue to be mistreated, even if Social Workers make regular home visits to prevent abuse (published in *The Lancet*, May 5, 2005). So, it isn't surprising that Seth Pollak (2005) at the University of Wisconsin at Madison found that



even a hint of anger from strangers talking in the next room causes a prolonged “alert” response in 4 and 5-year-old abused children. The noise held their attention longer. So, abused children are probably hyper-alert in school, easily distracted, anxious, and have interpersonal problems. Many parents frequently try to hide their fights from their children but the conflicts that do occur in front of the kids are more intense, more emotional, and more destructive. Why? It seems because parents can mostly hide the minor conflicts but the major fights get out of control and are obvious (Papp, Cummings, and Goeke-Morey, 2002).

Geffner, R., Igelman, R. S. and Zellner (2003) review the empirical literature about the immediate and long-term effects of children witnessing domestic violence. It is a 309 page book. The British, who seem a little ahead of us, have studied what to do about the influence that viewing violence has on children’s emotional, behavioral, and academic adjustment (South Wales Family Study; see Parenting Action Plan at <http://www.wales.gov.uk>). One would expect that seeing your own parents fighting, calling each other bad names, and so on would be a powerful and lasting experience for a child. Psychologists have also studied the impact of violence on TV, in movies, and in computer games on young children. Several studies have shown short-term effects (both fear and aggression) of aggressive entertainment on young children but the effects on older children are less clear. The evidence linking viewing media violence with actual criminal behavior by the child is also weak (Browne and Havilton-Giachritsis, 2005). My Conclusion: you should take viewing violence or thinking about anger excessively in any form seriously. See <http://www.kff.org/about/entmediastudies.cfm>.

### Controlling yourself while punishing your child

Parenting is almost always a mixture of love and resentment for most people. Surely most Moms and Dads are, at times, angry at their children and obsessed with an irksome emotional mix of love and frustration (see Samalin, 1991). Most mothers and fathers have, in fact, at some time, become furious at her/his child. There may well be an urge to physically hurt the child--to spank, hit, or shake him/her. It is hard to know if your urge to hurt your child is truly dangerous. However, if you sense you are getting close to becoming violent, something must be done immediately. You must call your spouse, a friend, relative, a person from church, a neighbor or someone-- anyone. If at all possible, have someone else care for the child for a while. Also, make an appointment for psychological help and/or call the local Parents Anonymous organization (see your phone book) or Childhelp USA's National Child Abuse hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD) for local on-going sources of help. Calling for help is hard to do. But don't run risks with your kids' physical and emotional health (or with your legal future). A traumatic childhood may stay with a child for a life-time. Professional help is usually needed (so add regular therapy appointments to your schedule as well as attending, if possible, local Parents Anonymous meetings). People who beat kids are under enormous emotional pressure. They need relief. It is important to honestly determine just how much risk you are to your kids and to lower that risk as soon as possible. Often treatment needs to involve both parents and the child.

There are certain other warning signs you can use: *the excessively physical parent* often has been *abused* or neglected themselves as children (less true for woman than men). Be concerned if you were abused as a child.

Their own growing anger should be a warning to them. These parents are often *isolated* from other adults and have a passive, ungiving partner. They often don't like themselves and feel *depressed*. They may have *impossible expectations* of their children, e.g. that a 16-month-old will stop dirtying his diaper, that a 13-month-old will stop crying when the parent demands it, and so on. They often *see the child as bad* or willful or nasty and mean or constantly demanding or angrily defiant. They may have *strong urges to hurt* the child and have previously acted on those urges to some extent. They are often *in a crisis*--a fight with the spouse, have recently been fired, or can't pay the bills. If a parent is being battered, the child is also at risk, especially a boy.

If you have such a background and find yourself in several of these conditions, try to become more and more aware of your potential of becoming abusive and be especially cautious. Start reducing your frustrations; make it a self-help project to find ways to get away or to understand the child and control your anger (see the last section of this chapter and chapter 12). On the other hand, don't immediately over-react and panic--you aren't an awful parent--just because the kids bother you and you end up spanking them (without any injury). It is better if you never hit a child, but a rare moderate spanking isn't awful. Abuse is much more violent and harsher than discipline (see chapter 9); psychological and physical harm happens when you are "in a rage and out of control." Remember, too, that anger expressed in the form of psychological abuse or criticism or neglect ("I hate you," "I wish you had never been born," "you're stupid", "I don't want to see your face again") may also be very damaging (Garbarino, Guttman, & Seeley, 1987) and has to be stopped.

Whether you were abused as a child or not, as soon as you admit to yourself that you are close to abusing your children, start right away the long process of healing yourself and, please, seriously consider getting therapy (Sanders & DeVargas-Walker, 1987). I want to reassure you that a few research centers have carefully researched treatment methods for "troubled kids" who are violent, oppositional, defiant and seemingly headed for delinquency and trouble in school or with the law. These treatments are science-based or "evidence-based" and have been taught to many psychologists in large child treatment center around the country. Three programs are noteworthy:

(1) Parent Management Training at Yale University ([carroldh@biomed.med.yale.edu](mailto:carroldh@biomed.med.yale.edu)), under the leadership of Alan Kazdin, has been evaluated over 50 times for children between 2 and 13. It is effective. The approach is to train the parents to use rewards and punishment in carefully controlled steps.

(2) **The Incredible Years** program is for parents of 2 to 8-year-olds at the University of Washington (<http://www.incredibleyears.com/>). Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton has supported seven outcome studies over the last 20 years. Parents attend 12 training sessions based on videos about anger, conversational skills, and appropriate behavior in school. The research indicated that the parent-child relationships got better, the child's behavior improved at home and at school, and the parents used less violent discipline.



These training materials have been sold to many clinics and schools. So, a trained person may be in your neighborhood.

(3) **Multi-systemic Therapy** developed at Medical University of South Carolina is a tough test of therapy because it takes 12 to 17-year-old referrals from juvenile courts that are at risk of being jailed or sent to foster care. It is an intensive treatment program for 3 to 5 months ([http://www.ilppp.virginia.edu/Juvenile\\_Forensic\\_Fact\\_Sheets/MSTComp.html](http://www.ilppp.virginia.edu/Juvenile_Forensic_Fact_Sheets/MSTComp.html)). The focus is on changing the factors in the delinquent's life that seem to be leading to trouble, including their home-life and their friends. Rules governing the youth's life are agreed on, they are closely monitored, depending on behavior rewards and punishments are given out, parents are helped if they are poorly adjusted, and so on. **Multi-systemic Therapy** has had 14 clinical trials published. The results have been good: re-arrests are reduced, fewer foster care placements were necessary, and the cost to the state is less. So, even in difficult situations, well researched therapy can be effective. (See <http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=81>.)

### Sources of information: Dealing with problem children

There are, of course, sources of information in books, such as Helfer's (1968, 1999), *The Battered Child*, which was a "classic" and has been updated. Other books help us to understand the abused child (Heineman, 1998). **Parents Anonymous** (<http://www.parentsanonymous.org/palindex1.htm/>) was mentioned above; it is the major national organization of peer groups for abusive parents. Call them at 909-621-6184 or fax 909-625-6304 or email to [parentsanon@msn.com](mailto:parentsanon@msn.com). Parents Anonymous mutual-helping groups are safe and offer advice and understanding support to parents wanting to gain self-control. Another confidential source of crisis counseling about abuse and referrals is **Child Help USA Hotline** (<http://www.childhelp.org/>) (1-800-422-4453). There are Web sites offering information: **Child Abuse Prevention** (<http://child-abuse.com/>) and the **Child Welfare Information Gateway** (<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>) [1.800.394.3366].

Remember, all states have an 800 number to which all professionals, teachers, and law enforcement officials are required by law to report all actual and strongly suspected child abuse and neglect. If your child has been treated by a doctor or taken to an ER following "discipline," the authorities in your state "child investigation and protection agency" are likely to already consider it child abuse. But it is very important that an already abusive parent seek treatment. Keep in mind, however, that any responsible professional person will probably feel compelled by law to report any recent serious (e.g. if the child needed to go to the Emergency Room) abuse you disclose. This is likely to be true even for a therapist from whom you are seeking help with the problem. Keep in mind that the law requires that all abuse be reported. If a therapist does report your offense, this, it does not mean this therapist is not interested in helping you.

If you are getting irritable with your children and spanking them occasionally and moderately (moderate spanking is not against the law), decide to do something NOW about the physical aggression before it is too late! Spanking is a danger sign...and besides it does no good—in fact, makes

the situation worse. Please read about spanking: Samalin (1991), Straus (1994), or Marshall (2002); all persuasively argue against physical punishment and for a different attitude towards discipline and for a much healthier attitude between you and your child. The research evidence is very clear: physical punishment, even if it isn't violent, produces children who are more aggressive with their peers. The more violent the parents are, the meaner the children will be (Strassberg, 1994).

In addition to learning to completely avoid physical punishment and verbal/emotional abuse, it is critical that you thoroughly reconsider your entire way of relating with your child. To make this major change after 10 or 12 years, you will probably need a good therapist and a good book about wholesome relationships and effective discipline. Here are four good new books about discipline: Phelan (2003) concentrates on using simple, sensible, unemotional methods of counting and time-out in many situations with 2 to 12-year-olds. Dunning (2004) has a unique approach to parenting when each parent has his/her own preferred style of relating to a son or daughter—the author shows how both parents can still be supportive of each other in terms of guiding and disciplining the child. Koenig (2004), the creator of Smart Discipline seminars, teaches parents to get children to do what parents ask (“follow the rules”) and, at the same time, increase the child’s and teenagers’ self-esteem.

### Anger is usually a two-way street

Where a parent is frequently and harshly disciplining the child or teenager, there is very likely to be a very angry and oppositional child or teen (just like domestic violence comes from both parties). In the last 40 years there has been an intense interest in child-rearing, much of this centering on the child’s anger or rebellion. Likewise, the school systems throughout the nation have been concerned with controlling aggressive or anti-social behavior. There are many books for teachers and parents about handling conflicts, anger control, fighting, girl’s wars, rudeness, teasing, bullying, making peace, etc. Some publishers specialize in these “applied psychology” books, such as [Courage To Change](http://www.couragetochange.com), P.O. Box 486, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18703-0486 (<http://www.couragetochange.com>) or [Creative Therapy Store](http://www.creativetherapiststore.com) (<http://www.creativetherapiststore.com>).

Child rearing and discipline (preferably the use of rewards instead of punishment) is beyond the scope of this book. (A cluster of links to help in dealing with child care and difficult experiences in a child’s life is given in Chapter 9. But in recent years there have been several books written for dealing with “problem” children, including the defiant, difficult, intense, explosive, etc. child. I’d like to share a few. One is by Glasser and Easley (1999) who are behaviorally oriented but different. They maintain that intense children need intense responses to their positive behaviors; therefore, a pat on the head and a “that’s nice” comment isn’t going to cut it with these kids. Likewise, bad behaviors should be followed by a clear correction by the parent but an *uninteresting* reaction, such as a simple check on a behavior chart. Another is by Greene (2001) who has researched and written a book for the “explosive” child. Such a child is very difficult to work with. Years after the toddler’s tantrums should have been overcome, some children are still

responding to frustration with intense, sudden, inexplicable violent rage. Even these children can usually be effectively taught needed skills and dealt with in loving ways. An example of an effective treatment is given in the next section.

Several more Websites offer information about discipline:

( <http://toronto.ca/health/children/discipline.htm>),  
 ( <http://www.essortment.com/family.html>), and  
 ( <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/discipline.3.19.html>).

A huge meta-analysis (Skowron & Reinemann, 2005) assessing the effectiveness of 21 psychological treatment programs done between 1974 and 2000 and designed to help the child—and the parents--cope with various kinds of child maltreatment. As you can imagine, there were different treatment methods, many different reactions to the abuse by the child, various ways of measuring outcome of treatment, different research designs, some families volunteered and some were mandated, and so on. It is a complex analysis. What were the overall conclusions? After getting treated, 71% of the participants were judged to be functioning better than individuals in the untreated matched control groups. The treatments were considered by the researchers to be moderately effective, but not highly effective. Look at it this way, if the assorted treatments given to half of the 964 families in this analysis had not been helped at all by the treatments, only 50% of the treated subjects would, in that case, be doing better than the control subjects. The consequences of maltreatment are very difficult problems to solve so we should be thankful for small improvements. But massive research is needed before we can dependably be highly helpful. Much better treatment is needed.

In 2000, almost a million children were officially judged to have been mistreated and of those about 483,450 received psychological treatment. All of them should have been helped. Keep in mind that the goal is not to eliminate all anger within a family...the goal is to avoid the harmful, hateful, brutal aspects by developing an understanding the child's or the parent's behavior and by finding more rational and reasonable ways to reacting to them. Anger doesn't have to belittle or hurt others. Lynn Namka ( <http://www.AngriesOut.com/> ), Berthold Berg, Ron Potter-Efron, Bernard Golden, and many other child/teen experts have written about families "getting the mads out" using "healthy anger." (See <http://www.creativetherapiststore.com>.)

Daniel Sonkin's (1992), *Wounded Boys, Heroic Men*, is a good book for men who were abused as boys and want to deal with the left-over consequences. For information about abuse resulting from a [parent's addiction](#), go to chapters 4 and 9. For more information about [child sexual abuse](#) and incest, also go to chapter 9.

## Parent-teenager conflicts

About 60% of the students in my college classes had gone through difficult conflicts with their parents (the others had acceptable or good relations). This is the usual sequence: until puberty there is a closeness with

one or both parents. Conflicts usually start during the 12 to 16-year-old period. Friends become more important than parents. Parent-teenager fights range in intensity from quiet withdrawal to raging arguments on every issue.

Conflicts may begin with the teenager stopping doing certain things that please their parents--or that would indicate closeness or similarity to the parents, like going to church or to the movies with the parents. They want to be on their own, to "do their own thing," which sometimes evolves into having the responsibilities of a 5-year-old and the freedom of a 25-year-old. Parental rules and values are often challenged or broken. This is called "boundary breaking;" in moderation it is natural, normal, necessary, and healthy. Depending on the peer group, the teenager may do some things partly to "shake up" or defy the parents (and the establishment)--dress, talk, dance, and "have fun" in their own way. Using drugs, reckless driving, drinking, staying out late, getting "too serious," and other behaviors may be for excitement but boundary breaking may be involved too. When the parents object or refuse permission, the teenager may intensely resent their interference (which is why the topic is covered in this chapter).

The parents may respond just as strongly to the teenager's new behavior. When the agreeable kid starts to argue about everything, it is baffling to the parents. Parents resent defiance, especially parents who are authoritarian, I-make-the-rules-type. They may feel like a failure as a parent. The teenager's ideas seem totally unreasonable to them. The parents' emotional reaction is more than just reasonable concern for the teenager's welfare, it is an intense reaction--either panic that the son or daughter is headed for disaster or boiling resentment of the teenager's rebelliousness. When both respond with strong resentment, it is war.

Why this war? In some families these quarrels may be necessary in order for the young person to become "his/her own person" and free him/herself from parents' control. Sonnett (1975), Robertiello (1976), Ginott (1969) and many others have speculated about the underlying causes somewhat as follows: Teenagers are unsure of themselves but they pretend to be confident. They fear admitting their doubts because that might lead to being taken over again--almost smothered--by their parents' opinions and control. Yet, there are temptations to not grow up, to be taken care of, and to avoid scary responsibilities. This danger--of remaining a weak, dependent, controlled child--provides the intense force behind the drive to be different from and to challenge the parents. Teenagers deny the importance of their relationships with parents; they give up hugging and kissing; they show little gratitude; they emphasize their differences from their parents and their similarity to their friends. All attempts, in part, to get free.

Bickering, insulting, and getting mad push the parents away. Disliking parents and not getting along with them makes it easier to leave. What do the parents do? Some say, "I've taught you all I know, now go live life as you choose and learn from your experiences. I'll always love you." Other parents feel crushed and/or furious when teenagers decide to go a different direction. These parents wanted their children to accomplish their goals and to conform to their values and way of life. They perhaps hoped to live life, again, through their children. At least, they wanted the son/daughter to follow their religion,

accept their morals, marry the "right kind" of person, get an education and "good" job, have children, etc. They may be very hurt if the son/daughter wants to go another direction.

In the final stages, when the parent-teenager conflict becomes bitter, usually it is a power struggle between controlling parents and a resisting young person. The conflict becomes a "win-lose" situation where no compromises are possible and someone must lose. The more dominating, controlling parents (who tend to produce insecure, resentful but independent teenagers) don't like to lose and struggle hard for continued control. The teenager can almost always win these conflicts eventually, however, by just not telling the parent what he/she is doing or by being passive-aggressive (forgetful, helpless, ineffective) or by running away.

### How to resolve parent-young adult conflicts

When the rebelling young person is 16 or 17, the parents have to accept reality that they have lost much of their control--they can't watch the son or daughter all the time. The "child" is on his/her own. The parent can still help the young person make decisions by sharing their wisdom (if it is requested). Both parents and young persons could attempt to control their anger (see near the end of this chapter and chapter 12) and adopt good communication skills: "I" statements, empathy responses, and self-disclosure (chapter 13). Both could develop positive attitudes. Teenagers can realize that parents don't universally go from "wise" to "stupid" as they themselves age from 12 to 17. The young person can also realize that responsibility comes with freedom; if you are old enough to declare your independence and make your own decisions, you are old enough to accept the consequences (meaning=don't expect your parents to get you out of trouble or to pay for whatever you want). Parents can remind themselves that making mistakes is part of growing up; we all learn from our mistakes, including drinking and getting sick, getting pregnant, being rejected, dropping out of school, being fired, etc.

Young adults, like all of us, need support and love when they are "down." Give it. Avoid criticism, anger, rejection, and, the parental favorite, you-should-have-listened-to-me comments. When they are hurting, show love and concern--but don't rush in to rescue them, let them deal with the problems they made for themselves. Farmer (1989) provides help to parents trying to be caring, loving, and at peace with their teenagers. As we will see in chapters 8 and 9, there are also three especially good general self-help books for parents and teens: Ginott (1969), Elkind (1984), and Steinberg & Levine (1990). Straus (1994), writing more for clinicians, focuses on understanding the violence in the lives of teenagers, both the abuse to them and their striking out at others.

Several recent writers deal with withdrawn, critical, argumentative, sarcastic, manipulative teenagers who wear down their worried, overly giving, permissive, now over-whelmed, and out-of-control parents. Edgette (2002) offers good advice about avoiding "final" conflicts, violence, and endless arguments (e.g. when the teenager will not admit being wrong or that they need help because they are busy proving their independence). She suggests

ways to allow some freedom and decision-making to the teen but also underscores the importance of the teen taking responsibility for his/her decisions, that is the parent combines some permissiveness with some firm parental insistence on being responsible. The trick is to maintain a caring relationship through the conflicts of the teen years so that life's longest and sometimes warmest relationship can flourish during the remaining 70 years or so of life. Riera (2003) does a nice job of describing how parents and their teenager can stay connected.

Child care, growing up, the impact of childhood experiences, and family problems, such as abuse, are discussed in chapter 9. Helpful Websites about parenting teens are available at [About Parenting Teens](http://parentingteens.about.com/) (<http://parentingteens.about.com/>) and at [Focus Adolescent Services](http://www.focusas.com/Parenting.html) (<http://www.focusas.com/Parenting.html>). Try putting "helping your teenager" into Google or any other search engine and see if you find information that might be helpful to your teenager. There are Websites about coping with many problems: step-family, career planning, cliques, smoking, weight, trauma, peer pressure, depression, driving, being responsible, stress, etc. Meaningful, helpful talk with your teenager is a sound basis for a relationship.

### Getting closer again

If you are a young adult who has gone through "the wars" with one or both parents, it may be wise and rewarding to try to get closer again. Try to see your parents as real people: how old were they when you were born? What problems did they have? Do you suppose they often wondered what to do and if they were being good parents to you? Did being parents interfere with important goals in their lives? Were and are they desperately wanting you to "turn out all right" and make them proud? Are they longing for a close relationship with you? If they get disappointed and angry at you, is that awful?

Some day when you are feeling reasonably secure about yourself and positive about your parents, take the initiative and open up to them. Share your feelings: fears, self-doubts, regrets about the fights, how difficult it was to break away, and your hope for a mature, equal, accepting, close relationship with them in the future. Emphasize the positive. If they have been helpful, show your appreciation. Forget and forgive the "war," if possible, or, at least, avoid letting the poison keep festering. The students I work with find this "reunion" with their parents scary to plan. But it is extremely gratifying, once it is done, to have taken some responsibility for this relationship--almost certainly the longest, deepest, and most influential relationship you will ever have. Many people are amazed at how hard it is to say "I love you" and to hug or touch their mother or father or child again. But it feels so good. Many of us cry.

If you are grown and independent and love your parents openly and never had to fight with your parents to get where you are, be sure to thank them for doing so well in a difficult job. If you are wishing your parents had been better, ask yourself: "Although they weren't perfect, weren't they good enough?" They did what they had to do (see determinism in chapter 14). If

you feel you need total agreement and unfailing support from your parents, ask yourself why that is needed. Does it reflect some dependency and self-doubt?

Try to use your insights into these conflicts. The teenager is trying to find "his/her own place"--their unique personality and life-style. Look for unconscious forces: children may delight in driving parents up a wall, parents may get some secret pleasure from seeing their children fail or make mistakes in certain ways, a parent's dreams may be frustrated when the young person decides to "do his/her own thing," parents may be especially upset when children do things they prohibit but are tempted to do themselves, etc. Most importantly, the teenager may be slowly "cutting the umbilical cord" by creating an "uproar" which makes it easier for him/her to leave the love, warmth, and stifling dependency of home. Viewed in that light, maybe having a few uproars isn't so bad. Don't let the "fights" become permanently hurtful. Be forgiving.

## Jealousy

The case of Tony and Jane described at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the complicated and intertwined nature of anger and fear. Jealousy is a fear of losing our loved one to someone else. Thus, it involves an anticipated loss (depression) and a failure in competition with someone else (anxiety and low self-esteem). In addition, when your partner shows a love or sexual interest in someone else, there is a "breach of contract" with you and a disregard for your feelings. When Tony went flirting and dancing with attractive women, even if it was merely innocent fun, he callously placed his need for fun over Jane's plea for consideration of her feelings. That makes Jane mad. Also, if Tony and Jane were married or engaged, Tony seemed (to Jane) to break a solemn oath to forever "forgo all others" within 10 minutes of meeting an attractive woman at a party. That too makes her mad...and distrustful, and rightly so in my opinion. Yet, many of us are jealous without any valid grounds for feeling mistreated or neglected; we are just afraid of what might happen.

Jealousy is discussed at length in chapter 10 (and see White & Mullen, 1989). Concerning Jane's anger, she could try to reduce it either by honestly disclosing to Tony how upsetting and hurtful his flirting is (coupled with an assertive request for reassurance and that he stop) or by reducing the intensity of her anger response. Her anger could be reduced in a variety of ways, e.g. by desensitization or stress inoculation, by correcting her thoughts about how terrible it is that Tony flirts, by building her self-esteem, or by changing her view of Tony's flirting from being an indication of his infidelity to being a reflection of his doubts about his attractiveness. Other methods for controlling anger are mentioned in the last section.

## Distrusting Others





## Distrust of others and honest self-disclosure

One of the things we dislike most is to be deceived or cheated, to be lied to. To call someone a liar is a serious charge made when we are very angry. It is surely going to cause a fight. Yet, common sense tells us that some distrust is appropriate. People do deceive others, sometimes, even best friends and loved ones. So, in some ways the human condition encourages distrust. Our novels and entertainment often suggest a person finds someone (not his/her partner) else attractive. We teach children to hide their valuables and to not accept rides from strangers (good advice). We warn kids that others might touch them in the "wrong places." We don't believe ads and salespersons. We know people put their "best foot forward." Teenagers know the line on the second date, "I love you, let's do it." Politicians say what we want to hear. We believe people are pushed by unconscious forces and don't really know themselves. We know people respond to stereotypes instead of real people. So is it best to trust or distrust? to be honest or dishonest? The answers are not simple. The best answer depends of the circumstances. But, in general, research shows that trusting people have better interpersonal relationships. People low in trust tend to be more angry, competitive, resentful, and unempathic (Gurtman, 1992).

We must realize though that each individual is so complex and has so many feelings, needs, opinions, etc., he/she couldn't possibly reveal all sides of him/herself to a new acquaintance. So we play roles, at least we show only parts of our real self(s). What else is related to hiding parts of ourselves? Our fear of rejection, our own sensitivity or vulnerability. Few people want to pretend to be something they aren't. Yet, others have to be accepting before we are likely to be open and honest. Or we have to be strong enough to say "it's OK if they don't like me." Examples: if you feel homosexual urges are disgusting and sick, your friend probably can't tell you about his/her homosexual interests. If you are very sexually attracted to someone, you probably can't tell them the truth about why you are approaching them. An article in a women's magazine was entitled "My Life in a 39EE Bra." The writer said that most men made a point of telling her early on that they were "leg men" but that wasn't her impression later. We often tell people what we think they want to hear, we tell what is most acceptable. Or, we must become willing to run the risk of criticism and rejection.

Among the better antidotes for a fear of rejection are self-confidence, self-acceptance, a willingness to find another friend if necessary, and an ability to accept and profit from criticism. For example, you can handle criticism better if you:

- Avoid over-reacting to the criticism or rejection so you can understand what is being said about you. Remember, you don't have to be loved by everybody all the time (see chapter 14). But, make constructive use of the person's opinions and criticism.
- Assess the accuracy of what was said. Try to understand the motives of the source. Are emotions being displaced on to you? Is the critic's opinion based on valid information? Is he/she projecting? Is he/she playing put-down games? Is he/she afraid of or competing with you?
- 
- - a. If the critics seem accurate (and especially if several people agree), ask for all the information and help they can give. Make plans to improve.



b. If the critic seems in error and biased, then discount the information or "take it for what it's worth." It would still be valuable to understand how and why the situation arose. Depending on the circumstances, you'll have to decide whether to counter-attack or forget it.



"Once upon a time a man whose ax was missing suspected his neighbor's son.  
The boy walked like a thief, looked like a thief, and spoke like a thief.  
But the man found his ax while digging in the valley, and the next time he saw his neighbor's  
son, the boy walked, looked, and spoke like any other child."  
-----Lao-tzu (604-531 B.C.)



## How to become more trusting

The major point, however, is that you can take greater risks in trusting and in being honest in relating to others (trying for a deeper friendship) *if* you are less vulnerable or less dependent and more self-accepting. The stronger and more secure you are, the more honest you can be and the more open others will be with you. Clearly, distrust and dishonesty are appropriate in some situations, but they are few. Trust and honesty are more often preferred, especially as one becomes more secure and independent. Interesting research, which we now turn to, has confirmed the merits of trusting others.

### The Trust Scale

Julian Rotter (1980) developed an "Interpersonal Trust Scale," which measures the belief that another person's word or promise can be relied upon. It includes items like these: To what extent do you agree with these statements?

1. In dealing with strangers, one is better off trusting them--within reason--until they provide evidence of being untrustworthy.
2. **Most people can be counted on to do what they say they will do.**
3. **The courts give fair and unbiased treatment to everyone.**
4. Most elected public officials are really sincere in their campaign promises.
5. Most salesmen are honest in describing their products.
6. Very few accident claims filed against insurance companies are phony.

You can get a feel for how you would answer such questions (all these questions reflect a trusting attitude, but in the extreme they would reflect a naive, too trusting attitude).

Trusting (but not naive) people tend to be happier, better liked by others, more honest, and more moralistic do-gooders than less trusting people. Of course, not all distrustful people are dishonest themselves; however, there is a trend in this direction. Some would say that trusting is pretty dumb. But high and low trusters are about the same in intelligence. You might think, "OK, but surely trusters are more

gullible." Rotter's research says "no, not so." It's true the high truster does take the view, "I'll trust them until they do me wrong." But, they seem just as able to detect the cues of a dishonest deal or statement as a distrustful person. Indeed, Rotter (1980) says it is the distrustful person who is more likely to be "taken" by the con artist. How come? Well, since the dishonest person believes the world is crooked-- "that's how everyone makes a fast buck"--when a "drug dealer" comes along and offers \$1000 in 10 days if he/she will invest \$500 today to fly a spare part to the stranded plane in Mexico, the dishonest person hands over his/her \$500. The moralistic, trusting person would more likely say, "I don't want to get involved in something dishonest or illegal...and may be a scam"

Another disadvantage of distrusting is that it disrupts honest dealings and puts up barriers to open, intimate relationships. Rapoport (1974) has studied trust and cooperation for 20 years. He found people tended to be distrustful, especially in a competitive rather than cooperative situation. A betrayal of trust is hard for most people to forgive. But, trusting people are more likely to "give someone a second chance." Unfortunately, competing nations, like people, are not trusting and are too self-centered to be rational. Rotter (1980) gives an excellent but scary example. It seems that the U.S. during the Cold War had prepared a disarmament plan, but before it was presented, the Russians came forth with a very similar plan. We should have been pleased, right? No. Since we didn't trust the Russians, the plan was thought to have had some secret advantage to them, so the US couldn't possibly accept the plan. We had to think of another plan, one they wouldn't like. That kind of thinking could have killed us all. Maybe the message is: don't trust governments to do all *your* thinking for you.

Rotter also developed the Internalizer-Externalizer Scale (see chapter 8). Externalizers (people who believe that external forces determine what happens in their lives) tend to be more distrusting. On the other hand, Internalizers, believing they are in control and can change things, are more likely to be aggressive when they are frustrated or provoked (Singer, 1984). So it appears that Internalizers and Externalizers handle anger differently. Internalizers initially are more trusting but when frustrated or hurt by someone they act out aggressively. Externalizers are distrustful and passively accept the unkind actions of others which re-confirm their already skeptical views of others.

How can you become more trusting? Have trusting parents. Beyond that, Rotter suggests that you frequently put your distrust to a test. When someone says something you tend to doubt (without any hard evidence), act as if you believe it and see what happens. Rotter thinks you will learn to be more trusting *and* the person you are trusting will learn to be more trustworthy (like a self-fulfilling prophecy) as well.



It is better to suffer wrong than to do it, and happier to sometimes be cheated than not to trust.  
-Apples of Gold



## Disliking Others without Valid Reasons: Prejudice



### Where Do Prejudices Come From?

Harold Fishbein, who made a life-long study of prejudice, thought that racial and ethnic prejudices were unfortunately due to evolutionary changes in human genes. If so, how did these fear-of-stranger tendencies get in our genes? The theory is that over millions of years, humans and pre-humans lived in tribes which were threatened with dangers and had to be ever alert for attacks. Many tribes fought for resources and competed for survival with other tribes. Under these conditions, the genes of our more watchful, cautious, strong, aggressive, agile and somewhat fearful-of-outsiders ancestors got passed on to us. These innate cautious-with-stranger tendencies helped us survive two million years ago but today those once-helpful genes may now make it harder to make peace with neighboring countries, to trust the "different" people that live across town, and harder to share equally with people who follow different social, political or religious beliefs. Even though our genes may have saved our lives 2 million years ago, these suspicious, angry tendencies are a problem when relating to lots of "different" kinds of people today. However, during the same history, humans also developed a wonderful brain which can, if helped, identify our own irrational ideas and feelings—and stop our unfair, wrong, and unneeded prejudices.



Prejudice is a lazy man's substitute for thinking.

Author Unknown.



Ask an angry person where his/her anger comes from and you are likely to be told: from my wife/husband, my boss, my family, my children, my work, i.e. from my situation. You will almost never be told: my anger comes from my brain, from my way of thinking about the situation, or from false ideas I have accepted being right.

Prejudice is a premature judgment, i.e. made before you have all the facts. It could refer to a positive bias but more commonly the word refers to a negative feeling, opinion or attitude toward a person or group of people which is not based on objective facts. These prejudgments are usually based on stereotypes which are oversimplified, sometimes overly positive or negative, and over generalized views of groups or types of people. Or, a prejudgment of one person may be based on an emotional experience we have had with another similar person, sort of our own personal stereotype. Stereotypes also

involve role expectations, i.e. how we expect the other person (or group, such as Japanese) to behave and relate to us and to other people. Our culture has hundreds of ready-made stereotypes: leaders are often seen as dominant, arrogant men; housewives are nice but empty headed; teenagers are music crazed car-fanatics; very smart people are over-confident and socially weird, and on and on. Of course, sometimes a leader or housewife or teenager is somewhat like the stereotype but it is a gross injustice to automatically assume they are all alike. Stereotypes are used by major groups to communicate the expected behaviors of their own subgroups, e.g. students in a particular school system may have stereotypes of "jocks," "nerds," "brains," "cheerleaders," "preppies," "delinquents," "druggies," and so on. Cultures have their social and literary stereotypes, such as "the old maid teacher," "the salesman," "the professor," "the gay man," "the soccer mom", etc.

Prejudice, in the form of negative put-downs, justifies oppression and helps those of us "on top" (the advantaged) feel okay about being there. Prejudice can be a hostile, resentful feeling--an unfounded dislike for someone, an unfair blaming or degradation of others. It is a degrading attitude that helps us feel superior or chauvinistic. Of course, the misjudged and oppressed person resents the unfair judgment. Discrimination (like aggression) is an act of dealing with one person or group differently than another. One may be positively or negatively biased towards a person or group; this behavior does not necessarily reflect the attitude (prejudice) one feels towards that person or group. You might recognize your prejudiced feelings are unreasonable and refuse to act in unfair ways. Common unfavorable prejudices in our country involve blacks, women, Jews, Arabs, Japanese, Germans, people on welfare, rich, farmers, rednecks, obese, handicapped, unattractive, uneducated, elderly, Catholics, Communists, atheists, fundamentalists, homosexuals, Latinos, Indians, and lots of others.

Theorists trying to explain prejudices use the concepts of cognitions, emotions, and motivations in complex ways. Sometimes the different aspects of prejudice are expressed this way: *Stereotypes* are the cognitive (negative thoughts and beliefs) aspects of an attitude; *prejudice* provides the emotional drive to aggress against or neglect certain people; *discrimination* provides a way to act against disliked persons or groups. Stereotypes usually characterize out groups in terms of (1) friendliness or warmth and (2) how able or competent they are. That is: are strangers likely to be friends or foes? And how able, powerful, and resourceful are they? It is easy to see why we gravitate toward people like us. They are less likely to harm us. Social psychology is a very important discipline. If you want to know more, Susan Fiske (2004) has done systematic, long-term research about prejudice, stereotypes and many social motives.

## Unconscious prejudice

In order to make these concepts of stereotypes and prejudice more relevant to you, I recommend that you go to the [UnderstandingPrejudice.org](http://www.understandingprejudice.org) Website (<http://www.understandingprejudice.org>) by Scott Plous (2002). This site offers articles about prejudice, a list of experts and organizations in this area, interactive exercises to increase self-awareness, ads for his anthology, and,

most importantly, several interesting quizzes and surveys to assess your own personal attitudes, knowledge, and motivations concerning various prejudices. For example, there is a test to (a) see how aware you are of prejudices that appear in ads, (b) measure your complex positive and negative reactions to women's roles and to feminists, (c) see how well you know and feel about the history of slavery and of native American Indians, and (d) uncover your *unconscious* biases, especially in terms of males being associated with career roles and females being associated with family-parenting roles. The Website scores your responses to some of the scales and enables you to compare your attitudes about groups with normative samples. The personal feedback you get from the quizzes should help you understand and decide the changes you would like to make in terms of how you view others. The better informed you are about your prejudices and their source, the more practical use you can make of the information given by me and by many writers in this important area.

Researchers studying attitudes and stereotypes have found it helpful to distinguish between *explicit* and *implicit* attitudes and stereotypes. Explicit attitudes are fully conscious evaluations of some group or person. Implicit attitudes are evaluations that may be strong but hidden from others and often even outside our own conscious awareness (but can be measured in experiments). For example, the organization your spouse works for may be judged favorably or unfavorably by you, depending on whether you feel positively or negatively towards your spouse...there is an association but it isn't expressed or known explicitly. Likewise, there can be implicit stereotypes; these are beliefs about groups or types of people that are strong enough to influence your feelings and behavior with such people without your being aware of your actions. Example: if you judge that John Smith is more likely to be famous than Jane Smith, you might have an unknown belief or implicit stereotype that says men are more likely than women to achieve honor and fame.

The [Implicit Association Test](http://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit) (<http://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit>) provides one way of measuring implicit attitudes. It does this by pairing two concepts together, for example young and good and elderly and good. If your attitude associates young with good more so than elderly with good then there is less conflict to resolve and you can respond faster to young and good. Anyway, take some of the tests and you will see how hidden attitudes can be detected and measured.

## Understanding our own prejudices—Allport and DuBois

When we are prejudiced, we violate three standards: reason, justice, and tolerance. We are *unreasonable* if we judge others negatively without evidence or in spite of positive evidence or if we use stereotypes without allowing for individual differences. We are *unjust* if we discriminate and pay men one fifth or one third more for the same work as women or select more men than women for leadership positions or provide more money for male extra-curricular activities in high school than for female activities. We are *intolerant* if we reject or dislike people because they are different, e.g. of a different religion, different socioeconomic status, or have a different set of values. We violate all three standards when we have a scapegoat, i.e. a

powerless and innocent person we blame for something he/she didn't do. By blaming some person or some group, the real causes are overlooked or hidden. German propaganda degraded and blamed the Jews for the country's economic problems and, in that way, reduced the blame on the Nazi government and increased the hatred of Jews, thereby supporting their extermination. Psychiatrists would say the Nazi denied their own hostility and guilt and projected their selfish and angry traits to all Jews.

Prejudices are hard to change most of the time and hard to recognize part of the time. Gordon Allport (1954) illustrates how a prejudiced person resists "the facts" in this conversation:

Mr. X: The trouble with the Jews is that they only take care of their own group.

Mr. Y: But the record of the Community Chest campaign shows that they give more generously, in proportion to their numbers, to the general charities of the community, than do non-Jews.

Mr. X: That shows they are always trying to buy favor and intrude into Christian affairs. They think of nothing but money; that is why there are so many Jewish bankers.

Mr. Y: But a recent study shows that the percentage of Jews in the banking business is negligible, far smaller than the percentage of non-Jews.

Mr. X: That's just it; they don't go in for respectable business; they are only in the movie business or run night clubs.

A prejudiced person, like bigot Mr. X, is so inclined to hate Jews that a few facts won't stop him/her. Sounds bad and it is. Are we all prejudiced? Surely in some ways. Certain prejudices are so ingrained in our society it would be hard to avoid them. Examples of negative prejudices you might not think of: against eating grasshoppers, caterpillars, or ants, against a female doctor (we think she is less competent than a male), against a man in a typically female occupation like nursing or secretary, against a person who has just lost (we see losers as less hard working or less competent--especially males who lose because males are "supposed" to be successful), and against a couple who decide to reverse the usual roles, i.e. the wife works while the husband stays home with the children.

Historians would contend that prejudice can not be understood without a sense of history. For example, slavery 150 years ago is related to today's anti-black attitudes. Likewise, the religious wars 400 years ago between Catholics and Protestants that killed thousands are related to today's distrust of each religion by the other. During the 1500-1600's the Ottoman Empire was wealthy and the most powerful empire in the world. Radical Muslims, even some terrorists today, still resent the loss of their power and glory. Almost 800 years ago during the Crusades, Christians on their way to wars in the Holy Land slaughtered (in the name of the Prince of Peace) thousands of eastern European Jews. Hitler reflected their attitudes. Anti-Semitism still

lives. History accounts for many cultural stereotypes, but our own personal history also accounts for many of our biases too, e.g. you almost certainly have a unique reaction to women who remind you of your mother.

Gordon Allport and W. E. B DuBois

Gordon Allport (1954) has deeply influenced psychologists' thinking about prejudice, namely, that it is a natural, universal psychological process of being frustrated or hostile and then displacing the anger from the real source to innocent minorities. This explanation implies that prejudice takes place in our heads. On the other hand, ninety years ago, a great black scholar, W. E. B. DuBois, reminded whites that prejudice doesn't just spring from the human mind in a vacuum (Gaines & Reed, 1995). It is social and economic exploitation, not just a mental process, which contributes to *prejudice against* the minority and to *self-doubts within* those discriminated against. For example, Blacks, women, Orientals, the poor, the unattractive, etc. are all discriminated against and, thus, constantly reminded that they are a disadvantaged minority. Blacks, as a result of extreme prejudice, have dual identities; they are both "American" and "Black" but neither identity is entirely acceptable to many blacks. Thus, many blacks have ambivalent attitudes about both "Americans" and "Blacks," and about who they are. White America is devoted to individualism ("I'll take care of myself, you take care of yourself"); African culture emphasizes caring for the group. For Blacks, this is a no-win situation, a choice between trying to be like Whites (and better off than others) or being Black (and worse off than most Americans but trying to help your people).

Following DuBois, many sociologists see prejudice as caused by social problems, such as over-crowding in urban areas, overpopulation, unemployment, competition between groups, etc. It has been found, for example, that persons who are low in socioeconomic status or have lost status are more prejudiced, perhaps because they look for people to blame-- for scapegoats. Rural and suburban America have always looked down on the poor, urban dweller--80 years ago it was the Jews, Italians, and Irish, today it is the blacks, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc. In effect, the *victims* of city life were and are blamed for the crime and deterioration there. That's not fair, is it? Also, competition between groups, as we will see, increases the hostility: Jewish and black businesses compete in the slums, black and white men compete for the same intensive-labor jobs, men and women compete for promotions, etc.

To see a scholarly re-evaluation of Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* and a careful assessment of the 50 years of research following Allport's book, see Dovidio, Glick, & Budman (2005).

## Prejudice can take many forms

A new prejudice can be learned quickly; yet, certain prejudices are very resistant to change. The strength of the prejudice may suddenly change. In many instances, a bias or prejudice can be very slight or subtle, i.e. one might "short change" one employee, friend, or child so slightly that it is imperceptible to others. In rare instances prejudice can also be so extremely

strong that it may look to most people like a psychosis or mental illness. Examples: a few days after September 11, a man walked into a gas station in Arizona and killed an employee. The murdered man looked like he was from the Middle East, but he wasn't. The killer, after he was arrested, simply said "I stand for America all the way," as though that explains and justifies his killing a man that looks Arabic. That wasn't the only outrageous act against Muslims after September 11. Over 1,700 reports of harassment and vandalism to Muslim Americans were reported during just 5 months after September 11. Apparently in some people's minds, all Arabs are like the terrorists.

The fear of foreigners is called xenophobia. There are famous examples of exaggerated fears of foreigners. One is locking 120,000 Japanese into fenced in camps during WWII. Most of them were law-abiding American citizens and there has never been any evidence that the lock up for the war prevented any anti-war efforts.

Prejudice is often easy to teach, one bad act by a few may influence millions. Becoming prejudice is so easy that many psychologists believe that it is a habit that is hardwired into us or that we have a natural tendency to quickly classify a foreigner as friend or foe or that we divide people into good guys and bad guys. Once we know who is in the good group and who isn't—who is "us" and "them"—, we set about building our self-esteem by finding more and more good things about our kind and we begin in earnest compiling a long list of bad traits that the other group has and we take pride we don't have. Psychologists, Henri Tajfel and John Turner, named this the "Social Identity Theory." The theory explains some self-serving motives for being prejudiced. I suspect there are several psychological payoffs for being prejudiced.

Several famous psychological experiments demonstrate that a prejudice can often be taught or created quickly. The Prison Experiment described in the next section is an example. Also, a third grade teacher, Janet Elliott, created the now-famous Blue-eyed and Brown-eyed experiment. By giving praise and advantages to one half of her class, she created new attitudes and negative feelings in kids who had been congenial friends. There appears to be some satisfaction in feeling and/or expressing resentment, especially when an authority seems to encourage negative feelings. The fortunate aspect of this changeable quality of prejudices is that when we become conscious of or feel guilty about our biased thoughts and feeling, we can usually change. Several methods for changing prejudicial feelings are described in this section. The first step may be to make a conscious commitment to judge everyone objectively and *as an individual*, not judging all group members on the basis of a few individuals or on vague rumors about possible behaviors of members of a huge group they may belong to

## Extreme prejudice

There are several instances of extreme bias, like the murder of the Arizona man after September 11 that certainly looks totally irrational and psychotic. There are also instances of people being so homophobic that they can not work with others (because you never know who they—gays—are). The prejudiced person may be so afraid of gays that almost all aspects of their



personal, professional, emotional, and social lives are disrupted and their problems are blamed on gays or on the gay or lesbian movement. These deeply ingrained prejudices are not easy to change.

Now, you might ask yourself this question: Is there a clear difference between an ordinary prejudice and a pathological bias? Or, in the extreme, do they fade together and become the same delusional thinking? There are cases of people who are deeply prejudiced against almost any disliked and distrusted group—Jews, Blacks, Orientals, Mexicans or whatever. For example, one woman described by Monteith (8/18/02 in *Psychology Today*. (Also see [http://www.learnline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15324834basp1802\\_2](http://www.learnline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15324834basp1802_2)) <http://207.159.134.31/pt63.xeno.htm>) who thought Jews were diseased and would infect her; therefore, she wouldn't see a doctor because so many doctors are Jewish. This woman who will not see a doctor and the man in Arizona who killed a man because he looked like a Muslim are extremely prejudiced. Their conditions and thinking surely have some similarity to hate crime perpetrators and to paranoid schizophrenic thinking. However, the Diagnostic Manual doesn't yet have a diagnosis for extreme prejudice. Some doctors believe a new diagnosis of extreme irrational prejudice is needed.

I believe that when a prejudice becomes clearly irrational, it is likely to reflect a mental disorder. Such an irrational belief is more than a prejudice or a mental self-manipulation just to make you feel good about yourself. Yet, we need to be careful and remember that we all have prejudices. But certain extreme prejudices (like intense hatred of another country or religion) are considered by society to have enough rational bases that the believers are not considered psychotic by many people. Even most of German people did not consider Hitler's extermination of the Jews to be psychotic thinking. Perhaps prejudicial thinking is such a part of our mental life that we are overly tolerant of extreme prejudice thoughts and feelings. Perhaps that tolerance of hate of people who are seen as different is part of the reason our species goes to war so frequently.

## You don't think you are prejudiced any more?

The days of crude people using the "N" word or referring to a black man as a spade are over. But racial prejudice is far from over. Helen Tinsley-Jones (2003), a black psychologist, has written a powerful article underscoring the extent to which racial prejudice undermines the security and mental health of Blacks. Almost all (about 98%) of Black Americans have experienced some racial act or unconscious discrimination during the last year, but most modern racism is covert and subtle. For example, Whites are much more likely to physiologically react when touched by a Black than by a White experimenter. Another indication of prejudice is shown by a poll of 1,000 Californians asking "Have you been victimized more after September 11 than you were before?" Between 57% and 80% of Iranian, Arabic, and Pakistani people say "yes."

In an emergency situation where someone was facing a life-threatening situation, White bystanders (when alone) offer to help White and Black people in deep trouble about 90% of the time. If the bystander believes there are other bystanders, the percent of Whites that assist a Black victim drops to 38% but assistance to a White victim is about 75%. Whites recommend a

White candidate significantly more often than a Black candidate, even when the records are equivalent. Lastly, only 67% of Whites approve of interracial dating and marriage, i.e. one third don't approve.

Racism hurts Blacks...discrimination batters them in many ways...they get poorer medical care, poorer education, less desirable jobs, less income, poorer psychological treatment and so on because their skin is a little different. No thinking person can put him or herself in those situations day in and day after without being hurt—maybe ashamed, maybe angered, maybe afraid, maybe insecure and feeling inferior, maybe deeply saddened, maybe wondering if he or she is inferior, stupid, lazy, and unworthy...

New interesting research by Michael Inzlicht in *Psychological Science* (March, 2006) shows how coaches have been right all along: if an athlete gains confidence, he or she plays better. Or the reverse, lacking confidence (I'll probably miss the basket; I'll strike out; Oh, God, I really messed up last time I had the ball) seriously impairs many players. The same is true for students, says Dr. Inzlicht. Experiences that cast doubt on a student's academic ability quickly reduces their self-control when under stress of testing, writing a paper, presenting in class, public speaking, etc. Stigmatized groups of people, such as females told they are weak in math or Blacks who believe they can't do well on verbal tests, do poorly on related school tasks, even though the SAT shows they have the ability. So, prejudice, negative stereotypes, and psychological pressures result in less self-control, lower test scores, less studying, poor class notes, distracting study conditions, less scheduling of school work, etc. Therefore, these researchers believe teaching people about stereotyping and the fact that intelligence and ability are changeable characteristics helps remove the handicaps of prejudice. Talking openly, rationally, and without rancor about prejudice (and about the victim's reaction to unfair but psychologically understandable discrimination) will hopefully reduce the prejudiced group's or person's bias and increase everyone's performance.

What is the moral of the story? Dr. Tinsley-Jones says that responsible people need to remain aware that racism is a serious threat to the mental health of Blacks. We all need to take a stand against every act of racism and discrimination, especially if we have social, economic, or political power.

## Is intimacy a possible antidote to racial prejudice?

In chapter 5, a fantastic experiment is described ([http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter5/chap5\\_42.html](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter5/chap5_42.html)). It demonstrates how a fear can be learned by pairing a neutral stimulus (a small light) with a very frightening experience (being unable to breath for one minute). The amazing thing was that it took only one trial to learn this fear, i.e. the fear response immediately started to occur to the light after one pairing with fear and continued to occur every time the light came on. The other amazing thing was that the fear reaction never extinguished, no matter how often the little light was turned on. Ordinarily, the fear response to a conditioned stimulus (light) will weaken if the light is presented over and over again and nothing happens. But in this experiment the fear reaction to the light never diminished much at all! They just stopped the experiment (and,

of course, that procedure became unethical because no one knew how to get rid of that particular fear response).

Such an experiment is hard to forget. And now over 40 years later a somewhat similar experiment appears in the literature about prejudice. Olsson, Ebert, Banaji, and Phelps (2005) studied the learning of fears between Blacks and Whites as well as the resistance of those fears to extinction. The 2005 procedure: The experimenters presented each participant with facial pictures of two ordinary black men and two ordinary white men. Half of the participants were white and half were black. During the fear acquisition stage of the experiment, each participant was shown one black and one white face paired several times with mild electric shock. The other black and the other white face shown the participant were not paired with shock at any time. Then, during the extinction phase all four pictures of faces were presented without being paired with additional shock. During both the acquisition and extinction phases, the level of fear was measured by skin conductance responses.

The results: there was a conditioned fear response to both ingroup (same race) and outgroup (different race) faces during acquisition when shock was administered. However, during the extinction phase when pictures were presented several times without shock, only the conditioned fear responses to outgroup faces resisted extinction. In other words, white participants had developed a fear response to both black and white faces paired with shock but only their conditioned fear response to black faces (outgroup) continued in spite of no shock being given. Likewise, black participants responded the same way—a fear response was conditioned to both black and white faces but only the fear response to a white face resisted extinction.

Finally, given that the experimenters could now identify participants who were more able to extinguish their conditioned fear responses and participants who were less able to do so, they set about looking for the racial attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and experiences that characterized those two groups. These experimenters found only one factor that distinguished between the groups: interracial dating! Specifically they correlated each participant's reduction of fear via extinction with their number of outgroup romantic partners divided by the number of ingroup romantic partners they reported having. If this outcome surprises you, remember there is a history of research showing that positive social contact between the races tends to reduce prejudice. In this study (done in New York City), more of the black participants (51%) reported interracial dating experiences than the white participants (28%). The implications of this small study are tentative but interesting. The findings suggest that our efforts at integration over the last 40 years could have been more effective if we had taken a more positive attitude towards inter-racial intimacy or, at least, supported close, caring, trusting and meaningful relationships. On the other hand, Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003), a black developmental psychologist, believes that the black students hanging together in school is healthy and important for racial identity. Much, much more research and discussion are needed.

## Experimentally created prejudice and new research

As described above, the Zimbardo "Prison Experiment" created negative, prejudiced attitudes just by placing some people in power over others, like guards, who were powerless, like prisoners. These guards were ordinary college students but they were within a short time insulting and humiliating the prisoners. Before long the prisoners were being abused (the experiment had to be stopped). This suggests almost anyone can quickly become prejudiced and cruel, in the right circumstances. It says something about human nature, namely, ordinary people will torture enemy prisoners. Please note that the Abu Ghraib prison situation seems quite similar to this psychological experiment. Also note that this is knowledge the military must stay aware of (Fiske, Harris, & Cuddy, 2004).

One might wonder if the same animosity happens between controlling management and complying workers in industry. There are other examples of almost instant prejudice. One third-grade teacher in Riceville, Iowa, gave a lesson in discrimination. The teacher divided the class into two groups: blue-eyed and brown-eyed. Each group got the same special privileges and praise on alternate days. On the days their group was favored, the students felt "smarter," "stronger," "good inside," and enjoyed keeping the "inferiors" in their place. The same children on the deprived or inferior days felt tense, unsure of themselves, and did poorer work. They learned within a few hours to feel and act negatively toward long-term "friends." Humans seem much better at learning prejudices than math, said the teacher.

In a famous study, Sheriff and others (Sheriff & Hovland, 1961) designed a boys' camp to study relations between two groups. The boys did everything with the same group, soon friendships and group spirit developed. Then the psychologists had the groups compete with each other in tug-of-war and various games. At first, there was good sportsmanship, but soon tension and animosity developed. There was name-calling, fights, and raids on the "enemy" cabins. Anger was easily created via competition, but could the experimenters create peace? The psychologists tried getting the groups together for good times--good food, movies, sing-alongs, etc. What happened? The anger continued. The groups threw food at each other, shoved, and yelled insults.

Next, the psychologists set up several situations where the two groups had to work together to get something they wanted. There was a break in the water line that had to be fixed (or camp would be closed). The food truck broke down and it took everyone's cooperation to push it. When they worked together on these serious, important tasks, they didn't fight. Indeed, friendships developed. Just as competition led to friction among equals, cooperative work led to positive feelings. Ask yourself: when did our country last cooperate with the Russians, the Japanese, the Chinese, or the Cubans to educate or feed hurting people? Or, when did *you* last work meaningfully with the people you view negatively?

Psychologists have other explanations

Psychologists suggest we learn prejudiced attitudes via several other processes. Examples: We may learn to discriminate because prejudice pays! Slave owners certainly profited greatly from slaves. In the past, parents profited from having lots of obedient children. Factories profit from poorly paid workers. Bosses profit from bright, able secretaries who work for 40% less than males. We can impress certain people and curry favor with them if we are prejudiced, e.g. a prejudiced parent, friend, or boss likes us to hold the same views.

Prejudice also comes as part of our familial inheritance! As children we may identify with bigoted parents and adopt prejudiced attitudes without thinking. Most families utilize certain stereotypes, such as "only men go to bars," "women can't fix mechanical things," "old people are boring," etc. Gender roles may also have been assumed (and taught by example) in your family--the women and girls always did the cooking and the housecleaning and the men always fixed the cars, mowed the lawn, and joked about sex. These biased views are deeply embedded in our mind.

Larry King (1971) in *Confessions of a White Racist* exemplifies this subtle learning of prejudiced stereotypes from parents, siblings, and friends:

"Quite without knowing how I came by the gift, and in a complete absence of even the slightest contact with black people, I assimilated certain absolutes: the Negro would steal anything lying around loose and a high percentage of all that was bolted down; you couldn't hurt him if you hit him on the head with a tire tool; he revered watermelon above all other fruits of the vine; he had a mule's determination not to work unless driven or led to it; he would screw a snake if somebody would hold its head.

Even our speech patterns were instructional...One's more menial labors could leave one 'dirty as a nigger' or possibly 'sweating like a nigger at election.'...I don't remember that we employed our demeaning expressions in any remarkable spirit of vitriol: we were simply reciting certain of our cultural catechisms, and they came as naturally as breathing."

Such beliefs are a terrible injustice and an insult to human intelligence. Belittling beliefs are just as destructive as being hit with a tire tool or refused a job; yet, the beliefs were learned and used without realizing the ignorance and unfairness involved. This unthinking conformity to beliefs of our social group happens frequently. As we saw with Mr. X, these stereotypes are resistant to change. By their unpleasant and hostile nature, stereotypes discourage intimate contact with the "target" persons so that one doesn't discover what individuals of that type are really like. However, if one does have contact, the prejudice may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. For instance, if you falsely believe that supervisors or teachers are uninterested in you, then you may approach them in such a shy, uncomfortable way that they avoid interactions that make you uneasy; consequently, they seem uninterested--just like you expected.

Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1968) observed, in a famous experiment, the self-fulfilling prophecy in the class room. They told the teachers that certain students would be intellectual "late bloomers" during the school year. Really these "bloomers" were chosen at random. But because the teachers expected them to do better, they did! This was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Another interesting finding in regards to prejudice was that the predicted and actual "bloomers" were liked by their teachers, but the students who were not expected to bloom *but did* were not so liked by their teachers. Apparently, we humans like to be right. When others don't behave as we expect them to, we don't like being wrong (and don't like the people who prove us wrong).

#### Recent research of prejudice

Until the 1990's, temporary mood or emotional changes were not considered significantly important in understanding prejudice. An individual's prevailing mood was considered fairly unimportant and not given much consideration in terms of how he or she judged others. However, in the last 10 years researchers have demonstrated that our temporary emotional state has a quick and significant influence on our judgments about a person who is seen as "different." For example, if you increase the general feeling of irritability within a group of students serving as judges in a experiment or if you do something to lower the judges' self-esteem, the subjects (judges) will almost immediately think of someone different from them (e.g. a Jew or a Black if they are white and Christian) in a more negative way, e.g. the subjects (judges) in the experiment are more likely to believe the "different" person may have stolen something or cheated in some way. Interestingly enough, as the student (judges) in this experiment describe the "subject" *more negatively* or more guilty, they start feeling *better* about themselves. That is, when irritated and putting down someone else, people start to feel better about themselves and "their kind of people." That alone may be enough payoffs to produce a prejudiced bias.

The earlier research on prejudice has implied that peoples' stereotypes largely determine their intolerant behavior towards the homeless, addicts, the elderly, and so on. But recently it has been found by Princeton University psychologists (Oct, 2004, APA Monitor, 34-35) that peoples' *emotional responses* to such groups provide a better prediction (than do stereotypes) of how they will behaviorally respond to such people. The major emotions connected to unfair and discriminatory behavior reportedly are pity, disgust, envy, and pride. For instance, the general population rates the homeless and addicts as low in warmth and low in competence which lead to feelings of disgust and to unhelpful reactions. Likewise, the elderly are rated in ways that give rise to an emotional reaction of pity which leads to a protective response but also to social exclusion and neglect. Therefore, to understand how one group treats outgroups of different people, we need to understand the underlying emotions which seem to be the driving forces behind the production of prejudiced discrimination and intolerance.

## The authoritarian personality and prejudice

During World War II, Hitler's Germany openly declared war on most of the world and secretly murdered six million Jews. Hitler had been elected by claiming his country was threatened from within by rioting students and from without by Russian Communists; he called for law and order. Jews were Germany's readily available scapegoat. Hitler became a strong, authoritarian leader and many of the German people accepted his control. Why do some people idolize leaders? Why do some parents demand obedience and harshly punish any misbehavior, especially anger towards them? Why are certain people more "straight," stern, distant, intolerant, and hostile while others are nonconformists, tolerant, and loving?

What kind of people would follow an aggressive, arrogant, critical, prejudiced leader? The classic study on this topic is *The Authoritarian Personality*. These authors (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson & Sanford, 1950) described several traits of authoritarian leaders, like Hitler, and their followers, like the German people:

1. Rigid, unthinking adherence to conventional, middle-class ideas of right and wrong. The distinction has to be made between (a) incorporating (as in Kohlberg's stage 6--see chapter 3) universal values and (b) having blind allegiance to traditional social-political-religious customs or organizations. Examples: an egalitarian person who truly values one-person-one-vote, equal rights, equal opportunities, and freedom of speech will support a democracy, not a dictatorship. A person who says, "I love my country--right or wrong" or "America--love it or leave it" may be a flag-waving, patriotic speech-making politician who is secretly an antidemocratic authoritarian (similar in some ways to Hitler). For the authoritarian the values of respecting and caring for others are not as important as being a "good German" or a "good American" or a "good Catholic" or a "good Baptist."

Important values to an authoritarian are obedience, cleanliness, success, inhibition or denial of emotions (especially anger and even love), firm discipline, honoring parents and leaders, and abhorring all immoral sexual feelings. This was the German character. Authoritarian parents tend to produce dominated children who become authoritarian parents. Egalitarians produce egalitarians.

2. Respect for and submission to authority--parents, teachers, religion, bosses, or any leader. This includes a desire for a strong leader and for followers to revere the leader, following him (seldom her) blindly. It was believed by the psychoanalytic writers of *The Authoritarian Personality* that recognizing one's hostile feelings towards an authority was so frightening that the authoritarian personality was compelled to be submissive. There is an emphasis on following rules and regulations, on law and order. Everyone has a proper role to play, including gender role.

3. They take their anger out on someone safe. In an authoritarian environment (family, religion, school, peer group, government), the compliant, subservient, unquestioning follower stores up unexpressed anger at the authority. The hostility can't be expressed towards the authority, however, so it is displaced to an outsider who is different--a scapegoat. Unconsciously, the authoritarian says, "I don't hate my father; I hate Jews (or blacks or unions or management or ambitious women or Communists or people on welfare)." The "good cause" to which one is dedicated often dictates who to hate, who to be prejudice against.

4. They can't trust people. They believe "people who are different are no good." If we believe others are as bad as or worse than we are, we feel less guilt: "Everybody looks out for #1" or "Everybody would cheat if they had a chance." Such a negative view of people leads to the conclusion that harsh laws and a strong police or army are necessary. Also, it leads people to foolishly believe that humans would "go wild" and be totally immoral if they lost their religion.

5. Because they feel weak, authoritarian personalities believe it is important to have a powerful leader and to be part of a powerful group. Thus, they relish being in the "strongest nation on earth," the "master race," the "world-wide communist movement," "the wealthiest nation," the "best corporation," the "best part of town," the "best-looking crowd," the "best team," etc. The successful, the powerful, the leaders are to be held in awe. And the authoritarian says, "When I get power, I want to be held in awe too. I'll expect respect, just like I demand it from my children."

6. Over-simplified thinking. If our great leaders and our enormous government tell us what to do, if our God and our religion direct our lives, then we don't have to take responsibility for thinking or deciding. We just do what we are told. And, in general, we, "the masses," are given simple explanations and told the solutions are simple by authoritarian leaders. Examples: "The source of the trouble is lenient parents (or schools or laws)," "God is on our side," "Get rid of the Jews (or Capitalists or Communists or blacks or Arabs)." For the authoritarian if things aren't simple, they are unknowable, e.g. he/she endorses the statement, "science has its place, but there are many important things that can never possibly be understood by the human mind."

7. Guard against dangerous ideas. Since the authoritarian already has a handle on the truth, he/she opposes new ideas, unconventional solutions, and creative imaginations. They believe an original thinker is dangerous; he/she will think differently. It's considered good to be suspicious of psychologists, writers, and artists who probe your mind and feelings--such people are scary. Governments who observe subversives are OK, though. Indeed, censorship of the media may become necessary, especially if the media becomes critical of our leaders or sexually provocative. A businessperson produces needed products; an intellectual is a threat.



8. I'm pure, others are evil. The authoritarian represses his/her aggressive and sexual feelings, then projects those traits on to stereotyped persons in the outgroup (see defense mechanisms in chapter 5). For example, it was Larry King's and other white men's dishonesty, laziness, hatred, and sexual urges that got projected to the black man (see quote above). The authoritarian, therefore, feels surrounded by people preoccupied with sex and/or violence. The psychoanalysts who wrote *The Authoritarian Personality* say the sexual fears come from an unresolved Oedipus or Electra complex. The hostility comes from childhood (see #2 & #3 above) too and throughout their lives authoritarians expect criminal acts nearby and terrorists' attacks around the world. They become paranoid, believing many people want to hurt them (which justify their aggression?).

9. Ethnocentrism: Everything of mine is better than yours--my country, my religion, my kind of people, my family, and my self. Research has also shown the authoritarian is more prejudiced and more prone to punish people (including their own children) to get them to work harder or to do "right" (Byrne & Kelley, 1981).

This picture of an authoritarian isn't pretty. How many of these people are there? Zimbardo's "prison study" suggests that the potential for authoritarianism may be quite high, given the right circumstances. It is estimated that at least 80% of us have prejudices. Hostility (especially the you-are-not-my-equal and I-don't-care-about-your-type) abounds in the world. Milgram's study of obedience (in chapter 8) suggests 65% of us would physically hurt someone if told to do so by an authority. Also, in that chapter we will see that most of us conform to social pressures in dress, in opinions, in behavior. Maybe there are parts of an authoritarian personality inside all of us.

### Like all behavior, prejudice has multiple causes

Duckitt (1992) summarized the causes of prejudice: (1) universal psychological processes in all of us, such as displacement of anger, projection of our undesirable personality traits to others, disliking people who are "different," etc., (2) dynamics between groups, such as competition for jobs, exploitation of one group by another, etc., (3) passing on of prejudiced attitudes, such as family-subgroup pressures to favor and discriminate against certain types of people, explanations of behavior (crime, desertion of family, drug use) are handed down to young people, etc., and (4) certain individual tendencies to be critical and unfair, such as authoritarians, angry people looking for someone to attack, persons with low self-esteem, etc. Since the causes are complex, the solutions may be complex too.

### Integration: Does it reduce racial prejudice?

In the last 45 years we have had a lot of experience with integration as a solution to racial discrimination. We should feel proud of those efforts but how well have they worked? It depends on how desegregation is done. Is it true that as we get to know each other better we will see that our prejudices are untrue? Only under certain conditions. If blacks and whites live as equals in

integrated housing where it is easy to have frequent and informal contacts in the laundry rooms, elevators, and play grounds, the answer is "yes," they start to trust and like each other. Likewise, in the military service, after living, fighting, and dying as equals together, blacks and whites liked each other better than did soldiers in segregated army units. On the other hand, when schools were integrated by law and the families involved vigorously opposed integration, many students, who never interacted intimately with the other races, became *more* prejudiced (Aronson, 1984).

So, what are the important factors in making integration work?

(1) *Cooperation between groups for shared goals*, like in the boys' camp.

(2) *Frequent, casual contact between equals*, like in integrated apartments. Contact of blacks with their white landlord or between the black maid and her wealthy white housewife don't help much. Inviting poor folks over to your \$300,000 house for Thanksgiving dinner, no matter how good your turkey dressing is, won't help.

(3) A *long-term cooperative working relationship*. In the late 1960's, there were two kinds of black-white groups at Southern Illinois University: (1) encounter groups meeting for only a few hours and (2) year-long groups for educationally disadvantaged students. There were many verbal battles in the short-term encounter groups--some groups had to be terminated to avoid violence. Yet, the long-term groups, which tried to help each other survive in school, had no major racial problems.

(4) The *general social environment needs to be supportive of integration* and good relationships. If your family or friends think you are foolish for tolerating an outgroup or if property value is expected to go down if "their kind" move in, it is not likely that your prejudice will decrease with exposure to this group of people, unless you are strong enough to contradict your own social group.

(5) The political and community *leaders should make it clear that integration is inevitable*. If I know I must work with you, I will convince myself that you are OK. As long as people think integration can be "experimented with" and possibly delayed, the unthinking hate remains active inside. Human rights are not negotiable, even if the majority of people are prejudice against you, you still have *equal* rights. The Bill of Rights, in fact, is ingeniously designed to protect the minority against an unfair majority. Quick acceptance and integration of an outgroup is better than a gradual process that creates more prejudice (Aronson, 1984).

(6) How we work together is important--we *need to become mutually helping equals*. Just throwing different groups together in schools is not enough--we must work closely, cooperatively, and cordially together. Aronson (1984) developed a teaching technique that reduced the competition and rivalry among students. He called it the

"interdependent jigsaw teaching method." It is now called "cooperative learning" and it works this way: students are placed in random groups of five or six. Each student is given 1/5th or 1/6th of the lesson to learn and, then, teach to his/her small group. Rather than making fun of slow students or disregarding uninvolved students, the students now help each other grasp and communicate the information. They need each other's information. Each student plays a vital role in helping every one do well on the exams. Furthermore, students get to know each other better, respect and like each other better, gain in self-respect, and empathize with each other more, like school better, and disadvantaged students do better on exams without any loss among the other students.

## New methods for changing stereotypes, emotions and prejudice

It is time to experiment with other approaches. Experimental techniques for changing ways one group sees and feels about another group (an out group) are being tested now. As part of this discussion, it is important to understand how an individual can change his or her perceptions of their own in-group as well as understand how the individual's self-perception can be changed. All these perceptions and attitudes have a bearing on our prejudices and how we relate to others and to many out groups. Individual personality differences, of course, play a role here too. I will only give a few examples of recent research that may eventually help people get along with others. Most of the focus is on students.

One of the major approaches developed several years ago to reduce prejudice in schools was the Jigsaw Classroom Technique. It involved organizing small study groups so that each child contributed equally to the assigned task. It is an interesting idea but makes the teacher's work load more demanding. Research has shown that this teaching method does often reduce prejudice, but sometimes it fails, especially if individuals in the study group do not pull their load or have unpleasant personalities. Another technique that is being studied is called the Common In-group Identity Model which aims to reduce stereotyping (Oskamp, 2000). Attempts in this approach are made to merge two or more out groups into a single super group, i.e. individuals are encouraged to see their similarities and feel allied. A somewhat similar method involves changing the social context. It is hoped that the unconscious negative attitudes can be altered by changing the social environment the individuals live in. This is done by exposing each person to stories and images of admired people who belong to the group which they feel prejudice towards...and to be repeatedly exposed to stories and images of disliked and embarrassing people from their own in-group. Research by Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) has shown that this procedure can alter people's attitudes towards other groups and their own group.

For decades it has been known that defeatist expectations of failing or doing poorly often becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. Stereotypes often include

ideas suggesting that one has limited ability or skills. Examples would include common beliefs, such as females don't do well in math and spatial relations, blacks make low grades, and men have trouble with verbal skills. Claude Steele, a psychologist at Stanford University, believes our society could benefit greatly by reducing the "stereotype threats" so that every person can do their best (without the barriers of negative expectations). Consider the data: black students get lower grades and drop out of college more than whites, even if the groups are matched by SAT scores. Also, black and white students with similar SAT scores do about the same when told they are taking the GRE which measures problem-solving but blacks score much lower than whites when told the test measures verbal skills. Similarly, females do not do as well as males on math, unless they are told that gender doesn't affect their scores. In that case, females score equal to males.

So, Dr. Steele urges test givers and evaluators to take stereotype threats and test anxiety into account and try to minimize their effects or to "look beyond the test score" for more accurate assessment. One reason why it is important to have diversity (and a number of blacks, rural, or Asian students) is so all kinds of students will feel comfortable and safe in numbers. Consider how uncomfortable you might feel if you were the "token" black, farm kid, or Oriental student in your school.

Unfortunately, the well-intentioned but resisted and too often resented forced integration of schools in the 1950's and 1960's did not result in a lot more positive intimate contact between the races during the 1970's and 1980's. Few blacks were in the "advanced" classes, many were sent to Special Ed classes from which they never escape. Aronson's cooperative learning method was not being used widely. Blacks dominated the athletic teams; Latinos seldom tried out. Social groups were separated by race and socioeconomic class; students gathered in racial-economic clusters in the lunch room. There are still relatively few inter-racial friendships (unless they talk, dress, and act alike) and even fewer inter-racial love relationships. Why aren't we working together as mutually helping equals? It seems that racial biases are still strong and are getting all mixed up with old well entrenched cultural-intellectual-economic class biases. We still have a lot of work to do.



It is never safe to consider individuals in groups, classes, or races. To ascribe virtues or vices to all the individuals of a group is as senseless as it is unjust and inaccurate.  
-Wings of Silver



## Self-help methods to reduce our own prejudices

First of all, we must recognize what prejudice really is. It isn't limited to having an intense hatred of a group who are different, and plotting to exterminate all of them. It is much more subtle...and, to a considerable extent, its temporary, spontaneous generation is unavoidable. But we could become intelligent enough to quickly reject those unreasonable feelings. For

example, if you hear on the evening news that a local 15-year-old girl was brutally assaulted by a huge, blond, handsome, white man, and the next day a big, attractive, white man walks into where you work, it is the nature of our species to wonder if this could be the assailant or, at least, if this man could be dangerous too. You might even be a little less friendly and avoid getting physically close. You have prejudged this stranger! If big white men were constantly coming into your work area, your suspiciousness would quickly extinguish because most would be nice. But if white men rarely came to your work place, your prejudice might last for weeks and months...or even grow. You couldn't have avoided the evening news.

Thus, any negative information--even false rumors--you have heard about any person or any group--murder among black men, sexual sinfulness among preachers, binge drinking among college students, etc., etc.--forms the basis for a prejudgment. Likewise, any person associated with a negative life experience--the first kid to beat up on you, the first boy/girl to two-time you, the first boss to fire you--forms expectations of others who look or act as he/she did. This acquiring of prejudged expectations may be beyond our control. It may be a natural, innate coping mechanism of humans. And, unfortunately, in this way, we are constantly adding new prejudices to the deeply entrenched cultural and familial ones from childhood. However, reacting to these prejudgments with rational judgments may be well within our control, if we know what is going on inside of us.

### Prejudice with compunction

Patricia Devine, University of Wisconsin at Madison, distinguishes between prejudice with compunction (guilt or regret) and prejudice without compunction. *High-prejudice people* without compunction respond automatically and strongly, seeing nothing wrong with their attitude and reactions. The *low-prejudice person* with compunction has less of a negative reaction and often realizes that his/her emotional reaction is not "what it should be" or not rational; thus, he/she regrets his/her prejudicial attitudes or suspicions. This kind of low-prejudice people constantly tries to monitor and correct their thinking. Examples: "Just because one big white man assaulted someone is no reason for me to suspect this man" or "okay, this person is unattractive (or handsome/beautiful), but that isn't related to how well he/she can do the job." People with high self-esteem, optimism, and tolerance are more aware and better able to control their prejudged judgments. It is possible.

In my opinion, since all of us have many irrational feelings (prejudices) and constantly develop new ones, all of us must learn to recognize these prejudgments as soon as possible and correct them. It is hard, sometimes, because these prejudices show themselves in subtle ways known only to you, e.g. holding on to your purse or valuables especially carefully while you are next to a black man, being reluctant to vote for a woman or a Jew, dreading your daughter dating someone of another race or religion, believing women shouldn't serve in combat, feeling a little resentment if a female becomes your supervisor, wondering if a well dressed black person is into crime, avoiding sitting next to an old or a fat person, feeling reluctant to work with a homosexual, etc. Race, gender, age, attractiveness, education, wealth, ethnic

background, etc. tell us almost nothing about the basic nature of a specific individual. If we prejudge a person on any of these bases, and most or all of us do, we are prejudiced. Low-prejudice people with compunction have a good chance to correct their errors. We don't yet know how to get the high prejudiced people to see the irrationality and unfairness of generalizing from a stereotype to a specific unique individual. But, I think they will eventually learn from the rest of us to have compunction.

Finally, we can all try to be as forgiving of others as we are of ourselves. When we do poorly, we blame the situation. When someone else does poorly, we conclude they are dumb or lazy. In competitive situations, if our rival is successful, we say he/she was lucky. In cooperative situations, we can be as generous with others as we are with ourselves, i.e. their successes are due to skill and their failures are unfortunate breaks to be avoided next time. We could be generous towards everyone.



Nothing will make us so charitable and tender to the faults of others as to thoroughly examine ourselves.



If Mr. X and Larry King can learn prejudice by hearing ignorant, hateful comments by family and friends, why can't they learn to be unbiased by reading about blacks (if they can't interact directly), reading about prejudice, and challenging their own unreasonable thinking just like an overly self-critical person might? Why not tell yourself: "A black or woman or homosexual or body builder or unattractive small person or atheist or \_\_\_\_\_ could be an excellent president or boss in my company." Or: "In selecting a mate (or preparing to be one), pimples and bra or jock size are not nearly as important as brains, values, and personality."

Only we can do something about our subtle prejudices--it is our responsibility to "clean up our act." If you are not almost constantly checking your views and opinions of others for bias (prejudgments), you are probably not successfully controlling your prejudice and discrimination. It is not easy. But please, while you may have difficulty detecting all your prejudices, keep on trying to detect your errors of prejudgment and remain contrite about doing others wrong.

It does seem that as a society we are reducing prejudice, but slowly. In 1942, only 30% favored desegregation in schools, in 1956, 49% did, in 1970 75% did, and in 1980 about 90% did. But, as we have seen, even with desegregation, there is a long, long way to go before we "love thy neighbor as thyself." Unfortunately, the highly prejudiced people can't see their irrationality and unfairness; their hate unconsciously overwhelms their logic. Each minimally prejudiced person has to keep confronting the highly prejudiced people with reason.

Why does it take so long to remove prejudice, unfairness, and discrimination? Partly because prejudice and discrimination pays off in many

ways. Actually, the egalitarian idea of giving everyone in the world an equal chance is a terrible threat to our affluent world; it's almost un-American. Think about it. How do we resolve this conflict between fairness and greed? Melvin Lerner (1980) in *The Belief In A Just World* demonstrates that we Americans (and maybe everybody) tend to accept the way things are and assume that people get what they deserve, the good are rewarded and the sinful, lazy, or ignorant are punished. We look at an unfair, cruel world and conclude it is just. How do we do this? We denigrate the victim, deny the evidence, or turn the whole situation around in our minds. For example, Lerner cited a study in which 1000 people had viewed a film of a woman being painfully shocked in a psychological learning experiment (it was staged, not real). At first, many viewers became irate at the experimenter who administered the shock shown in the film. But by the end of the experiment, most viewers believed the victim was really weak or a fool to sit there and allow herself to be shocked. Not one out of 1000 subjects made an effort to protest such experiments; it is more comfortable to believe "everything is fine." But we are living a lie; everything is not fine in the real world.

Another example of this re-interpretation of an unjust world is Colette Dowling's (1988) book, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. Dowling blames women's problems on their weakness and unassertiveness--lower pay, fewer promotions, double work (outside and inside the home), domination by men, and so on. This is more "blaming the victim." Men benefit and must, as profiteers and self-appointed decision-makers, take most of the blame for the injustice to women.

It seems that we need to learn both tolerance for others and intolerance for injustice. The great black writer, Frederick Douglass, said, "The power of a tyrant is granted by the oppressed." He also pointed out that one must have a dream--must have hope--before one can rebel against injustice. He wrote, "Beat and cuff your slave, keep him hungry and spiritless, and he will follow the chain of his master like a dog; work him moderately, surround him with physical comfort, and dreams of freedom intrude."

The people who are oppressed but still hopeful need to be joined by more and more people with a determined sense of justice. As Tavis (1984) suggests, thinking and talking about injustice may generate a useful anger. Anger has been called the handmaiden of justice. Perhaps controlled anger, as in non-violent social action, or a combination of threatening rebels (bad guys) and more reasonable peace-makers (good guys) offers the best hope of changing this cruel world.



It is only imperfection that is intolerant of what is imperfect. The more perfect we are, the gentler and quiet we become toward the defects of others.

The only safe and sure way to destroy an enemy is to make him/her your friend.



Jim Cole's ideas for self-reducing one's own prejudices

Part of the [Beyond Prejudice Website](http://www.beyondprejudice.com/reduce_your.html) by Cole addresses self-reduction of prejudice in considerable detail (see [http://www.beyondprejudice.com/reduce\\_your.html](http://www.beyondprejudice.com/reduce_your.html)). I will give a brief summary of his steps but if you want to carry out his methods, please read his Website:

Learn and acknowledge your prejudices; boldly face your stereotypes; find someone or a group to talk with; commit yourself to changing; keep a log of your prejudicial thoughts, emotions, and behaviors; note your self-talk about the disliked groups; challenge the accuracy of your self-talk with facts; have more pleasant contact with disliked group; note and value their diversity; yell "STOP" at your degrading thoughts; reward stopping prejudice thoughts; face how other groups see your group; be secure enough to accept criticism; accept your being indecisive and wrong sometimes; learn to be empathic; learn to listen in depth; accept complexity and indecisiveness in many areas; develop your caring for others; learn more about the people you are critical of (read their history, talk with them about their family history); increasing your self-acceptance increases your tolerance of others; criticize offensive comments and jokes (don't laugh at racial jokes); avoid supporting businesses that are not socially responsible (low paying, no insurance, promotes smoking).

Read the details in Cole's Website and in my Chapter 13 about communication skills.

#### Possible efforts by society to reduce prejudice and hatred

Morton Deutsch (1993) has recommended changes in the schools to "prepare children to live in a peaceful world." The first step is the use of *cooperative learning techniques* which get us interacting with others and teach positive interdependence. It takes teachers 2 or 3 years to learn these methods. Second is teaching *conflict resolution techniques* which are important skills for all of us to know (see method #10 in chapter 13). Training in handling conflicts would require several courses and workshops for students, plus lots of practice. Third is using *constructive controversy techniques* which get students arguing about important issues in such a way that the discussion promotes critical and empathic thinking. Fourth is the use of *mediation techniques* in schools by students and teachers to resolve all kinds of disagreements. We see that all disagreements are resolvable if we will be rational and fair. Learning to be a mediator takes 30-40 hours. Everyone needs that training which, when used, provides great, practical experience with handling anger.

Read the controversial book about racism by D'Souza (1995). It is thought provoking and, among other things, suggests the ultimate solution is interracial marriage. Why not?

I realize you can not do these things all by yourself, but you and your friends can urge your school to try to reduce animosity between people and groups. You can think about the problem. You can volunteer to participate.



Schools around the world should be honestly evaluating anger and prejudice reduction programs.

## Books and websites about reducing prejudices

Whitley, B. E. and Kite, M. E. (2005). *The psychology of prejudice and discrimination*. Wadsworth Publishing. (\$60.95)

Nelson, T. D. (2005). *The psychology of prejudice*. Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Russell A. Dewey, PhD: [Psych Web Home Page](http://www.psychwww.com/) (<http://www.psychwww.com/>) and [Psychology Self-Help Resources on the Internet](http://www.psychwww.com/resource/selfhelp.htm) (<http://www.psychwww.com/resource/selfhelp.htm>) and [Violence articles](http://www.psywww.com/resource/selfhelp/violence.html) (<http://www.psywww.com/resource/selfhelp/violence.html>).

Maier, Gary (2005). Understanding the dynamics of abusive relations (<http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/p960926.html>). Or see <http://wcr.sonoma.edu/v6n1/manuscripts/alvi.pdf>.

[Southern Poverty Law Center](http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp), Fight Hate and Promote Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp>).

Tatum, B. D. (2003). *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?: A Psychologist explains the development of racial identity*. Basic Books.

## Methods for Handling Our Own Aggression and Anger



### An important long-term concern

We have seen that anger is common but dreadfully destructive in human relations. Most of us dislike certain kinds of people, maybe "prejudiced, redneck clods," maybe "rude, demanding, lazy people on welfare," maybe "critical, arrogant bosses or teachers." If we are lucky, we can avoid conflict situations. However, if all of us would learn to control our irritation, jealousy, resentment, violence, prejudice, psychological putdowns, etc., wouldn't it be a much better world? Of course it would, but such goals seem so idealistic to many people, they think it is nonsense. People say "you can't change human nature." These defeatist attitudes prolong human misery. I don't think it is impossible (in a couple of generations) to get people to tolerate, even to love each other. It is an enormous task but such a worthy one that we must not give up. Instead, we must dedicate ourselves to improving the world, starting with our selves.

The pessimist, who believes there will always be hatred and war, should note that the most primitive people on earth (discovered in the Philippines in 1966) are gentle and loving. They have no word for war. How do they control their aggression? What is their system? The entire tribe discourages mean, inconsiderate behavior and encourages cooperation from an early age. Everyone is expected to provide a good, loving model for the children (Nagler, 1982). Please note: This non-aggressive culture was developed without modern education, without great scholars, research and books, without powerful governments working for peace, and without any of the world's great religions. If that primitive tribe can learn to love, why can't we? It may not be too difficult after all. Nagler makes an impassioned plea for non-violence in our time. The other bit of history I want to share with you is from Seneca, a Roman philosopher-educator, who served several Emperors until Nero executed him in 65 AD at age 61. He was an extraordinary person. Seneca wrote a book, *De Ira* (Of Anger), which has been summarized by Hans Toch (1983). In it Seneca proposed theories about aggression and self-help methods remarkably similar to the best we have today. It is humbling but it suggests that common anger problems may not be that hard to solve (we have been too busy waging war for the last 2000 years to work on reducing violence). Seneca said "hostile aggression" is to avenge an emotional injury. "Sadistic aggression," with practice, becomes habitual by frightening others and, in that way, reduces self-doubts (negative reinforcement). He noted that anger is often an overkill because we attribute evil to the other person or because the other person has hit our psychological weak spot, lowering our self-esteem. Sounds just like current theories, right?

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There are some subjects about which you will learn the truth more accurately from the first man you meet in the street than from people who have made a lifelong and accurate study of it.  
-George Bernard Shaw

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What were his self-control techniques? (1) Avoid frustrating situations by noting where you got angry in the past. (2) Reduce your anger by taking time, focusing on other emotions (pleasure, shame, or fear), avoiding weapons of aggression, and attending to other matters. (3) Respond calmly to an aggressor with empathy or mild, non-provocative comments or with no response at all. (4) If angry, concentrate on the undesirable consequences of becoming aggressive. Tell yourself: "Why give them the satisfaction of knowing you are upset?" or "It isn't worth being mad over." (5) Reconsider the circumstances and try to understand the motives or viewpoint of the other person. (6) Train yourself to be empathic with others; be tolerant of human weakness; be forgiving (ask yourself if you haven't done something as bad); and follow the "great lesson of mankind: *to do as we would be done by.*"

Remarkable! Seneca was clear and detailed. He covered the behavioral, skills, unconscious and especially the cognitive-attitudinal aspects of self-help. He did no research; he merely observed life around him. Now, if we can add research to those ancient "clinical observations," we may be able to make

more progress in the next 2000 years. By the way, Seneca also advocated child-rearing practices and humanistic education designed to build self-esteem, model non-aggressive responses, and reward constructive non-violent behavior. Sadly, an angry political leader killed him.

## Self-help methods must be tailored to each person's needs

First of all, it seems clear that we have two basic ways of dealing with our own anger. We can (a) *prevent it*, i.e. keep anger from welling up inside of us, or (b) *control it*, i.e. modify our aggressive urges after anger erupts inside. The preventative approach sounds ideal--avoid frustrating situations, be assertive when things first annoy you, eliminate irrational ideas that arouse anger, etc. But, we can't avoid all frustrations and all thoughts that arouse anger. Secondly, in the situations where we haven't, as yet, learned to prevent an angry reaction, we seem to fall into two easily recognized categories: (a) "*swallowers*" or repressor-suppressor or (b) "*exploders*" or hotheaded expressers. Do you recognize yourself and others you are close to? The "swallowers" haven't prevented the anger, they have just hidden it--suppressed it. (Don't let the fact that "swallowers" may eventually erupt in fits of rage, much like the "exploder," confuse you.) In "exploders," angry feelings and aggressive responses are immediate--little time for prevention, little time to think about avoiding anger, the emotions just spew out.

In time we will probably have a much better classification system. But for now, the swallower-exploder distinction can help us. It seems obvious that the self-help methods of most benefit to you will depend on (a) the nature of the frustrations which still upset you (anger has not been prevented) and (b) your personality type, "swallower" or "exploder." For instance, swallowers might find certain methods, especially stress inoculation (#10 below), venting feelings (#14), and assertiveness (#18), to be helpful. Exploders might use the same methods too but others might be more effective, e.g. self-instructions (#2 & #10), avoiding rewards (#7 & #8), learning tolerance (#12 & #25), challenging irrational ideas (#24) and strengthen your philosophy of love (#28 & #31).

Of course, there are times when anger is appropriate and effective. Carol Tavris (1984) says anger is effective only under these conditions:

1. The anger is *directed at the offending person* (telling your friends may increase your anger).
2. The expression *satisfies your need* to influence the situation and/or correct an injustice.
3. Your approach seems *likely to change* the other person's behavior, which means you can express yourself so they can understand your point of view and so they will cooperate with you.

If these conditions are not met, you are usually well advised to "bite your lip" or "hold your tongue" and vent your anger privately (by yourself alone), if that helps, or forget it. You will be surprised how often the suppression of hot, vile, cutting remarks avoids a nasty scene.

Both prevention-of-anger and control-of-anger methods are given in this section.

## Four popular books about reducing anger and tidbits

I will start by summarizing four popular books about Anger.

Then I will give some interesting tidbits of general information about anger management.

After that several self-help techniques or methods of modifying anger and aggression will be described and organized, like the rest of this book, by the five levels—behavior, emotions, skills, cognitive methods and ways of gaining insight. Hopefully, this organization, going from general to specific self-help methods, will help you plan an effective self-improvement project. Make use of scientific data I cite and your personal experience to decide what techniques might work best for you.

Bradley P. Barris (2002), *The Miracle of Living Without Anger*

The author, who is known for giving motivating seminars, does a good job of setting the stage for thinking about anger. He starts by telling his audience why it will be difficult for them to give up their angry ways of responding. First, he lists five “bitter truths” about anger: (1) no one can force you to give up being angry. Every effort in this direction will just make you mad, in spite of anger being unhealthy and could even kill you via heart disease, stroke, and several other diseases. (2) If you can’t control your anger and the harm it does to others, society will take on the task of punishing and correcting you (examples: road rage, failing to pay child support, gouging customers). (3) Getting angry frequently will seriously impair your problem-solving ability. Your brain doesn’t do its best when it is obsessed with negative emotions. (4) Life has a natural way of punishing you for spewing out so many negative vibes—“what goes around comes around.” (5) The anger that you develop and carry with you is the very thing that is most likely to destroy your most valuable relationships that you have. It may also cause you to dislike yourself. With all those negatives, one might think that we would be eager to get rid of our anger.

Then Barris spells out for you the lies you tell yourself about anger that leads to so many of us choosing to keep our anger and hostility rather than choosing to give up anger and live a much more rational and less stressful life. Here are the lies: Lie #1: “Sure I get mad...why not? It is just natural! If you never got angry, you’d really be an odd-ball.” Lie #2: “Emotions just happen. I don’t make my emotions up and I can’t stop them.” To many people the idea of choosing what emotion you want to have—or would help you better solve this particular problem—sounds really odd. But Barris sets about to train you how to choose the most helpful emotion (rarely anger) and control it.

Lie #3: “I have to let my anger out. It would really upset me if I had to hold it in. It isn’t healthy to go to bed with a load of resentment on your mind.”

Barris says this is garbage. Our culture teaches us that our anger is the outcome of happenings outside of us, not the product of how we see and think about the environment. It isn't me that needs to change; it is someone else or the world. The idea that stress causes anger is non-sense too (still blaming the environment, not ourselves). Letting your anger out is almost always a bad response, e.g. with your boss. Lie #4: "Some anger is healthy. It tells me that there is a problem somewhere that needs my attention." Barris admits that many psychologists feel this way but he says, according to his definition, no one really uses anger constructively that way. Lie #5: "Beating up on something, like a pillow or punching bag, helps me get the anger out." Barris says the person venting anger will feel better immediately afterwards but the beating on something is simply going to strengthen the connection between feeling frustrated and believing aggression and rage will solve the problem. So, your hostility problem keeps right on growing.

Lie #6: "Hey, if I didn't occasionally pitch a big one, everyone would think I am weakling and, maybe scared and/or unable to handle difficult situations." Barris points out that a strong, capable person is not one who rants and raves but one who thinks quickly and clearly so that an acceptable solution is found. Lie #7: "Even you, Dr. Barris, would get angry if you caught someone raping your wife!" Barris says this is a common argument made by a person who thinks they have delivered a fatal blow to his argument. Then he makes a surprising statement: "no, I wouldn't go into a rage because that is exactly the kind of situation in which I need to make good decisions very quickly." Barris says people, such as police officers, can be taught to do just that (well, that isn't exactly the same as your wife, is it? But it makes his point.). Lie #8: "Some things people do and say instantly make me mad. It is out of my control. I can't stop it." Barris says this is the biggest lie of all because it implies that others can make you angry and you can't stop them...and since you feel powerless to stop them, it is obvious that the other person is fully responsible for whatever happens (now, isn't that convenient?). Barris says you have to give up blaming others for how you feel and act.

From here Barris's book leads to understanding Rational-Emotional Therapy (described in detail in chapter 14) by using a Case Study of an unfaithful husband and a hurt, angry wife. Barris believes anger is always unhealthy but he accepts a related concept he calls "irritation." Irritation is what is felt when your desires (remember you can't just make a demand that water run up hill), preferences, hopes, wants or wishes are not met. Like Buddhists who tell us that you can't insist that the world unfold as you want it to, you can't control other people, and you can't even demand that you act and feel specific ways. You can hope and learn more about self-acceptance and self-control. In the course of reviewing your beliefs, you will be able to replace your anger-causing beliefs with beliefs that permit you to let go of anger. Eventually, your personal philosophy will need to be based on your life preferences which are adaptable to new situations. However, you just have to accept that you can not be 100% sure that you can make another person do anything. Acceptance of whatever happens is the key to internal peace. Whatever happens is lawful.

Les Carter (2003), *The Anger Trap*

Les Carter starts his latest book about anger with this observation: "...I have learned one thing. There is always something more that feeds the anger than what is observed (or blamed) on the surface." Beneath the strong, willful, hateful looks on the angry person's face, there may be fear, insecurity, hurt, the dread of being all alone, the feeling of being wronged, etc. Getting over our anger usually involves getting to know how we feel neglected, wounded, or deprived of our just dues. An angry person always has a history—a critical, hateful, demanding, belittling parent, an on-going bitter conflict with a sibling, being a bully or bullied, growing up in a neighborhood that taught hatred of their traditional enemies, etc., etc.

Underneath the self-centeredness and nastiness of anger or rage (as seen by outside observers) can be seen a demand for fairness or justice (as the angry person sees it). Anger is often a demand that things be done in "the right way," that I get the respect and status I deserve, that I get what I want and be obeyed, that I be in control, that my importance be acknowledged, and so on. In the angry person's mind, if you don't do what I'm asking you to do, you are insulting me and being defiant or hateful. So, I am justified to be angry.

Obviously, if these anger-generating beliefs and attitudes (cognitions) are not changed, the anger will continue and probably get worse. The main question is: how to change these ideas of an angry person...and, keep in mind, you may be dealing with a coiled rattlesnake. This is what Carter calls the irate person's "anger trap," i.e. being caught in an irritating, unhappy situation without knowing how to get out of the mess. The tools that life tends to give angry people are criticism, blaming and threatening others, shaming, guilt-slinging, and rage. No conflict resolution skills, no empathic listening to another viewpoint, no revealing of your own self-doubts and fragile ego, no searching for compromises, no admission that your demands and views might be wrong, etc. Angry people see other people as too unfriendly and they themselves often feel too fragile to handle their anger in a different way; they can sometimes be gradually encouraged to try new approaches. They usually need help to find better ways to resolve angry conflicts.

As we discussed in indirect aggression earlier in the chapter, many people avoid angry outbursts and have ways of denying their own suppressed anger, such as withdrawing or sulking and feeling frustrated, irritated, and impatient. There are several origins of anger that can be confusing, including the mad person suppressing his/her anger, then projecting anger to the other person: "Why are you doing this to me?" or "Why are you so upset with me?" Other people keep on suppressing their anger to avoid the irritation they feel until they explode over a small matter. Lots of people are just quiet until the anger blows over (that works well for many of us). Almost all of us avoid touchy topics. Some act as if they agree (when they don't) but never get around to resolving the conflicts. That is passive-aggressiveness because the resistance and anger come out in concealed ways. Some of these methods may work, some won't. All too often we can see examples all around us of open, seething aggressive people overpowering the less intense ones and getting away with it. That tells us anger works and reinforces our own anger. We also see how powerful indirect aggression (such as gossip) and thinly veiled anger (jealous, sullen, resistive behavior) can be.

A counselor might start by urging the angry patient to see that direct or indirect anger has a purpose—this awareness can motivate the angry person to find new ways to handle upsetting conflicts, i.e. develop an anger management plan. That would involve recognizing what triggers your anger, what justifies your anger and

what doesn't, what in your past aroused and motivated your anger responses, how you can change your thinking and accept responsibility for maintaining control over your anger, and so on. That is a start to finding a way out of the "anger trap."

Often when you get mad, you really have valid points to make but spewing out your strong, stinging anger reaction about some aspect of the situation may totally mess up the communication. Ranting weakens your helpful contributions. So, first, make an effort to describe the merits of your viewpoint from someone else's perspective, consider the good it will do, or the just causes your ideas will serve if tactfully stated. Leave aside the ways you are feeling personally slighted or offended. Rushing in abruptly and abrasively to get your way or to express your irritation will most likely be unproductive. If some of your ideas can serve a useful purpose and would be truly helpful to the person you are talking to, your ideas can probably be clearly expressed, without strong anger, in a way that is acceptable to the other person and to others. That controlled action demonstrates your thoughtfulness, open-mindedness, and good intentions. A cordial, civil tone opens minds and is facilitating; bitter and self-serving anger gives rise to counter-attacks and pessimism. Anger or showing that you are upset, when expressed in a constructive, supportive way, can strengthen relationships and emotional bonds.

Carter agrees that one of the more helpful ways to avoid being overly angry or aggressive is to learn and practice assertiveness, which is far more respectful and effective than anger. See [Assertiveness Training](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13_18.html) ([http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13\\_18.html](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13_18.html)). As also recommended in the previous chapter, a powerful way to calm one's self is to genuinely attempt to understand the views and feelings of the other person. See [Listening and Empathy Responding](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13_8.html) ([http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13\\_8.html](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13_8.html)). Two more helpful skills are described in the same chapter: ["I" Statements and Expressing Anger Constructively](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13_26.html) ([http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13\\_26.html](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter13/chap13_26.html)). Almost all psychologists would recommend these skills for dealing with anger.

Carter describes some of these skills in another way, namely, what he calls "releasing anger." That is a misleading phrase if you assume that it means fully venting or expressing anger. Instead, it means that you choose to set your anger aside in favor of self-restraint and understanding of the situation. This results in your taking the time to assess the situation and to "assertively" share your helpful ideas and pursue more important things than expressing your anger forcefully. Being assertive and controlling your anger (not letting it dominate your life) are good examples of self-direction. A child needs a loving parent to teach him/her ways of managing anger and relating to others. An anger-spewing adult needs therapy or self-help to develop an anger management plan.

Unfortunately, there are many reasons why we resist giving up the power we gain through anger. As Barris points out (see above), many loud, pushy people with explosive tempers view their anger as automatic, natural impulses that come from inside and are entirely out of their control, i.e. "I'm just that way," "I've always had an explosive temper," and "if you had been through what I have been through, you'd feel real angry too." Thus, the "hot head" often believes he/she has no choice and can't change. In addition, many other angry, aggressive people believe that the world is filled with dominating people who use open and/or subtle hostility or power to take control over their situation. Therefore, to avoid being taken over by others ("you ain't going to make me do something I don't want to do), some people think to

preserve their freedom they have to strongly oppose the controlling person or subtly undermine their power. There are also many people who believe *they* should be in control (“I have always gotten my way” or “I know more than anyone else” or “Men should make the important decisions”). So, to gain control themselves or to avoid being controlled, many people become “control freaks” themselves.

Carl Semmelroth (2005), *The Anger Habit in Relationships*

Carl Semmelroth, another author of a recent self-help book about anger in relationships, starts by expressing the point that we are responsible for our anger and its destructiveness. He thinks the idea that our spouse or a parent “makes me so mad” is nonsense. Many people in recent decades have been told “your feelings don’t hurt anyone” (unless you express the feelings tactlessly) and since the 1960’s were taught that “it is healthy to express your anger.” Children in recent decades have not been told that anger by its very nature is destructive and designed to hurt someone. Semmelroth says everyone needs to be taught that “anger is preparation to control by threatening to attack others.” Anger is a lot of people’s way of solving problems by gaining control. But control in a relationship like marriage is inconsistent with being equal partners. Using anger to get your way is not a loving thing to do. Seeing it any other way is a self-delusion.

The belief that one needs to express their anger comes from the idea that suppressed anger builds up until there is more and more pressure and finally an explosion. That is a common belief going back to early Freudian writings. Semmelroth and other more behavioral therapists say that anger is not a system of internal drives and pressures but rather a habit—a learned way of reacting in certain situations. Like other habits, the more you do it the more you are likely to do it. The more you act in a loving manner, the more you are reinforced for being caring, and the more likely you are to behave that way in the future. And the more often you act in anger and get your way, the stronger your anger habit becomes and the more nasty, hateful, and demanding you become.

Semmelroth, like Carter and most other psychologists, believes that every person can and should be taught how to control his/her anger, starting in early childhood. They, of course, would teach somewhat different methods for controlling our own behavior. However, being civil and controlling our most vile emotions requires extensive training. As billions of parents have found out, it won’t work to just tell a child to “stop being so hateful to your sister” or “get over feeling that way,” or “do what I tell you to do” (not as I do). Children need to be taught, certainly shown over and over and rewarded for using better ways of handling frustration, rather than being permitted to just use their ineffective natural angry responses. The needed self-control skills would involve: (1) understanding where your angry thoughts and feelings come from—their history, (2) deciding that being less angry would help you achieve important life goals, more so than being known as an ill tempered, unpleasant person, and (3) following a practical plan for learning better anger control.

Carter also discusses some ways we undermine our own decisions to try to control our anger better. Very often one of the things that makes us mad is feeling that someone else is being pushy or unfair or bossy. We may respond to that other person with our own anger, thinking we can’t let that person get away with



something so selfish. We may feel our strong anger is necessary to stop their anger. Then depending on our personality, we may try to force our beliefs on to others--we may conceal our angry feelings (looking for a chance to "win" the battle), we may speak forcefully, or we may strongly resist in a passive-aggressive manner. All these manipulations do not optimally resolve the conflicts. Most people who feel controlled or forced will, in time, rebel, resulting in undoing the situation that was based on anger. Our anger-based gains are usually lost. It works out that most people eventually have an opportunity to live their lives as they choose, so the "ill-gotten gains" based on your anger are soon lost. You might think of it this way: every person has a choice about how they express their anger and how they respond to anger directed at them. But most of us know how compelling our anger can be, so we are tempted to use it.

Carter has several chapters describing how our thinking—how we see the world—gives rise to anger. For instance, if we have learned to use anger as a way to establish our social status and our own sense of worth, then such a person is likely to be insecure, overly dependent on others' approval, and almost constantly angry. Likewise, in the reverse direction, as you build your self-esteem and your feelings of significance, as you work out a life-plan for living your philosophy of life, and as you have the experience of relating warmly with others, you will have less and less difficulty controlling your anger and being helpful and cordial.

In general, much of our anger seems to come from our own irrational thinking. See [Challenging Irrational Ideas](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter14/chap14_30.html) at ([http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter14/chap14\\_30.html](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter14/chap14_30.html)). Thinking things are awful can, of course, make us angry. That is, if we strive for an impossibly idealistic life or world, it is possible that seeing that life and people fall short of these ideals will generate continuous anger in us. Unfortunately, some people are unable to accept reality or ordinary human behavior and they get mad.

Carter proceeds on for several additional chapters describing how our thinking may make us upset and how his insights and skillful reasoning as a therapist makes the person realize that his or her own thoughts (cognitions) generate the anger that spews out. Psychologists do not know what percentage of people reading a therapist's or a writer's (like me) explanations of anger will actually be helped to control their anger. Perhaps, these kinds of case studies primarily lead the readers to believe that only a therapist could correctly analyze the causes and reduce their anger. More research is needed, right?

Dr. Semmelroth (2005) also teaches that our thoughts lead to anger but he focuses mostly on relationships. For instance, he describes how our interactions, when repeated often enough, become expectations, as if the expectations were a part of a formal agreement. Then when one party doesn't do what has become expected (call for a date, arrange to pick up food for supper, etc.), the other person becomes upset because the "rules" have been broken. It helps if couples recognize when considerate behaviors become expectations and then gradually become obligations. Obligations need to be discussed and explicitly agreed upon (otherwise, one partner thinks it is an obligation and the other considers it optional).

Of course, cleaning up the criticism, negative comparisons, and nagging in a conversation reduces the irritation both people feel. It can be helpful to keep a record of these events and discuss them later. Remember Dr. Semmelroth thinks anger is for control—and criticism builds up the pool of anger which you can use to

control the other person. That is one purpose for criticism but it is possible to deal with negative traits or behaviors without being nasty or critical. For example, it is possible to believe and state that certain behaviors are unfair—a judgmental thought—without it being expressed as an insulting, hostile, critical evaluation. Example: John seldom puts his dirty cloths in the clothes hamper. That is a factual statement that could be observed (and recorded!) and is very different from this kind of angry comment: “John is such an inconsiderate slob and leaves his clothes everywhere expecting me to pick up and do the laundry for him. He makes me so mad.” Like anger, critical comments are for control. Factual statements can lead to less agitation and more solved problems.

Some therapists find it helpful to realize that most relationships have two sides or aspects: one is the relationship each partner imagines or fantasizes they have and the other side is the factual or observable characteristics of their relationship. These two views or opinions of a marriage make it possible for a couple to treat each other very badly most of the time but to still believe the fantasy that they still love, like, and are totally committed to each other. With one partner having a wonderful story-book fantasized love for the other person, it may be possible to overlook the mistreatment and get through fights and hard times. (“Oh, I love him anyway” or “deep down he loves me.”) This sounds like denial to me. Believing in these positive illusions may help sometimes but denying the deep disappointment and strong resentment that exists is not a good way to rebuild a relationship. It is important to look for the truth—the behavioral evidence for each partner’s love and commitment, not just cling to a false fantasy developed long ago. People who love each other are good to each other.

Very often the angry person thinks the person who he/she is mad at has caused the anger. “You make me so mad!” “You really upset me when you don’t listen to me and spend so much money on clothes.” “Can’t you just tell your Mother “no”? Keep in mind that anger is to control someone (“I can’t stand your constant complaining!”) And anger is used as an excuse for our behavior: “Why did you yell at me?” “Because you are driving me out of my mind!”

But your partner buying clothes or complaining is not responsible for your yelling or for your rant about over-spending. (What are your legal or moral grounds for demanding they not buy clothes or spend money?) Your anger is the feelings of your body getting ready to attack someone...to make them do what you want them to do. (Just because they want to do something different than you want them to do does not justify your anger!)

It might also be helpful, if you have a chance, to learn what the person who is angry with you really wants from you. But if the relationship is between equals who have no right to discipline each other, then the person who is angry usually has no right to control you (by anger or any way since one is not the slave or employee of the other). The angry person should learn to say to him/herself that his/her anger is just a mistake he/she is making about how to change the relationship. Anger and threats are not acceptable ways to change the behavior of companions or friends. It is usually especially difficult if both people in the relationship are deep into controlling each other by the use of strong anger. Such a relationship usually needs professional help. Keeping a journal of the anger interactions might help—record what the ill feelings were about, what the angry person(s) wanted to happen, what the criticized partner preferred to do, what solutions were tried, and what final outcome resulted.

Semmelroth describes several couples who have anger problems. One troublesome situation is when one partner has learned to get sympathy and support by disclosing his unhappy marriage to a cold, uncaring woman who is more interested in getting ahead at her job than she is concerned about the children...or a woman who has a terrible history of being lied to and dumped on by womanizers. People with these kinds of problems can find people who need love and want to help. The problem is that a certain percentage of unhappy people are chronically unhappy and always feel angry because someone is dumping on them regardless of how caring and sympathetic the new partner tries to be. Eventually, the anger turns on the hapless helper and the angry partner will find a more sympathetic and helpful partner and start another relationship. How can you tell if your new friend and helper is chronically "mistreated" and unhappy? Get to know his/her history. Just as some people use anger to control others; other people use unhappiness and their hard-luck stories to get sympathy and loving care.

Semmelroth gives several bits of simple advice: (1) the anger is the problem of the person who is angry, (2) if you find yourself with a very angry person, stay calm and listen but do not comment or try to intervene. Trying to calm down or to reason with the angry person (who is no longer thinking rationally) is likely to draw you into the fight and make the situation worse, (3) if you become angry, see #1 and try telling yourself: "I should keep my mouth shut and not react while I'm angry" or "I will not let my stupid anger run my life." You can think better about anger problems when you are calm and thoughtful, and (4) instead of expecting things to be done for you (because you feel you are important) try feeling gratitude for all the things that come your way.

Finally Semmelroth talks about a common conflict in marriage, namely, there is disagreement about how to spend money and who is responsible for paying off debts. This arises when there are joint accounts where there are supposed to be joint decisions but they can't agree. Perhaps one person wants to have the "final" decision; perhaps the other person wants to make independent decisions. Many couples set up separate accounts so that independence can be maintained, each putting in his or her own money, deciding how to spend it, and being responsible for their own decisions. When both have an income, the separate accounts usually eliminates one person having to come hat in hand to "request" more money which may upset the partner. A marriage of equals consists of one individual, a second individual, and a joint partnership or family. Everyone needs their individuality and that independence should be respected, not attacked. If your partner makes decisions you don't agree with, tell them if it upsets you (giving them a choice about what to do) but don't use anger, insults, or threats in a effort to make them change.

The last point made by Semmelroth is that communication (where we tell the truth) should replace arguments (where we often stretch the truth when angry). He says arguments are about who is the bigger victim. For example in a divorce court the goal is to prove that you have been hurt, cheated or mistreated far more than your spouse. Arguments are not to solve problems; they are a string of accusations (attacks) to make you look good and the other person look bad. If you want to effectively communicate then you will have to stop your habit of arguing. That means stop using "argument starters," such as "you don't ever care about me," "I can never believe you," "you are never on my side," "you always misunderstand my point," "you think you are always right and I am always wrong," etc. Note all the "nevers" and "always" in these statements. If one can just get away from arguing and blasting away, it is easy for anyone to start a constructive discussion by asking a

reasonable question, expressing your concern about the issue, saying what good outcome you are hoping for in this discussion, etc. If you want to communicate, approach the other person in a calm, reasonable, even friendly manner.

Anger puts you on the attack with other people and on the defensive about yourself. Truth is lost when everything you say can be used against you...or against them. Feelings of care and love get transformed into feelings of hatred and thoughts of hurting other people. Anger is a habit and a well embedded habit is very hard to stop, especially when the participants are under attack.

Lynne Namka (2002), *How to Let Go of Your Mad Baggage*

Lynne Namka takes a different approach to learning anger-control than the last two self-help authors. She relies more on careful internal self-observations (in the form of exercises) rather than on describing the therapists' methods of giving you insight in the hopes you will see what is going on in your mind. Lynne is the author of several books about anger in children and in families (See Amazon). She says anger is just an emotion, neither good nor bad, but if it is expressed in a raw, hurtful manner, it can be very distressing. Anger is not well understood by the average person, partly because it is very complex and there is little research and partly because it is a taboo topic in school and often hard to talk about within families or among friends. It is socially acceptable to say my three-year-old has a terrible temper but it is not easy to say my 11-year-old daughter or my 40-year-old husband/wife has really scary fits of rage.

Your parents probably didn't know how to deal with anger. They may have exploded, which could have been very frightening to you as a child—you may have thought they might hurt you or someone else; you may have worried that they would abandon you; you may have wanted to hurt them back. Or, your parents may have stuffed their anger down inside and hidden it, giving you the idea that anger is bad or dangerous and to be avoided at all costs. In either of these contexts you started to believe that anger should be dealt with in certain ways. There was probably little help for the family to learn good ways to handle anger and, thus, you were unlikely to learn good techniques for dealing with anger. Just being encouraged to read one of the many books for children about anger might have been very helpful, e.g. Namka's, "How to Let Go of Your Mad Baggage." Most authors would agree that all of us starting at age 3 or so should have an Anger Control Workshop every few years, perhaps for the rest of our lives.

As we have already learned, there are many unhealthy ways anger can be used. For one thing, research shows that frequent and chronic expressions of anger over the years are associated with generally poor physical health, especially heart disease, high blood pressure, and strokes.. Sometimes a person uses anger to hide from themselves or to avoid feeling shame or guilt. Perhaps they are feeling critical of themselves because they haven't performed well but their way of handling this disappointment in themselves is to attack or criticize or blame someone else. This doesn't usually work well; it doesn't reduce their guilt or the shame about themselves. In fact, it often doubles these emotions because one is now mad at someone else as well as with one's self. Another unhealthy example is when the negative feelings you feel towards yourself get attributed to or "projected" (in order to distract you from your own self-criticism) on to someone else and you become

critical of them. This may temporarily reduce your self-criticism but the negative feelings towards yourself are still there.

As Namka points out, however, it is quite an achievement if one can detect an irritating trait or behavior in someone else and then by careful self-observation recognize that you may have the same trait or behavior tendency. And, more importantly, recognize that you may have projected (spread around) that emotion or trait to others in order to make yourself feel a little better. If you can own your own negative traits, stop getting upset by others, and understand or forgive yourself, you will be much better at controlling your rants. To deal with the guilt and shame that you discover you have been trying to conceal by getting angry with others, please refer to both guilt and shame in Chapter 6. The antidote to guilt and shame is self-understanding and self-acceptance (See Determinism in Chapter 14).

Namka suggests an exercise designed to make your relationships safer—a place in which you can openly share your feelings: Step (1) Do a “Feelings Check.” Focus on any internal feeling that makes you uncomfortable (or you don’t want to have this feeling). Label this feeling...mad, disappointed, hurt, scared, boiling over, pissed off, sad (it doesn’t have to be anger). As soon as you have an unpleasant feeling in mind, just spend some time mentally being with the feeling...you don’t need to complain about the feeling or figure out what to do about the feeling. Instead, tell yourself that having the feeling is OK, that the feeling is natural in your situation, that you can accept the feeling, and that you shouldn’t be ashamed of having the feeling, and so on. Spend time with the feeling even if you feel a little uncomfortable.

Step (2) Go deeper—describe your feelings about the feeling in #1...for example: “I feel ashamed of feeling so angry” or “it would really be scary if I did what I’m thinking of doing,” or “I feel like crying when I think of the angry feeling,” or “I feel my hatred of what you did is justified” or “I’m afraid this feeling will never go away” and so on. You will probably have many feelings about the feeling in step 1. That’s OK...these feelings are important for you to know about. Your feelings may change as you think about it.

Step (3) Carefully note your underlying feelings and judgments about the feelings and judgments that you had in #2 about the original feeling in #1. How accepting are you about having these various feelings? Do you feel scared, guilty, ashamed...about the first feeling?...or about the feelings or thoughts about the second wave of feelings? Do you feel good in some ways about having the #1 feeling or about having your reactions in #2 to the #1 feeling? What else do you feel— anxious? shame? proud? Ask yourself if these feelings give you some indication of how you feel about yourself? Is your self-concept positive or mostly negative and self-doubting? Are you being hard on yourself? Any way you are feeling is OK. Tell yourself to be accepting of the original feeling and of all the subsequent feelings.

Step (4) Try to identify your defense mechanisms. Like in this exercise thus far, when faced with some bad feelings, observe how you try to get away from them. Namka says the most common ways to defend ourselves from bad feelings are: to fix them, to change the feelings, to deny or escape from the feeling, to blame someone else for the bad feeling, and so on. If a person can relieve their bad feelings, they won’t need to be so defensive and will have more ability to solve the problems. By watching how you are trying to cope with a feeling, you are gaining self-knowledge about how you defend yourself. Watch carefully to see what you want to do with an uncomfortable feeling—ask if you use these possible defenses:

Use your anger to scare someone else  
 Talk others into being your buddy and supporting you  
 Give up and cry  
 Try not to think about it  
 Run away—get out of this situation  
 Have a drink, take a drug, eat dessert  
 Watch a game on TV and forget about it  
 Blame someone  
 Rationalize your feelings and actions to yourself  
 Throw yourself into solving someone else's troubles  
 Let the other person have their way

Your preferred modes of defense in this exercise are probably a lot like the defense mechanisms you use against stress when conflicts occur in your relationships. For example, if in this exercise you chose to do a Feeling Check on anger and found in steps 3 and 4 that you mostly thought about criticizing and blaming the person or situation you felt mad about in step 1, then your favorite defense mechanism may be to aggressively attack the person you imagine to be responsible for your anger. Observe your feelings about this feeling (#1) over and over—study them and try to discover the defense mechanisms you use. Then do the same exercise with many other feelings that make you uncomfortable. You probably learned as a young child the ways you still use to cope with frustrations that come along. You may need to learn new and more adult ways of handling life problems.

Step 5. Take time to relax. When calm, think what you could do to deal with the distressing feelings you face. Above all, get professional help, talk with friends, or read to find ways of dealing with anger problems. Learn to cope with your feelings—that takes time but when you are able to do that, then you will not have to be afraid of your feelings, you will not have to run, you can watch your troublesome feelings more closely, detect the onset of a problem, and cope with difficulties quickly.

Lynne Namka credits Virginia Satir and Scott Peck with some of the basic steps in this exercise.



Anger is fear announced. When we step away from expectations...and reduce our choices to simple preferences rather than addictions, then we take a giant step away from anger and toward mastery. The cycle and the pattern of anger are ended when we see the perfection in every moment and reduce our expectations to zero.

David Neale Walsh



A short article about controlling traffic rage is here (<http://www.cognitivetherapy.com/shortFuse.html>). The author Jane E. Brody suggests using cognitive methods, such as questioning your critical or cynical attitude about drivers, trying to imagine the troubles and anxieties of the people ahead slowing you down, trying to focus on relaxing, listening to music, and trying to

distract your attention away from the pushy, hostile, idiot following you too closely and to praising your increasing self-control and patience.

### Tidbits of information about anger and violence

1. Violence may repulse and scare us but many people in our culture are also fascinated by brutal crimes and serial killers. We want to read about them, see movies about their life and crimes, and watch TV about serious crimes. You can buy on eBay a lock of Charles Manson's hair or a bag of John Wayne Gacy's dirt from his crawl space. Maybe this idolizing of monstrous killers helps explain why 85% of the world's serial killers are raised and live in America. There is a 2005 book titled "Natural Born Celebrities" by David Schmid, an English professor. How do we explain both this attraction to and our repulsion by uncaring, brutal and repugnant criminals? One speculation is that many people have a deep need to reassure themselves that they are not at all like a horrendous, barbaric cannibalistic or sexually perverted killer. That may be why it is popular among crime writers to describe signs of brutality and weird thinking early in childhood that seem to foretell the hideous events to come in adulthood. That history gives us cause to think "Oh, I didn't do anything like that." That's reassuring. It also permits us to separate our "good" families from the "bad" families that live in another part of town. Note: Although many writers produce a lot of popular books and entertainment about major crimes, there is very little sound, thorough, and unbiased research of the childhoods of horrible criminals.
2. What are called "hate crimes" are usually violent acts expressed by an individual against someone from a different group, perhaps a different color, class, religion, etc. This isn't just the violence of the dominant group against the oppressed group. There are, of course, degradation and acts of violence by the powerful against the weak and the disadvantaged. But, there are also resentment, bitterness, and feelings of humiliation within the group discriminated against and treated inhumanely. Hate crimes are perpetrated by both the top-dog and the underdog. Most writers assume that hate is a part of prejudice. However, some writers believe that genocide is caused more by dehumanization (seeing a person as an inferior or a non-human) than by hatred (Is there much of a difference?). It seems to me that a wealthy country's neglect of the poor worldwide is more due to being able to believe the poor are not their responsibility or unimportant. The lack of help from the wealthy may be a little stronger than "it isn't my responsibility," something like benign neglect or disdain. Anger and hate remain poorly understood, e.g. what is the relationship between violence and hatred? If a country or a group attacks another country or group and claims they are acting in self-defense, does that mean they don't hate the people they are killing? Does it mean that killing in self-defense is not morally bad? Brent Dean Robbin's review (<http://www.psycinfo.com/psycrcritiques/display/?artid=2005136672>) of Sternberg's 2005 book, *The Psychology of Hate*, raises these questions. It is important to remember that not all cruel and despicable acts are definitely motivated by hatred. I give you only one reference: [John Newton and his song, Amazing Grace](#), written in Olney, England in about 1760 (<http://www.texasfasola.org/biographies/johnnewton.html>). Did John Newton always know slavery was morally wrong or was he a "good person" who soon

- came to realize he was on the wrong side? There is so much we still don't know about hatred and overcoming it.
3. Anger researchers have estimated that about 5% of our population has an anger control problem. There is even a new diagnosis, Intermittent Explosive Disorder, that includes "road rage" and "hockey dads," as well as some "PMS Moms." This impulse-control problem is very common at a young age, starting with the "terrible twos." During childhood, boys are more aggressive and more frequently irritable than girls but this generally declines during childhood. Irritation again rises in the 20's and 30's and then there are slightly more angry women than men. At 30-years-of-age, singles are angrier than those with partners (Flouri, E. "Anger, Irritability, and Hostility in Children and Adults," published by the Economic & Social Research Council in "Seven Deadly Sins: A New Look at Society Through an Old Lens."). Having high hostility in college and experiencing increased anger from college to midlife predicts many high health and social risks. At any age, threaten any man's masculinity and he will become more hostile (Willer, R., Cornell University, presentation at American Sociological Association meeting, 2005).
  4. Children and teens who view violent videos and video games (73% of these games reward violent choices) exhibit more violent behavior, have more violent fantasies, and see themselves as more aggressive than non-viewers, according to Dr. Kevin Kieffer at St. Leo University in Florida. At least these findings hold for the short-term effects but there are still some doubts about the long-term effects on aggressive behavior. The American Psychological Association has adopted a resolution calling for less violent content in such games.
  5. What would we do if science learned how to measure traits of Junior High and High School students that would enable the student, or the student's parents, or maybe a trusted therapist to predict the extent of violence likely in their love lives before they get to be 30-years-old? Such a finding has been reported. Lehrer, Buka, Gortmaker, and Shrier (2006) reported a moderately strong tendency for adolescent girls who report having moderately more depressive symptomatology during the previous week to have a considerably higher risk of experiencing partner violence 5 years later. Do we live in a society which would try to prevent the predicted violence? Such predictions and Psycho-Social educational programs for dealing with depression and violence may not be too far away.

### Emotional rumination vs. thoughtful reflection

Most therapists believe that it is helpful to "process" or "work through" negative emotions, as long as the patient doesn't become so involved in intense emotions that he/she becomes even more upset. Slowly we are learning more about self-regulation of emotions. In an interesting experiment (using only college students), Kross, Ayduk & Mischel (2005) first had each student recall an interpersonal incident in which they became very angry. Then the experimenters had the subjects remember and describe the incident under one of two different conditions: One half of the group was asked to take a "self-immersed perspective," ("relive the experience as if it were happening to you all over again"). The other half of the subjects were asked to look at the experience from a distance taking a "self-distanced perspective," ("move back away from the experience a little and watch the conflict unfold as if happening to a distant you"). Then half of each group was told to focus,



while recalling their angry episode, on the feelings and sensations they were experiencing (the what focus) and the other half were asked to focus on the underlying reasons for the specific feelings (the why focus) they had when angry. Thus, there were four different groups of about 39 students each: immersed-what, immersed-why, distanced-what, and distanced-why. Later, after remembering the event, each subject's degree of anger was assessed.

The results of this study indicate that two conditions, (1) self-distancing from the event and (2) focusing on understanding one's emotions, may enable a person to process a hot emotional experience so that the anger can be understood and cooled a bit. On the other hand, the authors suggest that asking a patient (or yourself?) "Why do you think you are feeling this way?" while he/she is deeply and personally immersed in reliving a highly stressful experience might trigger an emotional over-reaction. (I have some doubt about this prediction of dire consequences from asking "Why?" My experience with a few thousand students has been that most of us are well defended against disturbing explanations of our behavior. Yet, if the person is highly emotional, one should, of course, be cautious.) In summary, the "distant-why" strategy is recommended. Note that the underlying emotions and the causes of the emotions are faced so this method is not to be confused with intellectualization or with emotional avoidance.

One of the advantages of this research technique is that it is a laboratory method using college students which closely resembles psychotherapy methods. There are many opportunities for universities to do similar research. Relatively little process research of this sort is being done by therapists in practice. It may be that the most effective instructions given a person attempting to cope with and understand their strong emotions, such as in this study, differs depending on the emotion or the problem being dealt with...and depending on the purpose of the treatment method, such as gaining understanding and Cognitive Therapy--or desensitization and Traumatic Incident Reduction.

## Using methods from different levels for developing your own self-help plan

Level I: Anger or aggression-control methods that focus on simple behaviors and thoughts

**Reduce your frustrations.** You know who makes you mad, what topics of conversation upset you, the situations that drive you up a wall, and so on. Can you avoid them? This could be the best way to prevent anger. Even if you can't permanently avoid a person whom you currently dislike, staying away from that person for a few days could reduce the anger. See method #1 in chapter 11.

You may need to clarify or change your goals. Having no goals can be uncomfortable. Having impossible goals can be infuriating. You may need to plan ways of surmounting barriers in your way.

**Reduce the environmental support for your aggression.** How aggressive, mean, and nasty we are is partly determined by the behavior of those around us (Aronson, 1984). Perhaps you can avoid subcultures of violence, including gangs or friends who are hostile, TV violence, action movies, etc. More importantly, select for your friends people who are not quick tempered or cruel and not agitators or prejudiced. Examples: if you are in high school and see your friends being very disrespectful and belligerent with teachers or parents, you are more likely to become the same way. If your fellow workers are hostile to each other and insult each other behind their backs, you are more likely to be aggressive than if you were alone or with tolerant folks. So, choose your friends carefully. Pleasant, tactful models are very important (Lando & Donnerstein, 1978).

**Explain yourself and understand others.** It is remarkable what a difference a little understanding makes. For example one of Zillmann's (1979) studies shows that a brief comment like, "I am uptight" prior to being abrasive and rude is enough to take the sting out of your aggressiveness. So, if you are getting irritated at someone for being inconsiderate of you, ask them if (or just assume) something is wrong or say, "I'm sorry you are having a hard time." Similarly, if you are having a bad day and feeling grouchy, ask others (in advance) to excuse you because you are upset. This changes the environment.

**Develop better ways of behaving.** See method #2 in chapter 11. Although we may feel like hitting the other person and cussing them out, using our most degrading and vile language, we usually realize this would be unwise. Research confirms that calmly expressed anger is far more understandable and tolerable than a tirade. Moon and Eisler (1983) found that stress inoculation (#10), social skills training (#18-#21), and problem-solving methods training were all effective ways to control anger.

Try out different approaches and see how they work. Almost anything is better than destructive aggression. Use your problem-solving skills as discussed in chapters 2 and 13. If you are a yeller and screamer, try quiet tolerance and maybe daily meditation. If you are a psychological name-caller, try "I" statements (chapter 13) instead. If you sulk and withdraw for hours, try saying, "I have a problem I'd like to talk about soon." If you tend to strike out with your fists, try hitting a punching bag until you can plan out a reasonable verbal approach to solving the problem.

Baron and others (Biaggio, 1987) have shown that several responses are incompatible with getting intensely angry, i.e. these responses seem to help us calm down. Such responses include empathy responding, giving the offender a gift, asking for sympathy, and responding with humor. Other constructive reactions are to ask the offensive critic to clarify his/her insult or to volunteer to work with and help out the irritating person. This only works if your kindness is genuine and your offer is honest.

In addition to incompatible overt responses, there are many covert or internal responses you might use that will help suppress or control your anger. Examples: self-instructions, such as "they are just trying to make you mad" and "don't lose control and start yelling," influence greatly your view of

the situation and can be very helpful in avoiding and controlling aggression. Indeed, one of the major methods of anger control (Novaco, 1975) uses relaxation, Rational-Emotive techniques (#24 below), and self-talk (#10 below, plus self-instructions--method #2 in chapter 11--and stress-inoculation--method #7 in chapter 12).

**Stop hostile fantasies.** Preoccupation with the irritating situation, including repeatedly talking about it, may only increase your anger. See method #10--thought stopping--in chapter 11. Also, punishing your anger-generating fantasies--methods #18 and #19 in chapter 11--or substituting and rewarding constructive how-to-improve-the-situation thoughts--method #16 in chapter 11--might work to your advantage in this case.



I am too busy with my cause to hate--too absorbed in something bigger than myself. I have no time to quarrel, no time for regrets, and no man can force me to stoop low enough to hate him.  
-Lawrence James



**Guard against escalating the violence.** When we are mad, we frequently attempt overkill, i.e. hurt the person who hurt us a lot more. There are two problems with retaliating excessively: the enemy is tempted to counterattack you even more vigorously and you will probably start thinking of the enemy even more negatively (in order to convince yourself that he/she deserved the severe punishment you gave him/her) which makes you want to aggress again. Thus, the saying, "violence breeds violence" is doubly true--violence produces more hate in your opponent and in you. Research has shown that controlled, moderate retaliation so that "things are equal" (in contrast to "teaching them a lesson") feels better in the long run than excessive retaliation (Aronson, 1984). Better yet, walk away from the argument, let them have the last word.

**Record the antecedents and consequences of your anger.** As with all behaviors, you need to know (a) the learning history of the behavior (angry reactions), (b) the antecedents or situations that "set you off," (c) the nature and intensity of your anger, (d) your thoughts and views of the situation immediately before and during the anger, (e) what self-control methods did you use and how well did they work, and (f) the consequences (how others responded and other outcomes) following your emotional reaction. If this information is *carefully and systematically* recorded for a week or two, it could be enlightening and valuable. Examples: By becoming aware of the common but subtle triggers for your emotional reactions, you could avoid some future conflict situations. By noting your misinterpretations and false assumptions, you might straighten out your own anger-causing thoughts. By realizing the payoffs you are getting from your anger, you could clarify to yourself the purposes of your aggression and give up some of the unhealthy payoffs. Remember: "Aggression pays!" Perhaps you could gain the things and reactions you need from others in some other way.

Take a break. Suppress or disrupt your aggressive responses, find a distraction, distance yourself from the situation. This is "timeout" like you would use with a misbehaving child. You are getting away from the argument. Another good idea is the old adages of "count to 10" or "engage brain before starting mouth." Do whatever you can to stop your impulsive and unwise comments and aggression, like hitting or yelling. Even a brief delay may permit you to think of a more constructive response. Actually the longer the delay the better, try to relax and perhaps sleep on it. Talk to a friend and do other things. Research with children has confirmed Seneca's opinion that thinking about other things helps reduce our frustration and ire. Do something you enjoy, something that occupies your mind. Listen to music, take a bath, meditate, or see a good comedy. Or use a little comedy, but it is hard to control the sarcasm.

You know you need to "take a break," when you start to yell, your heart is pounding, your muscles are tense, and you are so occupied by your anger that you can't think clearly

Rules for taking a timeout: (1) only try to control your behavior, don't try to tell the other person to "cool it" for a while. (2) Tell the other party that you need a break and indicate when you will be back to continue. Don't give the impression that you are "blowing them off." Indicate when you would like to continue the discussion. (3) Set aside enough time to resolve the conflict. (4) During the break, be careful about whom you talk to about the conflict situation—the third party may re-arouse your anger or may develop a hatred of the other person which becomes a problem later.



Lady debater: Mr. Churchill, if I were your wife, I'd put arsenic in your tea!

Winston Churchill: Lady, if you were my wife, I'd drink it.

Abraham Lincoln to a large lady visitor who accidentally sat on and crushed his favorite top hat: If you'd just asked me lady, I could have told you it wouldn't fit.



Tavris (1984) says the best thing, sometimes, to do about anger is nothing, including thinking nothing about the incident. The irritating event is frequently unimportant; its memory may soon fade away; if you stay quiet, the relationship stays civil and respectful.

When it comes to anger, you are sometimes damned if you do express it and damned if you don't. Swallowing anger may be unwise. Some theorists say that self-instructions to suppress anger for a long period of time may be risky, because it lowers our self-esteem, increases our sense of

powerlessness, and increases health risks. Other theorists point to a phenomenon called "laughter in church," i.e. holding back the expression of an emotion--a laugh--may strengthen the feeling. Watch for these problems if you are holding back your feelings. If you have suppressed the emotional outburst but the anger still rages inside, you may need to vent the anger privately (#14).



He/she who can suppress a moment's anger may prevent a day of sorrow.



**Stop using your temper to get your way**, i.e. extinguish your aggression (see method #20 in chapter 11). Several years ago, Gerald Patterson suggested that the aggressor and the victim could both be reinforced by the other. If the aggressor gets what he/she wants by making demands, threatening, yelling, calling people names, being nasty, etc., this hostile behavior is positively reinforced. But the victim who submits or gives in to these demands is also reinforced! He/she escapes the stress and stops the aggression (negative reinforcement) by letting the aggressor have his/her way. In this way, perhaps dominant-submissive or abusive relationships are maintained for long periods.

As the payoffs for your angry feelings and behavior become clear to you, try to eliminate the rewards. Example: if your anger intimidates someone into giving you your way, enter an agreement with them that they will no longer make concessions following your hostile responses. If you feel stronger, "more of a man (or stronger woman)" after being nasty, tell yourself that such a reaction is foolish, that anger is a sign of weakness not of strength, that being understanding shows more intelligence and is admired by others more than aggressiveness. Most importantly, ask the other person to help you avoid aggression by refusing to reinforce it; instead, you should be rewarded for having more pleasant interactions with them.

**Record and reward better control over your temper.** Considerable research with children has shown that the consistent reward of constructive, pleasant, non-aggressive behavior (while ignoring aggressive behavior) reduces aggression and prepares the child to accept future frustrations much better. If kindergartners can learn this, why can't we as adults? Review your notes about anger at the end of each week; note how the events seem trivial later and how your emotions seem excessive. See if you don't find your pre-anger thoughts to be rather amusing. Start rewarding yourself for avoiding frustrating situations, for curtailing your anger responses, and for substituting more controlled, constructive responses, like empathy responses. For instance, if you dislike a relative, say a brother or a father-in-law, reward yourself whenever you increase the pleasant, interesting interactions with that person. This may counteract the conditioned negative reactions you have. See methods #3, #8 and #16 in chapter 11. Novaco's (1975) techniques also involve self-rewards (see #10, stress inoculation, below).

**Self-punish aggression.** Like any other unwanted behavior, you can punish your own angry behavior. Also, you can *atone or over-correct or make up for* your inconsiderate behavior. But make sure this latter approach, the "let's make up; I'm very sorry" stage, isn't a con or manipulation. Many abusive persons apologize, promise it won't ever happen again, and become very loving afterwards for a while...until they get mad and abusive the next time. The idea in this method is not for you to be forgiven but to be self-punished--to make your angry aggression unprofitable and unpleasant to you as the aggressor so you won't do it again.

## Level II: Methods for reducing or controlling anger

**Use stress-inoculation.** The cognitive-behavioral therapists have developed an elaborate method, called stress-inoculation, for coping with anger. It involves self-awareness of the irrational ideas we tell ourselves which increase anger, learning better self-statements to encourage and guide ourselves, and rehearsing over and over how to be more calm and controlled in specific situations. See method #7 in chapter 12 for details. This is probably the best researched method, showing this technique allays anger but does not increase assertiveness.

**Use desensitization.** This method was originally designed to break the connection between non-dangerous situations and fear. But presumably the method would work just as well to disconnect anger from overly frustrating situations. Usually there are specific people, behaviors, or situations that prompt your aggression. These could be used in a hierarchy for desensitization; indeed, that is essentially what is happening in the rehearsal stage of the last method, stress-inoculation. A recently married woman was extremely resentful and jealous when her handsome husband talked with any other woman, even if she knew they had some business to discuss. By using desensitization, she was able to reduce these resentments and fears. (Yes, you're right, if you are wondering if her self-confidence or his fidelity might not also be problems.) See method #6 in chapter 12.

Evaluations of desensitization have only found moderate effectiveness with anger (Warren & McLellarn, 1982). It has not worked with some people with violent tempers. Leventhal (1984) speculates that physiological arousal (which is what desensitization reduces) is not a critical part of becoming angry (e.g. people who are almost totally paralyzed get mad). Emotions are partly mental. Relaxation may not counter anger as well as it does fear. Still it has some effect.

**Consider frustration tolerance training.** Just as one can learn to avoid hot fudge sundaes, one can learn to control his/her fists and tongue and even gut responses to some extent. The procedure is to expose yourself to the irritation over and over until you can handle it. This can be done in fantasy (basically desensitization) or in role-play (a friend could play your pushy boss or critical father) or in reality (the jealous woman above seeks out the experience rather than trying to stop it--which becomes paradoxical intention--see method #12 in chapter 11).



**Meditation and relaxation.** Meditation or yoga and relaxation can be used to allay anger as well as anxiety (Carrington, 1977). Suinn (1990) and his students developed a training procedure involving the arousal of anxiety or anger (by imagining an irritating scene) and then practicing avoiding or reducing the anger response by relaxing. This procedure--relaxing, arousal of anger, attention to anger signs, replacing anger with relaxation--is repeated over and over for 4 to 8 sessions. The advantage of this procedure is that the relaxation techniques, such as a pleasant scene, deep muscle relaxation, or deep breathing, can be immediately used anytime unwanted anger occurs. This is similar to method #10. Also see chapter 12 and #11 above.

**Use catharsis.** Privately vent your feelings, get them off your chest. There are three skills involved: (a) realizing your feelings, (b) learning to express feelings, and (c) learning to drain or discharge your feelings. Some of the hotly debated pros and cons about this method have already been reviewed under "Frustration and Aggression" above. The pro-catharsis side is made up of dynamic and psychoanalytic therapists and popular folklore (Lincoln recommended writing down your feelings, then tearing up the paper). The anti-catharsis side is made up of personality researchers who believe that venting anger is just one more trial of learning to be aggressive. Certainly, one has to be on guard against this happening. Recall that under "Internal Dynamics" we discussed that one way for anger to build was via anger-generating fantasies, i.e. reliving an irritating experience over and over and getting madder and madder in the process (actually if you remained calm, it would be desensitization!). Thus, current theories make all kinds of predictions: anger is thought to grow if it is fully expressed *or* unexpressed *or* imagined *or* totally denied. In other words, psychologists don't agree, strongly indicating we don't understand anger very well yet.

The practical distinctions between a "swallower" and an "exploder" are especially clear when applying this method. An inhibited, suppressed person must first learn to accept all of him/herself, including the scary boiling rage. The "swallower" has had years of socialization: "Don't get so mad." "Stop acting like a little baby." "Wipe that smirk off your face before I knock it off." So one of his/her first tasks is to recognize his/her anger and learn to express it when alone. Part of method #8 in chapter 12 deals with the "swallower's" difficulties with expression. On the other hand, the "exploder" should have no difficulty venting his/her anger; it comes naturally, except now he/she has to learn to do it alone so it won't hurt anyone.

Healthy, effective venting will probably involve (a) *exhaustion*, i.e. vigorously expressing the feelings (punching a pillow, crying about the hurts) until you are drained, (b) *an intention and belief* (or self-suggestion) *that venting will rid you of the accumulated anger* forever, and (c) an *open-mindedness to new insights* as the angry feelings are expressed physically, verbally, and in your thoughts. *See method # 10 in chapter 12* for a full description. Observe the consequences of your venting carefully, if it isn't working, try some other approach.

Even a major anti-catharsis writer like Tavis (1984) cites Scheff (1979) and says, "Ventilating anger directly can be cathartic, but only if it restores your sense of control, reducing both the rush of adrenaline...and reducing

your belief that you are helpless or powerless." In other words, expressing anger right in the other person's face feels good and gets the venom out of your system if it works for you, i.e. rights some wrong or gets the other person to change, and, at the same time, avoids creating more conflict and stress. She admits that it is risky business when directly confronting the person you are mad at. I agree and *I'm not recommending direct, explosive, face-to-face attacks*. Tavis never seems to consider *private* catharsis.

Catharsis occurs quite often in therapy where it is almost universally considered therapeutic. But there is very little research into the effectiveness of self-generated fantasy and exercises (like beating a pillow) for venting and reducing anger. There is some evidence that expressing anger at the time you are upset reduces aggression later (Konecni, 1975). So, in spite of having little relevant scientific information to guide us, I'd rely on extensive therapeutic experience (Messina, 1989) that says it helps to "get angry feelings out of our system." Namka's (1995) book specifically helps a family express their anger constructively. We need more and better research.

**Deal with anxiety, guilt, and low self-esteem.** All environmental stresses and internal tensions seem to intensify our aggressive responses. Karen Horney thought chronic anger was a defense against emotional insecurity. Perhaps a sagging self-concept is particularly prone to prompt a hostile reaction to even minor offenses. Stress inoculation methods have been shown to reduce anger and increase self-esteem (Meichenbaum, 1985; Hains & Szyjakowski, 1990). Chapters 5, 6, 12, and 14 help change the emotions that may increase aggression.

**Deal with depression and helplessness.** Our first response to frustration is often anger--a quick vigorous (but often unwise) reaction to "straighten out" the situation. If we are unable to escape or overcome the frustration, however, we eventually lose hope and become apathetic. See chapter 6.

**Make constructive use of the energy from anger.** In contrast to the lethargy of depression, when we are angry, adrenaline flows and increases our blood pressure, we have lots of energy. Instead of using this "natural high" to hurt others, we can use it in constructive ways. Examples: if a smart student in your class annoys you, use your anger-energy to study more and be a better competitor. If it irritates you that you are out of shape and can't play some sport as well as others (or as well as you used to), use the resulting energy to get in shape, don't just eat or drink more and criticize others. I am not proposing you become a more competitive Type A personality; I'm not suggesting more anger but rather a more beneficial use of the anger already present. For instance, try starting your own self-help group for angry people; try helping others, such as by joining a local MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

### Level III: Skills involved in avoiding or reducing anger

It may be reasonable to assume that aggression and violence occurs when we do not have a better way of responding to the situation. In other words,



we lack problem-solving and interpersonal skills. Isaac Asimov said, "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."



If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to treat everything as if it were a nail.



**Learn to be assertive with others.** Assertiveness is tactful but firm; it is reasonable. Aggressiveness is inconsiderate, unreasonable, abrasive, and often an unfair angry over-reaction. Obviously, there will be less anger if you can be assertive rather than aggressive. Again the distinction between "swallowers" and "exploders" is useful. Swallowers need to learn to express their feelings, to stand up for their rights, to state their preferences and opinions, to immediately negotiate minor inconveniences or irritants. This is assertiveness. Quick effective action avoids the build up of anger, ulcers, and explosions. Exploders need to reduce their impulsive, hurtful anger, find better tactics for reducing conflicts, and, perhaps, learn ways to be more positive and empathic. *Both swallowers and exploders need to be assertive.* See method #3 in chapter 13.



Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way--that is not easy.  
-Aristotle



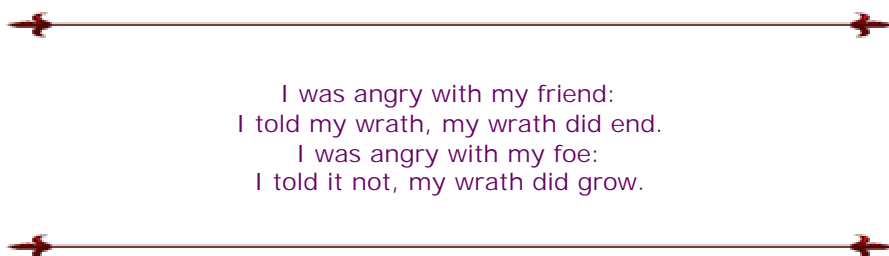
**Be empathic.** See the Longfellow quote at the beginning of this chapter. The least angry people are the most able to understand others, able to put themselves "in the other person's shoes" and realize their motives and pain. It is a life-long, unending task to know or intuit the inner workings of others and to view every human life as a kindred spirit, in the sense of "but for the grace of God, I would be that person." See method #2 in chapter 13 for empathy responding and method #4 in chapter 14 for tolerance through determinism. The most soothing reaction to hostility (your own or someone else's) is genuine empathy.

**Practice emotional control by role-playing.** There is no better way to learn new and better ways of interacting in difficult situations than to practice over and over with a friend. Watch how others handle the situation. Try out different approaches, get feedback, and practice until you are ready for real life. See method #1 in chapter 13.

**Learn to "fight" fairly.** When you find out someone has been lying to you, you may feel like yelling at them or even hitting them. That isn't very smart. A reasonable solution is unlikely to come out of a big nasty verbal or physical fight. So, chill out. Some therapists recommend fighting "fairly." To

fight fairly, first of all, you need to know why you are mad. For example, if you are over-reacting because you have had a bad day or because you are displacing anger from another person, that isn't fair. Then you and the other person (who lied) need to talk about how to fix the situation; you can even cry and shout about how upset or hurt you are, but no name-calling, no nasty put downs, no terrible threats, etc. Find out his/her viewpoint; get the facts. Stick with the current problem, don't dig up old grudges. Finally, state your views, hurts, fears, and preferences clearly; arrive at an "understanding," if possible, and an acceptable arrangement for the future.

Some therapists (Bach & Wyden, 1968) believe that frustrations especially in an intimate relationship are better expressed--fully and dramatically--than suppressed. Yet, few relationships could survive frequent, uncontrolled, all-out expressions of raw, negative, permanently hurtful emotions. So, there are guidelines for verbally fighting in such a way that the couple can vent their feelings, resolve their conflicts, and continue liking each other. See method #5 in chapter 13.



**Hold back your anger.** Act like a mature, responsible adult. Like the debate about catharsis, therapists disagree about the best way to handle anger towards a loved one. Mace & Mace (1974) and Charny (1972) point out that anger is the greatest destroyer of marriages. Thus, instead of "fighting," as just suggested, they recommend that you (a) admit your anger, (b) moderate or control it, and (c) ask your partner for help in figuring out what two committed, caring people can do about the situation. Then work out an agreement. This is not a total suppression of anger, i.e. the conflict is resolved, but the intense emotions are never expressed as they are in fair fighting.

**"I" statements express anger constructively.** There is great skill in knowing when, where, and how to resolve conflicts. Here are some steps to consider when planning how to handle a situation that upsets you:

- a. Have we chosen a time and place where both of us feel free to discuss our problems? If the other person brings up the problem at a bad time, tell him/her that you are also eager to resolve the problem and suggest a better time or place.
- b. Have I tried to find out how the other person sees and feels about the conflict? Ask questions to get his/her point of view. Give empathy responses (#19). Don't counter-attack. Put yourself in his/her shoes. Understanding will replace anger.

c. Have I asked the other person to listen to my point of view? Be specific and accurate (no self-serving exaggerations) about what was said and done, explaining why you are upset. You should talk about your feelings (you *are* the expert here). But, do not blame, "analyze," or "psychologize" about the other person's motives, feelings, or negative traits (you are *not* the expert here). Tactfulness and respect are important, so clearly communicate your needs and preferences but not your rage and resentment. There are ways of constructively communicating your unhappiness without going into an accusatory tirade. For example, an important skill is "I" statements. These "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_ (not: when you are a SOB) \_\_\_\_\_" statements not only tactfully ask for changes but they also convey that you are assuming responsibility for your own feelings, not blaming others for how you feel. *Method #4 in chapter 13* describes "I" statements in detail and why they work so much better than a stream of hateful insults and demands.

d. Have I made it clear to the other person exactly what I want done differently? (Making it clear that you are willing to change too.)

e. Have I asked the other person to tell me exactly what he/she would like me to do differently? (Without implying you will do whatever he/she wants.)

f. Have the two of us agreed on a mutually acceptable solution to our difficulty? Am I sure he/she knows exactly what I have in mind? Do I know exactly what he/she thinks the plan is? (Better put the agreement in writing.)

g. Have we planned to check with each other, after a given time, to make sure our compromise is working out?

h. Have I shown my appreciation for the positive changes the other person has made?

#### Level IV: Cognitive processes involved in reducing your aggression

Like the Greek philosophers, in 500 or 400 B.C. Buddhist teachers were guiding followers to be more patient and loving and to exercise control of their anger. We might benefit from studying the ancients as well as the modern psychologists (see the four popular books reviewed at the beginning of this section).

#### Buddhist teachings about controlling anger

In his book "How to Solve Our Human Problems," Buddhist teacher and author Geshe Kelsang Gyatso (2005) gives a clear explanation of how to control anger. The author is a Buddhist Master who introduced Kadampa Buddhism to the West in 1977. I have been greatly helped writing this section about Buddhist methods by Adam Waterhouse, an able member of a Kadampa Buddhist Center in Bristol, England. I

will briefly summarize Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's major suggestions for avoiding and handling anger. Interestingly enough, Gyatso's insights, based on 2400-year-old Eastern wisdom, are quite similar to very recent Cognitive Therapy techniques. Note also my earlier reference to Seneca, a Roman philosopher-educator about the time of Christ, who also had quite sophisticated ideas about managing anger.

Hundreds of years before Christ and even before the great Grecian culture, Buddha came to understand that in order to feel content one had to give up what he called the mind of "desirous attachment." This "mind" is made up of thoughts that tell us that our happiness depends on acquiring certain objects and goals (such as relationships with specific people, possessions, status, and/or enjoyable experiences). Desirous attachment is a dependency that is based on a misguided ("deluded") belief that happiness is produced by gaining a degree of wealth, success, attention, affection, etc. Buddhism teaches us to give up our wishes for those objects and experiences; we also need to give up our thoughts of anger and frustration when we don't or can't get the things we want.

Buddha believed that all lives involved hardships, suffering, and unhappiness. As he pointed out, even the most fortunate among us have to endure aging, sickness, loss of love, and, eventually, death. Buddha's years of observing the human condition, studying, and meditating led him to believe that in order to transcend these sufferings we have to attain a state of perfect inner peace, known as "liberation" or "nirvana." Perfect inner peace means we have to give up many wants and desires—not all desires, but our desires to find personal happiness from external conditions. Buddha knew how hard this would be to do since we humans tend to believe that external conditions cause happiness; today we in Western cultures still believe that wealth, possessions, attractive partners, fulfilling our whims, etc., will make us happy. Buddha, however, taught us differently and his message delivered by Buddhist teachers and monks remains relevant today. Buddhists are expected to overcome a variety of "deluded" minds, not just anger, but also desirous and sexual attachments, pride, self-centeredness and so on. A follower is also expected to learn over many years to meditate with more and more perfect concentration. This religion is very psychologically demanding but it is tolerant of backsliding. It is a religion that is relatively easy to understand, if you learn from a good teacher, but it is very difficult to follow moment by moment the religious instructions about mentally replacing anger and greed with patience. The devoted Buddhist meditates long hours and practices over and over to act, think, and feel the way his/her religion prescribes.



Buddhists believe that for a person to feel content and happy he or she may need to give up many, perhaps thousands, of frustrated wants and desires—not all desires (wanting to be a better person and wanting to help others are good desires). Yet, other desires lead to unhappiness, such as the drive to acquire more, to have power, to be different, and to have others and the world be different. The accepting of reality—the way things are—was seen as a way, even for the very poor, to find happiness and peace—called "nirvana." Accepting that the universe is unfolding as it should is not an easy assignment. Buddha and his many followers realized these changes in the goals we set and in attitudes we have would be hard to accept. Buddhists are practical, blunt realists who directly deal with internal mental and emotional events. Buddhist teachers expect much from their students. Buddha taught in Northern India for 50 years, became well known, and many stories were told about his extraordinary wisdom and powers.

To Buddhists it is very important to distinguish between two kinds of desires: (1) having very commendable goals in life (see Chapter 3), such as liberation, enlightenment, helping others, becoming less angry and more patient, etc. and (2) having an undesirable “mind contaminated with desirous attachments,”—craving a specific relationship, possession or entertainment—in the belief that we badly need these things in order to be happy. Thus, Buddhists are counseled to adopt helpful and tolerant goals and values while giving up frustrating, self-centered life goals which ignore the needs of others.

There is a sharp contrast in wants between Eastern cultures and Western cultures. Western societies value high ambitions, even praising goals that are blatantly self-serving and highly unlikely to be met (like becoming president or a millionaire...or having a fantastic body). We value driven people so long as their anxiety doesn't get out of hand. When stress becomes too great, we usually lower our sights because we recognize the wisdom of the Buddhist philosophy of giving up some self-imposed highly stressful desires. Another Western problem occurs when the culture, family, friends, teachers, employers and others push for a very different level of ambition than the individual him/herself prefers. The topic of this chapter is not stress, however, but anger. The Buddhist approach to both emotions is similar.

Gyatso defines anger as “a deluded mind that focuses on an animate or inanimate object, feels this disliked object to be unattractive, exaggerates its bad qualities, and wishes to harm it.” Like today's mindfulness-oriented psychologists, Gyatso tells us that we must watch our thoughts carefully and cut off angry thoughts as soon as they start. He emphasizes the unwanted consequences of strong anger—how it often causes us to be impulsive, unfair, critical, and irrational, creates strong negative feelings in other people towards us, and seriously damages our relationships with others. Such a view motivates us to control our anger and benefit from the practice of patience: peace of mind, improved relationships, and clearer thinking. Indeed, if everyone overcame their own anger, as the author points out, it would be a giant leap towards ending wars, murders, and violence.

Instead of feeling irritation, dislike, and frustration, Buddhist teachers say take every opportunity to practice patience, i.e. accept fully and happily everything that happens to you. You can, of course, take action to improve your circumstances, so long as your actions are tolerant and considerate of others. No one can make us feel badly; feeling badly is our own doing. Getting angry about something is not a show of strength; it is a show of ignorance because it is unreasonable to emotionally refuse to accept things as they are (similar to determinism; see chapter 14). Accept whatever can't be avoided. Saying to yourself “this is awful, I hate it” is usually irrational (compare this to Rational-Emotive Therapy in chapter 14). If we sometimes have to suffer hardship and pain, we should do it stoically. Striving for enlightenment and trying to improve the welfare of all living beings may at times be inconvenient. But keep on striving anyway. Understanding our own suffering leads us to useful insights and empathy for others.

  
 There is no evil greater than anger,  
 And no virtue greater than patience.  
 A Buddhist Master Shantideva  


Gyatso gives a very good deterministic (lawful) rationale for why we should not get mad at the person who hurts us physically or emotionally: the person offending us does not consciously and deliberately decide to get angry and harm us; instead he or she is acting on “an inner sickness of anger” as well as being dominated by strong emotions and by the complex conditions that influence him. Those conditions (e.g. his mood, his irrational ideas, his karma and the karma of the victim, the situation, his history of a bad temper, his family habits, his previous lives, etc.) are influencing his actions and determining whether he acts to insult/hurt us or to be gentle and patient with us. The aggressor is a giant bundle of incomprehensible constantly changing causes that exist for only a moment of time; he is not a carefully self-directed and responsible person. Thus, there is no person and no clear-cut cause to totally blame for the other person’s anger. So, even if we get hurt or offended, we can find no person deserving of our anger. Yet, suffering still occurs. If we are wise, like Buddhists, we should set about understanding the person who hurt us, controlling our anger in return, and soothing our urges to retaliate.

In a very practical way, Gyatso discusses how to avoid retaliating after we are hurt. We may do this by being patient and by learning to think: “he is hurting me only because he is deluded.” We can gradually reduce the frequency of our angry thoughts by deciding to avoid getting angry during the next hour or two. Then steadily step by step we can learn to control our anger for longer periods. Before long we can remain unruffled by people and things that used to push our buttons. In fact, the difficult, irritating person can be thought of as giving you an important gift, namely, the merit and virtue you earn when you practice patience. Keep in mind that anger is a very serious problem—it can destroy our happiness and our accumulated virtues. Buddhists believe that when an angry person is reincarnated, his or her body will be ugly and his or her temperament will still be unpleasant.

Gyatso gives more reasons for avoiding angry retaliation: study the person who hurt you to see if the anger was caused by his or her basic nature or by a temporary condition or fault. In either case there are no logical grounds for getting mad, so a crucial first step is seeing the irrationality of our anger and hatred. When facing strong anger and resentment, just briefly seeing the “delusional” aspects of hatred is not enough. You have to go deeper to get to the core of the feelings. This is where the Buddhist uses patience and meditation (see chapter 12) to instill this logical thinking—to make it automatic to believe that anger is never justified. How does meditation guide a person to more basic peace and happiness? While in the calm of meditation, you need to explore over and over the disadvantages of anger going from mild irritation to powerful disgust, disdain, and rage. Gradually you will more and more clearly see that the external events or behaviors of others that are bothering you are not the real problem—your anger is the problem! Your illogical ranting, raging mind is the problem! Like seeing that over-eating and smoking kills you and that drugs and alcohol ruin your marriage, you come to understand that enough is enough: you are a slave to your anger and your anger and criticism drive people and lovers away. You see the craziness of your ongoing anger and vow to change. Use the calmness of meditation to review your episodes of anger without getting angry this time but looking for better ways to resolve the conflicts. Note: this is today’s desensitization (see Chapter 12). Remember the Buddhist teachings: Antidotes to anger are patience and love; Love is wishing happiness to everyone; Respect others—inside every person is a sacred core deserving honor.

Another Buddhist approach is to remember the law of karma, i.e. we reap the results of our past actions. Thus, our own negative karma may be the cause of our own

pain, not the person who may seem to us to have caused us to be unhappy. In some situations the person involved in our feeling pain may actually be helping us by giving us an important chance to practice patience, to understand how we send out negative karma, to gain virtue by controlling our anger, and so on. Instead of feeling jealousy and envy, we should feel joy when others are successful or feel happy. We can praise them, "offer them the victory," and genuinely try to help them. Buddha said that becoming elated when praised and angry when criticized was the behavior of "the childish."

Buddha devoted himself to loving all sentient (feeling) beings and gave his life for many ordinary people; we too should respect and be a servant for all living beings. Avoiding retaliating when someone hurts us is a commendable form of patience. By being understanding and patient with others we become more enlightened--less self-centered, more self-controlled, more compassionate with others, and better prepared for whatever the future holds. If you would like to learn more about Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's teachings or about [Buddhist beliefs and methods of dealing with stress and anger](#), go to (<http://www.kadampa.org>).

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's book reads a lot like a modern Cognitive Psychology self-help book. Yet, Gyatso takes his wisdom from a long line of Buddhist Masters and wise men, especially Shantideva. You might wonder what great Buddhist Teachers had to say about frustration and anger a thousand or more years ago? Actually, we have a wonderful opportunity to compare ancient thoughts with modern psychological notions because the highly respected Indian pandit Shantideva (called the God of Peace) wrote a lot about anger and patience in his *Guide to the Bodhisattvas Way of Life*. This guide has been preserved and is considered by many Buddhists to be the best set of instructions ever written to become a fully enlightened human. There are several Websites that describe Shantideva's history and thinking about anger in simple, clear words: ([http://www.shantideva.net/guide\\_ch6.htm#top](http://www.shantideva.net/guide_ch6.htm#top) and <http://www.shantideva.net/index.html>).

I think you will also be impressed and well served by Geshe Tashi Tsering's edition of the transcripts of [Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's November 2002 course in London about coping with anger](#) (<http://www.jamyang.co.uk/DealingwithAnger.html>). Their examples (provided by both Gyatso and Tsering) are very good and will increase your understanding of the profound insights that were in large measure provided by Shantideva, the Indian yoga, and other Buddhist teachers well over a thousand years ago. These ancient wise men could converse easily with leading psychologists today and not feel behind at all. I hope humankind does a lot better controlling our temper and accepting frustrating experiences in the next 1000 years. But hope isn't enough. We need hard-nosed, no non-sense, practical outcome research.

### More cognitive methods described in this book

Quietly and calmly reading this book as adults, it may be hard to imagine how some teenagers get into fights, sometimes lots of fights. Susan Opatow of Columbia University says that almost all of the 40 seventh graders she studied in a New York City minority school had no idea how to handle their anger except to emotionally "retreat inward" or "explode outward," i.e. fight. Only 2 out of 40 said they would "verbally express their feelings of anger."

Not one considered "trying to reason with the other person" or "having an open discussion of both peoples' feelings" or "exchanging information or views" or "trying to find a satisfactory compromise" or any other solution. Perhaps it isn't surprising, since these students think fighting and swallowing their anger are the only solutions. Actually, over 50% think fights are constructive. These 13-year-olds say that without fights you would never find out who you are and what you want out of life, that you learn about people and how they react by fighting, that fights sometimes build a relationship, that fights settle arguments, and that fights can be fun.

Opatow says these kids consider nothing but "their gut reaction" when they are mad. They are spewers or swallows; almost never smart copers. Surely a wise society could teach them other possible ways of resolving conflict. Indeed, given a supportive environment and a little encouragement to ponder, I'll bet the seventh graders could devise their own effective, non-violent ways of handling these situations. The point is: we have to think things out ahead of time and practice responding in better ways than with our furious fists or combative mouths. The cognitive approach has a lot to offer (for a good general discussion see Hankins, 1993).

Williams (1989) and Williams & Williams (1993), advocates of reducing your level of anger for health reasons (heart disease and immune deficiencies), give this advice about expressing or suppressing your anger. When angry, ask yourself three questions: (a) Is this worthy of my attention? (b) Am I justified? (c) Can I do anything about it (without anyone getting hurt)? If you can answer all three "yes," perhaps you should express your feelings and try to do something. If any answer is "no," better control your emotions by thought stopping, attending to something else, meditation, reinterpreting, etc.


**Challenge your irrational ideas.** Anger-generating irrational ideas or beliefs come in various forms: your own impossible, perfectionistic standards make it impossible for anyone to please you; you feel a person is despicable when he/she lies about you or deceives you; you believe that others *make* you mad but really you are responsible for what you feel; it may seem perfectly clear to you that some peoples' behavior is immoral and disgusting; you feel sure that certain kinds of people or groups are causing serious trouble for all the good people in the community and these people should be severely punished. All these ideas may generate anger; look for the "shoulds" and the "ain't it awfuls" in your thinking. They are *your* ideas causing *your* anger.

Another viewpoint is that you can get a just and reasonable resolution of a conflict without hating, hurting, or humiliating anyone. Cognitive and Rational-Emotive therapy provide a way to change these anger-producing beliefs into more rational ideas and solutions. See method #3 in chapter 14. Two good books present the RET approach to handling your own anger (Ellis & Lange, 1994; Dryden, 1990).


**Take a deterministic view of the world.** The beauty of determinism is that it provides a way of experiencing life--all of it--as an understandable, "lawful," astonishingly beautiful, marvelously complex, and ever changing



process. There are reasons for everything; thus, everything that happens must happen and everything that doesn't happen is impossible or "unlawful" at that moment. Therefore, we should be accepting of ourselves, warts and all, and tolerant of others, hostility, greed, and all. See determinism in method #4 in chapter 14.



No man was to be eulogized for what he did or censured for what he did or did not do, because all of us are the children of conditions, of circumstances, of environment, of education, of acquired habits and of heredity molding man as they are and will forever be.  
-Abraham Lincoln



By understanding our enemy's background, needs, attitudes, and dreams, we can see how they feel and think. We may not agree with them but we "know where they are coming from." We can understand his/her actions and feelings. Understanding leads to acceptance.

Try **cognitive reality checking and reinterpretation**. Clearly, how we see our situation determines our emotional reaction. Example: you are in a fender bender: if you believe you were not paying attention, you may feel anxious and cry, but if you believe the other driver was reckless, you may feel angry and become verbally abusive. Some people (aggressive males, drunks, and people with little empathy) are much more prone than others to see hostile intentions in others. How biased are your perceptions? Are you frequently mad and thinking critical thoughts of others? Do you often think of others as stupid, lazy, jerks, losers, ugly, crude, disgusting, etc.? Try to test out your negative hunches about specific people. Try to realize you are oversimplifying, dehumanizing, and vilifying others, possibly to rationalize your own hostility and maybe as a cover up of your own self-hatred.

Anger can be reduced by (a) asking yourself if there are other less hostile ways of seeing (interpreting) this situation, (b) actually trying to see the situation from the other person's viewpoint (try describing the situation from their point of view), and (c) thinking about the likely consequences before acting aggressively. Yes, people *can* do this, reducing their own chronic hostility.

Suppose the irritating person can't be stopped or avoided, e.g. a cantankerous boss or a rebellious child, you can consciously try to attribute the irritating behavior to new, more acceptable causes. Examples: you may assume that the boss is under great pressure. You can see your immature 16-year-old as "trying to find him/herself," "scared of growing up," or "well trained to be dependent," rather than being "obnoxious" or "hateful and headed for trouble."

People who work in provocative situations, like police and bus drivers, can be inoculated against anger by learning self-control (method #10) or by viewing the other person's behavior in a new light. For instance, New York

City bus drivers are taught that riders repeating questions over and over, e.g. "how far is 49th street?" may be bothered by high anxiety or by language or hearing problems. Also, they are taught that apparent drunkenness may be caused by cerebral palsy, epileptic seizures, mental illness, medication, etc. Now, rather than getting mad, the bus driver is more likely to think "hey, this person may be sick." You can become more open-minded by yourself and, thus, less addicted to anger-generating thoughts about the other person's behavior or situation.

Viewing your anger as a resource. Andrew Roffman (2004) suggests that a therapist (or maybe a helper) ask the angry person to think of anger as a resource—a mental jumping off place to feeling differently—rather than a terrible internal beast you must restrain. The first step is to Unpack which means the angry person will review in great detail the connections between feeling angry and describing the experiences that seem to be causing the upset or irritated feelings. The helper urges the helpee to tell him or her more, including how do you know you are angry? Or what do you feel and where when you are mad? What do you feel like you should do when you are pissed off? What do you think others do in this situation? What should they do? Where is all these ideas you have come from? How do you think others see you when you get mad?

The second step is Looking for metaphors. This is because metaphors can be basic symbolic building blocks in our mental life. So, pay attention and focus more on metaphors. Examples: "that makes my blood boil," "she just keeps adding fuel to the fire," "he knows how to push my buttons," etc. These comments can lead to a discussion of a person's sensitive buttons and to the urges to both control the anger and to express the anger. There is almost always this conflict inside the angry person. There may also be several tugs-of-war going on inside.

Feeling anger can be a signal to stop automatic impulsive responses. When those choice points are identified, the angry person can engage his/her brain and ask his or herself: "What are my choices here?" and "Aren't there other choices than to either explode...or to meekly run away? And what are my choices? What is my philosophy of life? My values?" When the person struggling with anger answers these questions, they find that anger becomes a true resource that helps them find much more meaningful and fruitful life choices.

To Roffman anger is not a dreaded trait to be managed but a force one can encourage to lead him or her to make better decisions. He gives these examples: a father who was feeling furious with his 11-year-old son who had just drug a heavy sweeper down his beautiful wood stair case. A few minutes of thought reminded him of his sincere hope to be a good father and close to his son. He found a way to hold back the insulting name-calling and the urge to beat up on the kid. Likewise, a person feeling a moment of hatred towards a boss or spouse may take a few seconds to remind him or herself of the hopes they have about having a good job and a loving spouse for a long time. Anger becomes a reminder of smarter, kinder, more fruitful ways of acting.

**Love.** Jampolsky (1979) had a best-selling book, *Love is Letting Go of Fear*, which helps some people. The ideas are simple: We have a choice to love or to hate and fear (fear is really a cry for love). For peace of mind choose love and be concerned with giving, not getting. Through loving forgiveness we can avoid judging others and eliminate our own guilt. We believe the world makes us upset; but really, we (our thoughts) make the world. So, we can change the world by changing our thoughts--from fear or hateful thoughts to loving thoughts. We can't hurt others without first hurting ourselves (thinking bad about ourselves), so *give up your attack thoughts*. Do not judge, have only tolerant, understanding thoughts. It's your choice: love or fear.

There are many similar popular books that focus on attitudes. They sell well. Unfortunately, science has not evaluated the effectiveness of such books. My impression from reading self-reports from thousands of students is that this kind of change-your-attitude approach may have a temporary impact, but often needs to be repeated or re-learned after a few days or weeks because we forget and revert to our old angry ways of thinking.

**Accumulate logical and moral arguments against aggression and for love.** Psychologists apparently believe rational arguments are powerless against emotions as powerful as anger. Aronson (1984) writes, "such arguments probably would not significantly curtail aggressive behavior, no matter how sound, no matter how convincing." Such pessimism may account for the lack of effort with our children to curtail violence. Doesn't it seem strange that humans can learn the malicious, vile, sick, destructive ideas in racial and sexual stereotypes but we can't learn logical, cogent reasons for not abusing, slandering, or cheating on someone? Many people have become vegetarians and pacifists, how do we explain them? Didn't they hear and accept the arguments against killing animals and then change themselves? Are arguments against killing and mistreating humans less persuasive? Nagler (1982) gives many rational arguments for non-violence.



The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you can not murder the lie, not establish the truth. Through murder you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate... Hate can not drive out hate; only love can do that.  
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

We believe there is an inward teacher...by this inward teacher we are convinced that there is a way of death, and a way of life. The way of death is the way of threat and violence, hatred and malevolence, rigid ideology and obsessive nationalism. This way is all too easy to find. The way of life is harder to find... Neither rulers, nor parties, nor nations, nor ideologies, nor religions can command the legitimate loyalties of people unless they serve the way of life.  
-Quaker Readings on Pacifism



**Increase your self-confidence.** The more confident you are the less hurt you will be by criticism and rejection. The less hurt you are, the less angry you become. You are also less likely to be prejudiced. Self-confident people are probably self-accepting; self-accepting people are probably tolerant of others, i.e. less hateful. See method #1 in chapter 14 for self-concept building methods; you can come to see yourself as thoughtful, tolerant, understanding, and forgiving.

A part of confidence is believing you can control the inborn tendencies and childhood influences that make you bad tempered. Don't be a slave to your past; you can be smarter than that. If you are prone to feel powerless, you need to build your self-efficacy by demonstrating to yourself that your temper is controllable. Plan some self-help projects and work for self-control (see method #9 in chapter 14).

**Differentiate thoughts from deeds and the person from their action.** My actions are not me; part of me, maybe, but not all of me. Haim Ginott (1965, 1971) and Samalin (1991) make this so clear with children. Your son's room, filled with month old dirt, dust, dirty clothes and decaying food, may make you furious but that is different from saying to him, "you are a filthy, lazy, defiant, no-good punk." A dirty room doesn't make him a completely despicable person, as the statement implies. Likewise, there is an important distinction between thoughts or urges and actual deeds, e.g. feeling like hitting someone differs drastically from actually doing it.

Every human being should be respected. The Quakers might be right, God may be in every person. No thought or feeling is awful, it doesn't hurt anyone until it gets transformed into action. So, accept everyone as an important, worthy person, regardless of what they have done. Be tolerant of all ideas and feelings. Concentrate on solving the problem at hand rather than on any personal affront you may have suffered.

**Live a non-aggressive, loving, and forgiving philosophy.** There are many possibilities: Christian "love thy enemies" or "love one another" or "turn the other cheek" philosophy is one. Other approaches are the Quakers', Gandhi's, and Martin Luther King's non-violence philosophy, and the Kung Fu or Yoga philosophy of detachment and acceptance of the inevitable. Also, Carl Rogers and humanistic psychologists speak of "unconditional positive regard" for every person. Similarly, Martin Buber (1970) prescribes reverence for others, as implied in his title, *I and Thou*. This involves a deep respect for every person, considering them priceless, irreplaceable, vital, and a fascinating, unique miracle to be cherished, even if you don't like all that they have done. Every person has a right to be different, perhaps a responsibility to be his/her unique self.



To be wronged or robbed is nothing unless you continue to remember it.  
-Confucius

By taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior.  
-Francis Bacon



### Forgiveness—Details of cognitive ways to reduce anger

Anger consists of our bitter responses to insults, hurts, injustices, rejection, pain, etc., and the bitterness is repeatedly rehearsed and remembered. Hatred is a memory that we are unwilling to let go, to dismiss, to forgive. If we could forgive the person who offended us, we would no longer be so angry and stressed. For many of us, however, forgiveness is especially hard because we confuse it with other reactions. Making these distinctions may help you become forgiving:

- a. Forgiveness is *not* forgetting nor is it a promise to forget. You can never forget being hurt. In fact, if you had forgotten, you couldn't forgive.
- b. Forgiveness is *not* promising to believe the other person was not guilty or not responsible for the wrong things he/she did. If he/she were blameless, there would be nothing to forgive.
- c. Forgiveness is *not* praise or a reward; no reward was earned, none is given.
- d. Forgiveness is *not* approval of what was done. You are not conceding that the wrong he/she committed is viewed as any less serious than it has been heretofore.
- e. Forgiveness is *not* permission to repeat the offense. It does not mean that your values or society's rules have changed. It is not based on an assumption that the hurt will never be repeated on anyone but it implies such a hope.

*Forgiveness, as defined here, is your decision to no longer hate the sinner; it is getting rid of your venom, your hatred; it is your attempt to heal yourself, to give yourself some peace (Smedes, 1984). There is research evidence of a positive relationship between forgiveness and self-acceptance, i.e. the more you accept others, the more you like yourself, and the reverse.*

To get a [measure of your willingness to forgive](#), take the survey at [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org). Then go to [www.authentichappiness.org/all24](http://www.authentichappiness.org/all24) and insert your scores for each strength. This will help you understand yourself better and understand forgiveness better. By knowing clearly what forgiveness is and what it is not, we may be able to forgive more easily (also

see #25 and #30 above), using these steps (Simon & Simon, 1991; Felder, 1987):

a. Be sure you really want to forgive. If you are still boiling inside and feel there could never be even a partial justification of what was done, you aren't ready to forgive. You still have unfinished business with this person. If and when you want to get these bad feelings off your chest, want to remove some of the emotional barriers from the relationship, and want to see the other person's side of the situation, you may be ready to consider the remaining steps in forgiving. To get to the point of forgiving someone, try expressing the anger and pain with people you trust, but follow this with a genuine discussion of how and why you may be "nurturing and prolonging the pain." Then consider what you would gain if you let go of the resentment. Ask yourself if you have ever let down or hurt someone. Are you ready to give up your revenge against this other person?

b. Make a serious effort to understand the circumstances, thinking, motives, and hopes of the person who hurt you. Look for background information--cultural influences, painful childhood experiences, abuse, addictions, psychological problems, resentment, envy, ambitions, etc.--that would explain (not excuse) the resented behavior. Talk to relatives and friends of the person who offended you, get their opinions about the offender's situation and motives. Had he/she had experiences that made his/her actions towards you likely to occur?

c. Use this background information to look at what happened from the other person's point of view. As best you can tell, what was his/her psychological condition and educational background? What do you suppose he/she thought would be the outcome of treating you the way he/she did? What loss might he/she have been trying to handle or prevent? What emotions might have been dominating the other person? How do you think he/she saw you and your situation at the time? Look at the offender's behavior as a determinist would (see chapter 14). Example: suppose a spouse has been unfaithful; try to realize the past experiences that made him/her feel sexually insecure, realize why sexual conquering or another love was important to him/her, try to see how he/she was feeling about you at the time and how your feelings were overlooked, etc.

d. Another factor to consider is whether or not the offender is contrite or has made any efforts to change his/her behavior or to make up for harm that he/she has done. It is easier to forgive someone who is sorry and trying to improve--or will seek professional help (don't try to become his/her therapist yourself). Could he/she start to grow from hearing about your pain? Don't expect miracles and remember you are forgiving them for *your* well being, not his/hers.

e. Regardless of how the other person feels about his/her actions, the question is: Are you ready to absorb the pain without spewing hatred back (which stops the cycle)? Having a model, like Gandhi or Jesus,

may help. Can you start to wish the other person well? Would it feel good to give up the anger and the seeking of revenge?

f. Weigh the benefits vs. the disadvantages of forgiving, e.g. how much better are you likely to feel if you get rid of part of this anger? Are there positive aspects of your history with the offending person that you would like to renew, if you could forgive him/her? It is so sad, for example, when loving parents are estranged from a son or daughter for years because he or she married the "wrong" race or religion. On the other hand, trying to approach and forgive someone is stressful. If it doesn't work out well, your anger may build and be more disruptive and prolonged. If your forgiving suggests (to you or significant others) that you condone totally unforgivable behavior or that you now feel unworthy of condemning this person, perhaps you should wait. But, if you can stop carrying a burden of resenting and blaming, if you can emotionally heal yourself by getting rid of this poison, it probably is worthwhile. It is not a decision to be made lightly. But, what a blessing to lay down the load.

This method of forgiving has only been empirically tested a few times, but it was effective with elderly females (Hebl & Enright, 1993) and with incest victims (see Robert Enright's study in *Psychology Today*, 1996, p. 12). Similar approaches are also described by Casarjian (1992) and Flanigan (1993). The best and most recent empirical study, thus far, will be discussed below (Wade and Worthington (2005).

### **The idea of forgiveness**

American culture, being very religious, is full of pronouncements about the need for forgiveness. Christians believe God reconciled humanity (at least believers) with him by giving his son, Jesus, to suffer and die on the cross so that mortal humans can be forgiven for their sins and go to heaven. Forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity. So, it follows naturally that Christians rely heavily and in many ways on forgiveness. When believers fall short of their hoped-for-behavior and are not as good as they think they should be, they are advised to pray for God's forgiveness and for the strength to do better. They may ask others to pray for them too. When someone else has been unkind to you or wronged you, a Christian is told to forgive the person who harmed you or to "turn the other cheek."

Do you have to be religious in order to forgive someone? Not in order to have the ordinary psychological effects of forgiveness on yourself and on others (I have no idea of the impact on God). However, research has shown that a very religious person tends to forgive another person more easily than a person who does not have strong religious beliefs (Worthington, 2004). We don't yet know why that is.

Of course, there are many other teachings and belief systems, besides Christianity, that accentuate the value of acceptance, non-violence, love, tolerance, and forgiveness of each other. Buddhists and Quakers are especially dedicated to non-violence and pacifism, as were the followers of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Also, the Kung Fu and Yoga philosophies of detachment and acceptance of the inevitable have some similarity with forgiveness. Also, Carl Rogers and humanistic

psychologists advocated having “unconditional positive regard” or acceptance for every person. Similarly, Martin Buber (1970) prescribes having reverence for others, as implied in his title, *I and Thou*. These value systems, like Eastern philosophies, advocate having a deep respect for every person, considering them priceless, irreplaceable, vital, and fascinating, unique miracles to be cherished, even if you don’t like everything they have ever done. Many cultures have believed that God is present inside every human and should be recognized (sometimes with a reverent bow). It may not be too far afield to even cite the scientist who sees the events of the physical and psychological world as the natural, lawful outcome of past events. As Rogers would say “the facts are friendly.” Another great quote is “whether we understand it or not, the world is unfolding as it should.”

All of these philosophies or ways of looking at things are arguments against intense anger arising from things not going as we want them to go. Attitudes, such as these, are often the beginnings of a truce and forgiveness.

Anger consists of our bitter responses to slights, insults, thoughtless words or deeds, hurts, injustices, rejection, deception, meanness, cruelty, etc. Following the initial offense, there is often an assortment of angry reactions which are repeatedly rehearsed and repeated to ourselves. Hatred is a memory that we are unwilling to let go of, to dismiss, to forgive, or otherwise put out of our minds (although these thoughts are frequently hurting and upsetting us much more than the person who originally hurt us). If we could forgive the person who has offended us, we would no longer be so angry and upset.

One reason why forgiving someone is especially hard is because the forgiving process is all mixed up with other emotional reactions. Therapists helping patients with forgiving have found that it is important to clarify what forgiving consists of and what processes should not be confused with that activity.

What is and what is not involved in forgiving?

1. Forgiveness is *not* forgetting about a hurt nor is it a promise to forget. Most of us can never completely forget about a hurt. Besides, if you had forgotten the event, you couldn’t forgive.
2. Forgiveness is *not* promising to believe the other person was not guilty or not responsible for the wrong things he/she did. If he/she were blameless, there would be nothing to forgive.
3. Forgiveness is *not* rewarding or giving praise; usually no reward was earned and none should be given. If some behavior is praised, it doesn’t mean that an accompanying behavior wasn’t hurtful.
4. Forgiveness is *not* approval or a rationalization of what was done. You are not conceding that the wrong he/she committed is viewed as any less serious than it has been heretofore.
5. Forgiveness is *not* permission to repeat the offense. It does not mean that your preferences or society’s rules have changed. It is not based on an assumption that the hurt will never be repeated on anyone but it implies that hope.

*Forgiveness is your action based on the decision to no longer hate the perpetrator (or to hate less); it is getting rid of your venom, of your hatred, of your fantasies of retaliation, of your upsetting thoughts, of your distressing emotions; it is your attempt to heal the hurt inside by yourself, to give yourself some peace (Smedes,*



1984). Thus, it is easy to see why researchers have found that one's self-acceptance goes up as one learns to forgive others and hate them less. The definitions above and these distinctions may help you understand what is involved in forgiving someone (or yourself). And, by understanding forgiveness better, you should be able to control it better.

There are truly touching stories of people who have forgiven someone who committed horrible crimes or brutal abuse against them. There are people who have been unfaithful and, in that way, devastated their spouse, alienated their children and disrupted the entire family; yet they were forgiven (not usually, but sometimes). There are many cases where someone lost control and killed a child, a parent, or a loved one; and yet the family may forgive them. Pope John Paul II forgave the man who shot him. There are so many atrocities in war—loss of limbs, blindness, brain damage, post-traumatic stress disorders—and often the veteran forgives his/her government that sent him/her to war and may even forgive the enemy. Some people irresponsibly cause horrible things to happen in crimes and in accidents, such as drunk driving, but some of these people are forgiven.



There is a wonderful mythical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life -- happiness, freedom, and peace of mind -- are always attained by giving them to someone else.-----Peyton Conway March



I think it is commendable that some victims and the loved ones of victims are able to handle their hatred of the people who hurt them and eventually are able to calm their intense emotions so that the horrible events can be remembered without causing an emotional disruption. They learn to control their fantasies of retaliation and their nightmarish visions of the awful events to the extent that their emotions do not dominate their lives. That is a hard battle but when won, it is a great victory. Still there are many people who carry bitter hatred against the person or organization that hurt them or their loved one for the rest of their lives. That is a great emotional burden that usually brings with it depression, stress, other mental disorders and often various physical ailments (high blood pressure, heart disease, and poor general health). People who can not forgive often can hardly accept any solution other than continued punishment for life.

There has been increasing interest in studying forgiveness during the last decade or two. Fifteen to twenty new self-help and pop psychology books about forgiving have appeared in bookstores in the last 10 years. Science journals have published over 1,200 articles since 1997, mostly about the health benefits of reducing stress by psychological techniques, including forgiveness. One can only speculate why there has been an increased interest in forgiveness. When we have to deal with conflicts or anger and have to wrestle with moral dilemmas, we are probably prone to think more about forgiveness. There have been several major world conflicts with other countries in the last 50 years. For example, there have been very controversial wars, heavy casualties have been suffered, ethnic conflicts keep reoccurring, suicidal bombers are hard to understand and disturbing, countries using torture and

attempting genocide are appalling, etc. Such issues and religion-based terrorism raise ethical questions about how to make peace and to deal with the perpetrators. The decline of organized religion may also have raised the general public's concern with moral issues. There is a rising interest in psychology and the fantastic technology that enables scientists to see the brain at work. Two or three groups of psychologists are researching ways to facilitate forgiveness. Book publishers are always looking for "hot new topics." Maybe the time for forgiveness has arrived.

#### Techniques for facilitating forgiveness

Wade and Worthington (2005) have done a remarkable review of the two most common treatment procedures for helping a patient forgive a person who has hurt them. Most of the research used by these authors involved treatment in groups but the techniques used are similar to what most individual therapists would recommend to their clients for reducing anger and grudges. The group treatments were several weeks long and consisted of 20 or so exercises or techniques. Many of the methods were developed or revised by two groups of psychologists headed by Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) and Worthington (2001). Although the two groups take a somewhat different approach, their groups do rather similar things. I'll give a brief overview of the 15-20 weeks of group activities and later we will discuss some of the major controversies among the researchers.

Six group activities used by both Enright and Worthington's groups of researchers:

1. Defining forgiveness. It is important that the patients understand the differences between forgiveness and reconciliation, forgetting, and from condoning the perpetrator's behavior.
2. Remembering the hurtful/abusive experience..."telling your story." Describe the hurts, the unfairness, the bitterness, and the degrading aspects done to you in the situation. Also, your feelings—fears, rage, resentment of what was happening—and how appropriate you think your feelings were.
3. Practice empathizing with the person who hurt you. Understand how they saw the situation, their motivations and feelings, and try to understand them in light of their history and see them as an ordinary human as much as possible.
4. Encouraging the victim to remember times in their lives when they may have hurt someone. Note any similarity between how they were hurt and how they had hurt someone else. Do the two of you have similar past experiences?
5. Make a list of the potential advantages of forgiving someone of something. If you are willing to do so at this point, make a commitment to trying to forgive them.
6. Try reducing your anger-generating fantasies of being hurt or offended...the more pain you feel, the more anger you store up. And try giving up your daydreams of getting revenge. Replace "you-were-awful" thoughts with stories of people who weathered hard times and forgave the people who were mean to them.

This extensive meta-analysis of several possible steps in forgiving (as described above) generally provides moderate empirical support for using these methods to help people forgive. Much more research is needed, however. For example, the relative effectiveness of building empathy vs. making a commitment to forgive needs to be studied. While clinicians have several such procedures that might help forgivers, very little research has been done comparing specific methods for specific hurts. Likewise, little is known yet about which methods of teaching these self-help skills work best. Nor do we know the characteristics of therapists who are best suited

for this kind of therapy. Nor has the science been done to determine the characteristics of the better forgivers or which kinds of offenses are easiest or hardest to forgive. These questions could be answered if there were enough support for the needed studies.

Is forgiving a one-person or a two-person task?

Fortunately, some controversy is building among researchers in this area (this is fortunate because disagreements among scientists increase the amount of research that is done in the area). Some practitioner/scientists believe the person who has been hurt doesn't need to interact with the abuser at all. Robert Enright (2001), one of the earliest and better known authorities on forgiving, sees forgiveness as a "loving gift" that is given unconditionally regardless of the perpetrator's attitude or reaction. The offender doesn't need to apologize or express any regrets; the victim doesn't need to tell him/her that he/she has forgiven him/her... The person who inflicted the hurt does not even need to know that anyone is trying to or has forgiven him or her. Forgiving is done for the forgiver. The forgiver benefits from great relief of physical stress and from gaining mental comfort. So, the process is highly rewarding to the forgiver, regardless of whether the relationship survives or not.

The strongest arguments for involving the offender or the abuser, at least in certain violent circumstances, have been made by Dr. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (2003 and Oct, 2004) who worked for South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This commission wanted to get the perpetrators, including the notorious police death squads led by Eugene de Kock, and the black victims to understand each other better. That was a tough assignment because it involved brutality and racial prejudice.

At first, Dr. Gobodo-Madikizela found that the black citizens were unable to relate to the police officers. She believed that it was natural for victims of oppression to hold on to their intense anger in order to distance themselves from the people who had hurt them and other blacks. They were reluctant to see the officers as understandable real people until psychologists, like Dr. Gobodo-Madikizela, were able to get some of the South African police to apologize and show remorse for what they had done. Commander Eugene de Kock, himself, was one of many police who confessed to horrible acts and appeared to be truly remorseful. He is now serving a 200+ year sentence in prison.

As the blacks saw the police break down their own emotional walls and express feelings of sorrow, regrets, and shame, the blacks were able to see the officers as real human beings, rather than arrogant, evil monsters. Slowly the anger on both sides broke down. Then as they talked to each other and shared more about the history of the police perpetrators, their family backgrounds, their police training and indoctrination, the complex process in which prejudice and violent attitudes develop, gradually the police looked less evil.

If the abused person can also start to see some of his/her own wrong-doings and selfish-angry urges, then the perpetrator becomes even more like a fallible human being-- more like the victim. This process over a long period of time can mellow the victim's disdain and anger. Slowly the vile, bitter disgust fades into the background. But, of course, the memories of the fears, threats, and the dead relatives will never go away.

If you are thinking that many if not most people, who have been hurtful, insulting, and very unfair, will not be tearfully apologetic and asking for forgiveness. I think you are right. So the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission approach (involving both the offender and the victim) may frequently fail to work well. In that case, the person who has been mistreated has to learn to forgive without much help from the offender.



When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.

-----Helen Keller



Spring (2004) agrees with Goboda-Madikizela that forgiveness is arrived at more easily when there can be meaningful interaction between the hurter and the hurtee. If the offender can be involved, cooperative, contrite, apologetic, and interested in earning a better relationship, the task of forgiveness is much easier. In the right conditions, Spring believes "genuine forgiveness" can be achieved. But when the offender refuses to apologize or take responsibility for his/her hurtful role in causing the behavior or when the offended person feels the hurt is so terrible that it can't be forgiven, making genuine forgiveness impossible, Spring recommends that another approach, called "acceptance," that is better than lingering animosity or holding on to the anger. Acceptance is much less desirable than forgiveness but it is better than "phony forgiveness" and better than refusing to forgive at all. In acceptance the anger and hurt is expressed somewhat by the victim and their calm is restored to some degree in four steps: (1) The injured person makes sense, preferably with some help from the offender, of the offender's behavior and of their own reactions and behavior. The victim focuses on why the event hurt so much psychologically. Both may express regrets and grief about the decline of their relationship. Both identify what they need the other person to do so that some forgiveness is possible, making life easier. (2) The hurt/offended party tries to cut down on the time he/she spends being distressed by mentally re-living the hurtful events. (3) Instead, the hurt person tries to understand the life history of the hurtful person, the problems the offender had, and the personal short-comings that contributed to the offensive behavior (Why did he/she do that?). (4) Finally, the person trying to forgive should work on systematically "putting the experience behind them," so life is back to an acceptably calm state.

Trying to get an understanding of the hurtful events by yourself (no help from the offender) may be hard but it is possible for some people, partly depending on the victim's personality, how contrite the abuser becomes, and how badly the victim was hurt, etc. Frequently, people who know about the situation push the person who was hurt or wronged to forgive the wrong-doer. On the other hand, others will urge you to punish or "get even" with the person who hurt you. That might feel good for a moment, but...deciding how to handle hurtful situations is difficult and very important. Please don't make the decision to strike back impulsively.

My advice would be to avoid retaliating against the person who hurt you. Escalating the angry emotions by “striking back” is unwise and even dangerous. Remember this person has already hurt you; they might take an opportunity to hurt you even more. When the emotions are intense and the risks are high, the best place to settle the conflicts is often in a courtroom. Legal action can settle the score. Please refer back to a previous section about the danger in domestic violence. Don't let your emotions push you into something rash.

I don't want to make the mistake of over-selling forgiveness. It is not for every conflict; it will not work with every person. The search engines will present you with many religious Websites that advocate forgiveness in very positive terms, but they usually do not provide scientific evidence of outcome. The data about forgiveness is not in yet. Fortunately, several books, some by philosophers, have questioned the appropriateness and the effectiveness of forgiveness. I'd strongly encourage anyone struggling or having trouble making a decision about forgiving someone who has hurt them badly to do some deeper reading. Lamb, S. and Murphy, J. (2002) in *Before Forgiving* have collected articles from a wide range of scholars (the book is heavier reading than most pop psych or self-help books, but it will give you important information). The articles in their 2002 book raise some profound questions about forgiveness in therapy and they suggest other possible ways to resolve hurt and very angry feelings. For example, Lamb & Murphy point out that hardly anyone argues that Jews should forgive the Germans for the Holocaust; yet, forgiving is quickly recommended for almost all other offenses. There seems to be some extreme of evil beyond which forgiveness is not acceptable or maybe beyond our power to forgive. Murphy (2003) has another book about “getting even” when the situation is beyond forgiving. He is careful to mention the dangers of trying to get even.

Murphy also raises the question of whether forgiveness and letting go of resentment are consistent with being respectful of your self...if the behavior was truly awful, maybe it doesn't deserve being forgiven. Enright ((2001) argues both methods (forgiveness and reduced anger) can reflect self-respect in the victim but Murphy believes some victims may also have had so little self-respect that they were not appropriately irate in the first place or perhaps the lack of resentment may mean that the anger has not been resolved.

Some people, including Spring (2004) and an article by Lamb (2002), would argue that in many cases terrible and violent spouses should not be forgiven. They state that many women refuse to forgive husbands and ex-husbands. (In our society, there may not be strong social pressure to forgive wayward or abusive husbands. What about wayward and abusive wives?) So, these therapists and others look for alternatives to forgiveness. Lamb (2002), Judith Boss (2005), and Janice Haaken (2000) suggest compassion, which may be calming, but does not require victims to give up resentment. That is, if there can be some other way, like “compassion,” to arrive at an understanding of the origin of the abuser's problems, or “acceptance” in the sense that one can accept the reprehensible behavior was “lawful” or a reflection of psychopathology or “human nature,” then the bad behavior is still irritating and troubling but tolerable. These authors offer advice about reducing your strong anger so you are healthier, without fully forgiving the wrong-doer.

Forgiveness is often a hard decision, subject to change, requiring very difficult behaviors to be carried out, maybe taking months or years to complete. It isn't just the offender saying “I'm sorry, dear” and the victim saying “Oh, I forgive you.” In

fact, Spring (2004) refers to “cheap forgiveness” or “make-believe mercy” when the person who was deeply hurt quickly and glibly pardons the person who hurt him/her as a way to avoid the stress of conflict and the pain of dealing with unpleasant emotions. If serious hurts remain, e.g. if your spouse had a serious affair or a series of affairs, your trust and deep affection may not return for years, if ever. The above authors admit they are in many cases “throwing a cold blanket over the trendy forgiveness fad.” Also several of these writers express some concern that far more attention is given by psychologists to reducing the negative feelings of the victim than is given to fixing the serious problems of the wrong-doer. Near the end of this chapter (Ch 7) there is brief attention given to society’s constructive non-punitive efforts to improve the behavior of the anti-social, hostile, self-centered people who hurt and drive others crazy. We can’t count on Dr. Gobodo-Madikizela’s methods used with Eugene de Kock to arouse lasting profound remorse in all cruel or evil people.

There is also another con by the offender, called “pretend reform,” which we have seen in the Domestic Violence section above. The spouse-beater or the philandering mate often begs for forgiveness as he/she says they are very sorry and promises never to do it again. Time often proves that these promises are untrue. Perhaps because there often are no consequences to the offender for telling such lies. Maybe, just as we discuss later with prisoners, there need to be clearer and very demanding rules spelling out the consequences for keeping and for breaking promises. Example rules for a victim: if you have another affair, max out our credit card, drive under the influence, etc. these are the consequences that will happen immediately: 1. 2. 3... AND if you are completely devoted to me and stop flirting, if we are able to totally pay off our credit card in two years, or if you stop drinking and smoking within a month, this is what I expect our relationship will be like IN FIVE YEARS... Of course, the consequences need to be clear, doable, serious, and fully intended to happen.

So, the answer to the earlier question, “Is forgiveness a one-person or a two-person task?” is that different methods and approaches are needed for both one and two people. If both people are willing to work on it and if they can help each other make amends, it might be best for both to be involved, as in South Africa. But sometimes the two parties can not work on these strong but delicate and intimate feelings together. In that case, self-help methods and psychotherapy procedures are needed. Or the two people may need to go their own ways.

Some writers believe that achieving justice, not forgiveness in the victim’s heart, but a legally and morally fair resolution of conflicts, so that the wrongful action can be put aside and will reduce the stress in both parties. But how can this be done? Is the Nuremburg or the South African models (charges of wrong-doing, hearings and trial courts, and findings of guilt, punishment, and restitution) of seeking justice useful with modern nations, with unfairness in the corporate world, with your boss on the job, with your unhappy spouse? Would most people accept a decision by others acting as judges, such as a group of your good friends, as being just? Will a finding of such an ad hoc court settle the conflict and reduce negative emotions?

The most important and emotionally sensitive relationship many of us have is with our lovers, our partners, our spouses. Thus, it is not uncommon for hurts, betrayal, unfairness, and deceptions to happen in that relationship. It is well documented that the two genders take a different view of values, with women especially valuing caring relationships and males valuing justice (see

[http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter3/chap3\\_20.html](http://www.psychologicalselfhelp.org/Chapter3/chap3_20.html)). Quite possibly

forgiveness would be more central to the care-centered values of women while “facing the wrongdoing” and moral justice would be more central in the thinking of men. In any case there is much discussion about the philosophy of forgiveness, and a recent experiment reported some very interesting findings: Dr. Tania Singer, et al. (January, 2006) showed that men, who wanted revenge, got extra pleasure (more than women) when someone who had been unfair to them was physically punished. So, even brain scans show that some women sometimes do not seek retribution with the same vigor as men do.

The main focus in this section has been on the person forgiving the wrongdoer or, at least, being less angry at them. But it is good to remember that there are other main characters in this scenario: the perpetrator of the mistreatment, a wrongdoer refusing to apologize or an apologizer begging for forgiveness, people offering advice or support, members of the family, observers who don't know how to help, and others. While we are learning about being forgiving it is very important to keep in mind that an honest, well worded apology is very important and powerful in resolving conflicts. Several books could be helpful to anyone in these roles (Engel, 2002; Lamb, 2002; Orsborn, 2001; Landman, 2002). Also, the section near the end of this chapter about Dealing with an Angry Person should also be helpful.



Forgiving is not forgetting, it is remembering and letting go. -----Claudia Black, 1989



As an overview of forgiving, these are some of the kinds of techniques that have been developed and used by practicing therapists during the last 20 years:

1. Be sure you really want to forgive. If anger is still boiling inside and about to burst out or if you can't imagine even partly justifying what was done to you, you probably aren't ready to work on forgiving. You may never be ready. If your interest in resolving this friction and in having a better relationship increases or if your preoccupation with bad memories becomes “much too painful,” it may be a time to try to forgive. Consider doing this first: Get a group of trusted, concerned friends together, tell them how and why you are so upset. Then ask if there is some way you could look at the events differently. Could you be “nurturing and prolonging your own pain?” Try to answer these questions too: What would you gain or lose if you just let go of the pain and resentment? What if you expressed your hurts fully to the wrongdoer? Are you ready to move on and leave the anger and hurt behind you? Do you feel even a little responsible for what happened in the relationship?
2. Take the time to make a serious effort to understand the circumstances, thinking, needs, motives, and hopes of the person who has hurt you. Ask your friends for help with this. Look for background information that might help you understand the hurtful person—family and cultural factors, childhood experiences, psychological problems, self-doubts, resentments, difficulties with others like you, or anything that would help explain (not excuse) the resented behavior. Ask his/her friends why they think he/she hurt you.

3. With his/her past in mind, try to see what happened from the other person's point of view. What experiences had he/she had that possibly influenced the behavior that was so hurtful to you? What do you suppose he/she thought would be the outcome of treating you the way he/she did? What loss might he/she had been trying to avoid or handle? What emotions might have been dominating his/her mind? How do you think he/she saw you and your situation at the time? If you tried to explain his/her behavior in term of past experiences, powerful emotions, and laws of behavior, what would you say? Example: you were terribly hurt because your spouse had been unfaithful. Try to see the past experiences that might have made him/her feel sexually needy, in need of affection and attention, and desperate to have someone else love him/her. Can you understand how he/she was feeling about you at the time and how he/she could overlook your feelings and needs?
4. Ask yourself and others if the offender regrets what happened. Is he/she contrite and would like to be forgiven? Has he/she done anything to change or to make up for the hurts you have suffered? Would he/she be easier to forgive if they would say "I'm sorry" and indicate they would change? Would you like to see them seek professional help to change? Or at least read a book? (Please don't try to become their therapist yourself.) Do you think he/she could start to change and grow after hearing about your pain? (Please keep in mind that if you forgive them it will be for your well being, not to make their lives much better. Don't expect miracles to be done by the guilty offender.)
5. Regardless of how the other person feels about his/her hurtful actions, the question is: have you fully decided that you really want to let the anger and pain go (put it behind you) for your own good and not to help out the person who hurt you? Can you keep your anger from spewing out? Can you adopt a noble model of forgiving, like Gandhi or Jesus? If you had a respected model, it might help with your self-control. Can you gradually start to wish the other person well? Does it seem like it would feel good for you to give up your resentment and seeking revenge?
6. Weigh the benefits versus the disadvantages of forgiving. How much better will you feel if you can get rid of the anger? Is there any caring or any relationship left that is worth trying to save? Sometimes important relationships are blocked by strong resentments. For example, loving parents are sometimes estranged from a son or a daughter for years because the son or daughter married into the wrong race or religion. That is so sad. It takes courage to attempt forgiving in almost any conflict but the pay offs can be big, sometimes. There are no guarantees the forgiving will sooth your hurts and resentment. There are no guarantees that the forgiven person will act differently in the future. You may be hurt again but it shouldn't be as much of a surprise as the first time. It is uncertain if the hurter will offer apologies or make amends or even be friendly. Nevertheless, just getting rid of a load of anger by the victim is a great relief.

In fact, there is steadily growing evidence that by reducing your negative emotions, by forgiving, giving up grudges, and other means, you can improve your health—physically, psychologically, and interpersonally.



A brief summary of forgiving methods:



To resolve angry conflicts use empathy; when possible view others with unconditional positive regard; think like a scientist=determinism (the universe is unfolding as it should) rather than being upset; if you can't have both fairness and happiness, choose happiness; use your hostile energy to do good rather than to spew hostility; bad karma comes back to you. Adapted from Tom G. Stevens ( <http://csulb.edu/~tstevens/b-anger.htm>).



## Level V: Become aware and neutralize unconscious causes of aggression

**Avoid put-down games.** Transactional Analysis describes several common interactions that either degrade and hurt others or build one's ego at the expense of someone else. For example, a person might unconsciously place others in a position to fail (e.g. a parent criticizing the housecleaning of a child or a teacher assigning very hard problems to students) and thereby make themselves look super competent. Much of our gossip is an "Ain't it awful!" game in which we get support from each other by putting down others. Read more about games in chapter 9.

Disliking others is costly. Research confirms that hot headed, hostile people prone to cynical, antagonistic interactions (compared to less angry people) are, as you might expect, less open-minded, less tolerant, less understanding, less socially responsible, and more likely to have chronic heart disease. There are many good reasons to get serious about reducing our anger and critical intolerance. Becoming aware of unconscious processes, like games, is not easy, however.

**Look for unconscious payoffs.** Conscious payoffs were discussed above, including using the threat of anger to manipulate others. At the semi-conscious or unconscious levels there are more hidden rewards, such as a boss blustering around implying some people may be fired to build his/her own ego. Other examples: fighting to avoid intimacy and dependency (see family conflicts section above), getting mad to justify breaking up, building a resentment of another group or race to justify discrimination, getting mad at parents about assigned chores to justify "forgetting" to do them, etc.



Vicious anger is usually just another way of laying on a guilt trip.



A common "game" used by us as children involves making a parent mad so that he/she feels guilty, then the parent will give us--as a "poor little victim"--what we want. So your anger may be part of some one else's scheme to manipulate you, i.e. another person is profiting from your loss of emotional control. Another example: There is considerable sick satisfaction in being able to drive someone else "up the wall." Kids do it but it isn't just a kids' game.

Watch for guilt, self-hatred, self-defeating and I-don't-deserve-it attitudes. Do you harshly blame yourself? Guilt can add to the stress that creates anger towards others or which sets overly demanding standards expected of ourselves or others. It is not uncommon for a formerly poor person to feel they do not deserve the advantages and material gains that come with success. Read Rubin's (1975), *Compassion and Self-hate*, cited above, Karen Horney's (1942), *Self-analysis*, Karl Menninger's (1956), *Man Against Himself*, or Martha Friedman's (1980), *Overcoming the Fear of Success*.

Guard against displaced aggression. This was discussed under "Frustration and Aggression" and "Prejudice" above. Displacement may occur person to person (boss to spouse), group to group (as in prejudice), or situation to general irritability (as when miserable job or a life filled with broken promises results in chronic grouching). Awareness of the displacement may reduce the anger or make solutions easier to see.

Avoid hostility-generating groups and sub-cultures. Group membership provides ready made hostility and/or aggressive attitudes towards other groups. There are more and less violent-prone subcultures and religions. The Old Testament "Jehovah" and Allah of Islam are angry gods, encouraging aggression against our enemies and the wicked. In contrast, Eastern philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism teach that everything is predestined, so frustration and anger are foolish. Christianity is middle-of-the-road regarding anger: God is loving but angry aggression may be used to right wrongs. And, many millions of lives have been gallantly sacrificed to supposedly settle religious differences.

As Tavis (1989) points out, in the secular part of the Christian world "the meek did indeed inherit the earth, (not to own it but) to plow, to plant, and to harvest for their masters." It took a horrendous war to abolish slavery, and we aren't over the racial prejudices 130 years later (see *Black Rage* by Grier & Cobbs, 1968, and D'Souza, 1995). There are class (rich-poor) and ethnic hostilities around the world.



Americans are the world's greatest killers! In 1980, handguns killed 8 people in Britain, 4 in Australia, 24 in Switzerland, 77 in Japan, and 11, 522 in the good old US of A.

In the U.S., one out of 20 black males is killed before he reaches age 25.



The attitudes of our friends and family are powerful determinants of our feelings towards others. If they are hateful, we are likely to be the same, unless we can escape. Of course, it is a contribution to the group and to yourself if you can reduce the animosity within your group. But this is a difficult task; finding new friends is probably easier.

**Gain insight by reading, exploring your history, and using awareness techniques.** Look for unconscious motives behind your anger. Were you neglected, over-controlled, mistreated, or hurt as a child? Is there "unfinished business" inside you that spills out into other relationships? Is it possible, if you see other people as being inconsiderate, unfair, and mean, that you are projecting your own negative feelings and hostile tendencies onto others? Explore your thoughts and feelings that lie below the surface. Reading about the sources of anger in others will help you find the origin of your own anger.

Maslin (1994) illustrates how anger can destroy a marriage. Her view is that the dynamics are often unconscious, e.g. two people may fight all the time because they both need excessive attention or need to be taken care of. Other couples may constantly battle about jealous feelings or excessive attention to others of the opposite sex, which may reflect underlying unconscious fears of loss or total commitment. What you are angry about is often not the real problem. Reading can help you find the secret causes.

Chapter 15 provides guided fantasies, dream analysis, focusing, Gestalt exercises and other methods for increasing self-understanding of our anger. An encounter group or self-help group can be especially helpful in uncovering who we like and dislike--and why. It also helps us cope if we understand who likes and dislikes us--and why.

It is possible to learn to relate and feel differently towards certain types of people. Even if one has felt superior and been prejudice, extensive reading about the abuse and awful conditions surrounding the American Indian, inter-city Blacks, migrant workers, people in Third World nations, etc. may arouse sympathy and a desire to help improve those conditions. Most people would say, however, that it usually takes time and meaningful interaction with individuals of the outgroup before one can truly claim to have overcome his/her prejudices (See chapter 9).

## Self-Help books and articles for anger problems

I'd suggest starting with one fairly recent, professionally well recommended book (try your library or a nearby university): McKay, M. & Rogers, P. (2000), Beck, A. (1999), Ellis, A. & Tafrate, R.C. (1997), and Tavris (1989). These are all good. As we have seen over and over again, methods developed by research-oriented professions give leads to finding or improvising self-help methods. See DiGiuseppe and Tafrate (2001) for a comprehensive treatment model. Also, Schiraldi and Kerr (2002) have gathered many anger control skills into an anger management sourcebook. And the American Psychological Association has an [anger Website](http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/anger.html) (<http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/anger.html>).

Expensive, well advertised programs have developed over the years, such as the HeartMath Method (Childre, D., Rozman, D. & Childre, D. L., 2006), the Sedona Method (Dwoskin, H. and Levenson, L., 2002), and other anger control methods and workshops. These packages usually started with a simple book (about \$15) that grew to several books, a workbook, then audio tapes, video tapes, classes, expensive workshops, and perhaps a series of individual therapy sessions are added.

Often the same methods were applied to anxiety, depression, and panic, i.e. they became broad scope treatments. The publishers often market many of these teaching techniques in a bundle for several hundred dollars. It isn't clear that the actual self-help training you get improves as the price goes from \$15 to \$350 or more...nor is it clear (no research!) that the help offered in the expensive packages is significantly better than other people's advice on a few pages.

The work by Doc Childre and others, usually called HeartMath methods, is based on the premise that the rhythm of the heart can influence much of the nervous system, such as the brain, the immune system, and many emotions—anxiety, depression, and anger. Therefore, by using computerized techniques (FreezeFrame) that regulate and calm your heart, e.g. focusing on positive feelings (appreciation, concern, empathy), you can gain control of your emotions that interfere with studying and interacting wisely and effectively. The healthy calm heart relieves anxiety, improves health, and helps you avoid anger impulses or outbursts (Childre, D. and Rozman, D., 2003). One might suppose, reducing these emotions calms the heart too. Which comes first? This [alliance of HeartMath organizations](http://www.heartmath.org/alliances.html) (<http://www.heartmath.org/alliances.html>) and companies offer methods of analyzing heart rate, several training procedures for individuals and for schools, and many books and programs. See <http://www.HeartMath.com> for slick ads about this method.

Another large, well advertised system of change, called the Sedona Method, offers several books and other ways of learning their methods, such as an audio class (\$239), videos, and expensive seminars dealing with various emotional problems (Dwoskin, H. and Levenson, L., 2002). Their method consists of teaching people how to release or "let go" of unwanted, harmful emotions. They say everyone is looking for exactly the same thing—imperturbable happiness, the natural state of living (they say). In essence the Sedona Method says you can choose to easily stop feeling any emotion—anger, nervousness, fear, sadness and on and on. You can start by asking yourself: "Can I just drop thinking about this concern I am having?" If not, "Can I just allow this feeling to be there?" If so, "Can I welcome this feeling?" Don't fret about your answers; you are just feeling out the possibilities to the question: "Would I rather have this feeling or get rid of it?" If your answer is "I don't want to 'let go' yet," then ask "Well, when?" Repeat the same process until you are ready to "let go." Do this often enough, and you have found happiness.

"When you do "let go" of an obsession (often an emotion coupled with a desperate need to "figure out" why you feel this way), you become free to see or create alternative solutions. Most feelings don't have to be solved right now...maybe not ever...just "let go."

Both of the above treatment programs have a spiritual aspect and sometimes seem a little snake oil-ish. They "guarantee" the results.

It is hard to know if the two systems for coping with anger mentioned above are any better than brief, simple, free methods, such as the following two: Adam Waterhouse [adam@meditationinbristol.org], a Buddhist friend who has helped edit this book during the last year, has written a 3-page, free pamphlet, entitled, A Method for Overcoming Anger. He suggests these logical steps: 1. Do I have some anger I'd like to overcome? If yes, what is the object of my anger? 2. What fault am I finding with this person or object? 2a. Is it fair to judge the entire person/object on the basis of one characteristic? Am I giving too much weight to that factor? Bright,

clever minds frequently distort reality. Am I sure I am thinking straight and being realistic or is it possible that the person I am mad at doesn't really exist? If so, get over it.

Waterhouse says there are additional questions for you to ask about your anger: 3. Does everyone see this person/object the same way as I do? If not, is it likely that this person can be intrinsically bad without most people knowing it? Has my opinion of this person changed over time (like when I met them or when they were nice to me)? If yes, isn't it unlikely that they are intrinsically or totally bad? If this person probably isn't totally bad, shouldn't I start acknowledging their positive traits? Maybe I should make a firm commitment to avoid excessive fault-finding in the future.

Elaine Stoll, a therapist, offers 10 free tips for expressing anger: 1. Anger tells us something is wrong...never use violence or abusive language. 2. Give yourself a "time out" and talk yourself out of hostile thoughts and urges. 3. Don't blame others for your feeling mad. You are 100% responsible for your own thoughts, feelings and actions. 4. Look for what is behind your anger; often it is hurts, fears, feelings of vulnerability. 5. Think through the consequences to you and to them of losing your temper. 6. Discuss the "real" problems, not the accusations and not just reasons to get your way. 7. Make use of the best ideas from everyone to find acceptable solutions, give credit where credit is due. 8. Maintain your dignity; be respectful. 9. Be fair. 10. Be magnanimous (above revenge and resentment, generous in forgiving). ( [Stoll's tips](http://www.counsellingbc.com/public.html?act=articles&permalink=12&user=public) were modified by me but see:

<http://www.counsellingbc.com/public.html?act=articles&permalink=12&user=public>  
)

Until we get much more research than we have today it is impossible to compare different methods for quelling anger and aggression—big or small. There are lots of ideas and conjecture about what therapy or self-change techniques might work but there is very little hard, confirmed, comparative data permitting us to judge which methods for quelling anger and aggression would work best with specific people and in specific circumstances. Many authors have concentrated on specific types of angry people in specific conditions but most of them have, thus far, concentrated on just certain treatment methods, instead of comparing several different promising methods.

Recent publications: There are self-help books that deal with anger/aggression in different kinds of people: irritable males (Diamond, 2004), males prone to violent outbursts (Donovan, 2001; Harbin, 2000), women who are triggered more by complex relationship problems than by the power and control problems of men (Petracek, 2004), counselors and teachers teaching self-control to teenagers (Stewart, J., 2002), parents with an out of control child (Murphy & Oberlin, 2002), adult children-parent conflicts (Atkins, 2004), and healthy vs. unhealthy anger (Dryden, 2003).

As you can tell from looking over this chapter, there has been an enormous amount of reading material covering many aspects and types of anger produced over the last 40-50 years. I've already tried to guide you to the best sources for handling several kinds of aggression especially your own harmful anger. (Below are more sections about dealing with other people's aggression, including rape, stalking, violence, bullying, and dealing with hostile/aggressive people and oppositional, rebellious children or teenagers.) But insights may come from different kinds of books. Sharing the experiences

of others by reading case studies should be very helpful in starting to learn the very complex interpersonal dynamics of anger and jealousy. Wile (1993) describes in an enlightening way the self-talk, especially the criticism and the defensiveness that causes and exacerbates marital fights. I strongly recommend Lerner (1985), written especially for women in intimate relationships. Also, a well-written summary of current research about anger in several situations, such as in families, friendships, sports, etc., is given by Tavis (1989). Professionals rate both Lerner and Tavis very highly (Stantrock, Minnett & Campbell, 1994).

Tedeschi & Felson (1994) theorize about the social interaction aspects of aggression, e.g. power plays, intimidation, gaining status, getting even, and so on. Other books written for professionals explore female rage (Valentis & Devane, 1994), emotional abuse (Loring, 1994), emotional incest (Love, 1992), verbal abuse (Evans, 1993), male violence against women (Koss, et al., 1994), and treating survivors of abuse (Walker, 1993). Freeman (1990) focuses more on the childhood origins of anger. Goldberg (1994) believes that uncovering our anger can increase our capacity for love. Stearns and Stearns (1986) have written a history of anger, showing the impact of cultural attitudes; that is another facet of the problem.

Other generally useful self-help books focusing on anger are Potter-Efron (1994, 1995), McKay, Rogers & McKay (1989), Ellis (1985), Sonkin & Durphy (1989), Bach & Wyden (1976), Bilodeau (1993), and Weisinger (1985). Elgin (1994) helps people deal with a verbal abuser and Paymar (1993) helps abusive men. Friedman (1991) has summarized the connections among hostility, coping, and health. Similarly, Williams and Williams (1993) have shown the connection between the "Hostility Syndrome" and heart disease; they tell you how to reduce your anger (much like this chapter).

## Websites and videos about reducing your own aggressiveness

The [Anger Website](http://www.angelfire.com/hi/TheSeer/anger.html) at (<http://www.angelfire.com/hi/TheSeer/anger.html>) provides 50 links to aspects of anger—treatment, self-help, resolving conflicts, etc. The American Psychological Association offers several [approaches to controlling your own anger](http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/anger.html) (<http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/anger.html>). Two Websites, drawing on several books and sites, do a nice job of [identifying anger](http://www.heart7.net/anger1.html) (<http://www.heart7.net/anger1.html>) and of suggesting several ways of [safely using the power of anger](http://www.heart7.net/anger2.html) (<http://www.heart7.net/anger2.html>).

Lynn Namka has over 50 articles about reducing the level of anger and conflict within a family. They are laced with simple understandable exercises that involve parents, children, teenagers, and teachers. See [Get Your Angries Out!](http://members.aol.com/AngriesOut/index.htm) (<http://members.aol.com/AngriesOut/index.htm>.)

Research Press in Champaign, IL offers several videos dealing with anger control: *Learning to Manage Anger* for teens (\$200 or \$55 rental), *Dealing with Anger* for African American youth (\$495), *Anger Management for*



*Parents* (\$200 or \$55 rental). New Harbinger Publications has two videos: *Time out from Anger* and *Coping with an Angry Partner*.

## Warning: Please realize that intense anger can be dangerous

If you are close to losing control of your anger, realize this is not normal and you need to get treatment right away. Hostility can preoccupy, distort, and disable your mind; it can interfere with all other activities and may goad you into doing foolish and mean things. See Walker's (1990) description of murder by battered women. An uncontrollably angry person (both aggressor and victim) is afflicted with a terrible ailment; he/she is to be pitied; he/she needs immediate professional help. (Likewise, if someone is very angry at you, protect yourself! See discussion below.)

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Note: if you continue to have a serious temper and/or are frequently irritated, even after earnestly reading and trying some self-help methods, it is very important that you *consult a well trained therapist* and consider getting medication (antidepressants sometimes help).

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A reasonable summary is provided by the Institute of Mental Health Initiatives (202-364-7111), which tries to persuade the media (e.g. soaps) and schools to teach anger-control techniques. They use the handy little acronym of R-E-T-H-I-N-K to stand for seven skills for quieting unnecessary ire: R-recognize your emotion. Is it anger or threat or shame...? E-empathize with the other person. Try to understand their viewpoint and feelings? Express your feeling with "I" messages. T-think about your thinking. Am I being unreasonable? Am I awfulizing or musturbating? Look at the situation rationally, will it harm me a year from now? H-hear the other person and check out your perception by empathizing. I-integrate respect for every human into your feelings. "I mad but I still love you." N-notice your physiological responses. Learn to quickly calm down before losing control. K-keep on the topic, don't dig up old grudges. Look for compromises and solutions, including how to avoid situations that trigger your anger (the same thing often sets us off over and over). Very similar to Seneca in 60 AD.

**Not all anger is bad.** Lastly, after all these warnings, suggestions, and methods for controlling anger, I must underscore that although anger is unpleasant and potentially dangerous, it is often a beneficial and commendable emotion. Anger (not violence) is often justified. When that is so, if properly controlled, anger is a reasonable and effective reaction to an unfair or offensive situation. Anger is often necessary to change things! Specifically, anger motivates us to do something. Anger discloses unpleasant truths to others. Anger communicates that we are upset, that we can and will express ourselves, and that we are determined to correct a bad situation.

Anger can over-ride our fears that keep us withdrawn and compliant. Anger, properly utilized, gives us a sense of pride when we exert some control *and* improve a bad situation. Non-violent anger used to right wrongs is no vice, it is a virtue. Naturally, there is a book (Fein, 1993) about harnessing this powerful emotion for good purposes.

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## Dealing with an Aggressive Person

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There is no justification for violent aggression, such as spouse, child, or sibling abuse, criminal assault, rape, bullying, or any other physical harm or psychological insult to another person. You do not have to be a helpless "punching bag" or a timid Casper Milquetoast or a frightened scapegoat. You do not have to hide your feelings. What can you do? Express yourself assertively (chapter 13), if possible. Of course, if your life is in danger (and *it* *is* if someone is threatening or hitting you!), do whatever helps you reach safety. The problem is we don't know with any certainty how to protect ourselves from all grave dangers. For example, some abusive men have killed their wives for reporting their abuse to the police. Yet, research indicates the best approach to spouse abuse is to report it while protecting yourself; only 15% of abused wives who reported an assault to police were attacked again in the next six months, but among those who did not report the abuse 41% were assaulted again within six months (Lore & Schultz, 1993). All other things being equal, reporting aggression and abuse is the best thing to do.

If you are being treated unfairly, you can more effectively correct the situation by acting decisively and rationally--assertively (see chapter 13)-- than by using angry counter-threats and aggression. Harburg, Blakelock, and Barchas (1979) called this controlled approach "reflection." Your blood pressure stays the lowest if you first take enough time for everyone to calm down and then "set down and reason together." Women use this approach more than men.

### Coping with rape—a horrible and scary crime

It is a hateful, cruel power move. It is terrifying because overwhelming force and threats are used to the extent that the victim frequently fears for her life. This fear of dying is not an unreasonable fear because many well publicized rapes have ended with murder. And some rapists make it clear that they are in a rage and determined to dominate and degrade the victim. When you are being threatened with a weapon, knocked or thrown to the floor, and your clothes are being ripped off... that is terror. It is one of the worst of human experiences. It is humiliating and embarrassing. It is painful to think about and tell someone about. So, perhaps, it is not surprising that rape is reported to the police only 5% of the time; 50% of the time the woman tells no one. (Other research says only 1/3 of rapes are reported.) It is rightly considered an atrocious crime.



In a rape or an aggressive sex act, varying degrees of force and pressure or manipulation are used to dominate and get sex. Not all unwanted sex experiences are carried out in a brutal manner; sometimes it is subtle seduction, but that is still controlling another person for selfish purposes. Added altogether, rape, date rape, and other forms of sexual abuse are fairly common. For example, one in four girls is abused by age 14; one in three by age 18, many by family members. One in 6 boys is abused by age 16. Among college women, about 5% experience a rape or an attempted rape every year; that brings the total to a 20-25% chance of an unpleasant sexual experience sometime during the four years of college. 84% of these victims were attacked by someone they knew (57% by a "date"). Russell (1982) reports that 35% of college males confess that there is "some likelihood that they would rape a woman if they could get away with it." Also, 28% of "working women" have been sexually assaulted, 60% by someone they knew. Russell also interviewed almost 1000 women and found that 14% had been raped by their own husbands or ex-husbands. Remember, think of rape as a violent act. Man has an astonishing history of raping women (Brownmiller, 1975), including raping the women of conquered countries. Almost 700,000 women were raped in 1990; 30% were between 11 and 17; another 30% were under 11! The attacker was known by about 75% of the victims.

Should you resist rape and if so, how? Some people suggest that you not fight back at all. Others have recommended fighting back, screaming, vomiting, and doing everything you can to resist the rape, because only about half of the women who strongly resist are raped while almost all who don't resist are raped. The problem is very complex, e.g. *if a woman forcefully* resists physically--hitting, kicking, using martial arts--and *if the rapist has a weapon*, she is more likely to be seriously injured. If she vigorously resists verbally--screaming and yelling--she is less likely to be raped but she is just as likely to be physically injured in other ways (Ullman & Knight, 1993). *Nonforceful* resistance--fleeing, pushing, pleading, begging, and reasoning--doesn't seem to reduce the frequency of rape or of other injuries. It appears that many *violent* rapists continue their attack even if the victim resists vigorously physically and verbally (or doesn't resist). The latest advice is: with very physically violent rapists, resistance probably won't help (and increases the danger); yet, with a more verbal and less physical assailant, strong forceful resistance may help. But, we are talking about stranger rape. How can you quickly diagnose what type of rapist this is? Also, this advice may not be very good with acquaintance rape. In short, no one knows the best response with any certainty.

If you are raped, even if you are very upset, it is important to go to a hospital emergency room as soon as possible (see next paragraph for phone numbers and sites about where to go if you don't know). You need to be carefully checked, usually by rape examination specialists. Do not shower or clean up. Evidence needs to be collected. Pregnancy and [STDs](#) need to be considered. Injuries need to be treated. All sexual abuse should be officially reported, even if you escaped before being hurt. Rapists and abusers are repeaters. As a society, we must reinforce reporting sexual assaults and harassment. As long as offenders can get away with it, it will continue.

As a society, we must start early to face and correct the macho, hostile, insensitive, "sick," ignorant sexual-sadistic urges in men and boys. Several Web sites focus on preventing rapes, female and male rapes (oh, yes, it occurs): [Kate's Feminism Page](http://www.wwwomen.com/category/femini4.html) (<http://www.wwwomen.com/category/femini4.html>), [AWARE: Arming Women Against Rape](http://www.aware.org) (<http://www.aware.org>), and [Men Can Stop Rape](http://www.mencanstoprape.org/) (<http://www.mencanstoprape.org/>) if they learn to take sober responsibility for their sexual/hostile actions.

If you need help or are unsure about getting an exam or reporting the offense, call The Rape/Sexual Abuse Hotline at 1-800-551-0008 (serving only certain areas) or [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](http://www.rainn.org/) (<http://www.rainn.org/>) at 1-800-656-HOPE. This latter number automatically re-routes your call the nearest local rape crisis center or treatment/examination facilities. Very good lists of actions-to-take are given at [Healing from Sexual Assault](http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/booklets/rape/rape.html) (<http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/booklets/rape/rape.html>) and [4Women.gov](http://www.4woman.gov/faq/sexualassault.htm) (<http://www.4woman.gov/faq/sexualassault.htm>).

Rape is a very scary and dangerous situation. It is highly emotional--you may have many feelings and thoughts. It almost always has serious long-term psychological and psychosomatic ramifications for the victim. Yet, sadly, very few rape victims seek psychological help. Treatment for the victim is usually important, even if it is years later (Koss & Harvey, 1991; Bass & Davis, 1988, 1992). Other books can be especially helpful to rape victims: Warshaw (1988, 1994) writes mostly about date rape, and Ledra (1986) or Maltz (1992) address many aspects of various kinds of rape. Specific cognitive-behavioral programs have been written, e.g. for rape survivors (Foa, Hearst-Ikeda & Perry, 1995), to reduce the long-term emotional trauma. Both Matsakis (2003) and Rothbaum & Foa (1999) focus on recovery from rape. Psychological help for men who have been sexually abused in childhood is given by Lew (1990) and Sonkin (1992).

Web sites can lead you to many books and articles about specific rape and abuse issues: [Sexual Assault Information Page](http://www.rainn.org/) (a huge site at <http://www.rainn.org/>), [Sexual Assault Services](http://www.connsacs.org/) (<http://www.connsacs.org/>), and [International Child Abuse Network](http://www.yesican.org/) (<http://www.yesican.org/>). Several kinds of offenders were mentioned above (see emotional abuse and Norcross, et al., 2000) but I'll repeat only the [Professional Exploiter](http://www.advocatweb.org/hope/default.asp) (<http://www.advocatweb.org/hope/default.asp>) here. Date rape is also discussed in chapter 10.



The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate... Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.



Dealing with a stalker

There are so many different kinds of stalkers who stalk for many different reasons. So, at first, deciding how to cope with a stalker would be very difficult. Often you don't suspect that they could become a stalker—they may only seem interested in talking with you or making a reasonable request for some help or wanting to compliment your work. Later, you may start to have a little concern when they request too much help or time. They might want a special meeting with you or they propose doing a project with you or under your supervision...this action may concern you because it doesn't seem like you have encouraged this much involvement. Then when phone calls begin coming every day or so, you know something is going on that you don't want to happen.

The beginning of stalking can be much more ominous and scary: a former lover may be seen watching your house and then, perhaps, there are daily calls to see if someone else is there. It really gets scary if the old lover threatens to "beat up on" or confront anyone you are seen with. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, such a situation, especially involving an ex-lover, can be very awkward and even dangerous. Different stalkers have very different motivations, different personality needs, and different long-term objectives. Some are very needy, meek, or eager to please; that may be a nuisance but not likely to harm you. Other stalkers have very intense needs and motives that you have no way of knowing. Their intentions may be senseless—even psychotic. They may think you love them when you don't even like them. They may hear voices telling them to hurt you.

Obviously, what you need to do to protect yourself depends on the stalker. Since the stalker may range from being a 13-year-old kid who has never had a girlfriend before but has a crush on you to being a 46-year-old male who has repeatedly been arrested for assault and battery on persons similar to you. Your action has to be different. A simple, clear, firm statement that you don't have the time or that he should stop calling you will take care of the young adolescent. On the other hand, it would be wise to document all phone calls by the criminal, notifying the police of each one as it occurs (even if he is your ex-husband). Get the local Police Department's advice about how to handle the adult making nuisance or threatening calls. Most of the books and Websites given below offer advice about how to protect yourself.

There are several books written about stalkers and how to deal with them. But many of the authors have had their unique experiences with stalking. Their experiences may or may not apply well to a stalking crisis you might be in. For instance, one publication for the general public is by a female psychiatrist (Orion, D., 1997) who herself has been stalked for 7+ years. The doctor describes herself as having a terribly distressing experience of "having a long-term love affair (in the patient's mind) with a former patient." The patient became obsessively in love with her...and the patient believed the doctor was in love with her—a psychiatric condition called Erotomania. The doctor tried to transfer this demanding woman to another doctor, but the patient wouldn't accept the transfer. The almost constant harassment by this former patient lasted for years...in her office, at the doctor's home, wherever she went, everywhere. The doctor tried moving out of state and the patient followed her. The repeated contacts and confrontations aroused fear and frustration in the doctor; she tried to go to court for a restraining order. She suffered a lot of professional embarrassment since many others learned of the problem. Taking legal action she had to deal with the police and lawyers. The distressing encounters also happened at work and involved other staff in her clinic. The doctor could not feel safe and secure

from invasion anywhere. In her book she offers practical suggestions for handling a similar stalker in a similar situation. There is also valuable information in the book about the feelings and thoughts—the mental processes—that may be going on in the stalker, since the doctor got to know the patient very well. Several other [books about stalkers and coping with stalkers](#) are found at [http://www.esia.net/Recommended\\_Reading.htm](http://www.esia.net/Recommended_Reading.htm) .

Other books have been written by therapists who have worked with stalkers. Michele Pathe (2002), also a psychiatrist and Director of the Stalking and Threat Center, has written more of a practical survival manual, focusing on different types of stalkers and on coping strategies and community resources available to the victim. She is also co-author of *Stalkers and Their Victims*, along with other experienced counselors. The Mullen, P. E., Pathe, M. & Purcell, R. (2000) book is a somewhat more scholarly publication covering more research and the psychological understanding of stalking.

There is another group of authors who focus on the legal, criminology, public safety and survival aspects of stalking: Mike Proctor (2003) is a detective in California who tries to give the victim the who, where, how and why of stalking, so they and the Police Department can protect the victim and legally stop the aggressor. Bates (2001) and Boon and Sheridan (2002) also provide research and information to victims and Police Departments about risk assessment, a new diagnostic system for stalkers, and policing of stalking. Some police departments provide tips to stalking victims, such as [http://www.kenner.la.us/pol\\_alert\\_asa.html](http://www.kenner.la.us/pol_alert_asa.html). This site doesn't seem to be working but try <http://www.lawyers.com/Domestic-Violence/Louisiana/browse-by-city.html> . A good source of information about [Criminal Harassment \(stalking\) laws](#) and restraining orders is [http://www.metrac.org/new/faq\\_sta.htm](http://www.metrac.org/new/faq_sta.htm).

Finally, there are several Websites that provide resources, support and discussion groups: [Sanctuary](#) at [www.stalkingvictims.com](http://www.stalkingvictims.com) and [Stalking Resource Center](#) at <http://www.ncvc.org/src/Main.aspx>. You can call them at 1-800-FYI-CALL between 8:30 AM and 8:30 PM. I would recommend that you pay close attention to ways of keeping your whereabouts secret. For instance, Google may provide your address, phone number and a map to your house. Likewise, there are ways to block your address being given out at the Motor Vehicle Department and Post Office (use a PO Box). You can get and use an unlisted phone number while keeping your answering machine on the old number recording calls from the stalker. Carry an unlisted cell phone with you at all times and have friends, relatives, and trusted others call you on that phone.

Fortunately, a large recent [survey of people who have been stalked](#) was done in Britain and written up by Dr. Lorraine Sheridan at University of Leicester (<http://www.stalkingsurvey.com>). They got 1051 useable responses, and 86% of the victims of stalking were female. Perhaps surprisingly, 36% of the victims (male and female) were professionals but they included a wide range of incomes. Victims averaged 33 years of age and stalkers were 38 at the start of the crime. Half of the victims had had an intimate relationship with the stalker; another one-third had a prior acquaintance. If they had previously been intimate, about 85% of the stalkers had been abusive. Only 10% of the perpetrators started pursuing a total stranger. One third of the victims thought stalkers were mentally ill. Others thought stalking was just a story for TV or only happened to celebrities...they certainly felt it couldn't

happen to them and if it did, they could handle it. Actually, stalking is not a rare event, one in every 12 women have this experience sometime in their life.

The more common behaviors of stalkers are phone calls (72%), observing the victim (67%), threatening suicide (62%), breaking into victim's home (19%), sexual assault (18%), abuse of pets (15%), threatening children (13%), defamation of character, and identity theft. Usually the stalkers used a variety of threatening methods in spite of 22% facing legal action to stop them. About one-third of the victims were forced by circumstances to move, lost a relationship or their jobs. Many lost money or had to repair damaged property or car...58% were very frightened. Almost all had severe physical and emotional effects. One third believed their personality had been changed forever, e.g. unable to trust. On average, 21 other people, family members, etc., were affected in addition to the victim. Stalkers are diligent searchers for information from the victim's work, family, friends, public records; they are sometimes charming and convincing when getting information about the victims..

These are serious problems, yet, the victims were frequently told by friends that they were over-reacting or being paranoid. Some victims become afraid they will be laughed at, so only 42% report the stalking to the police. Of those who reported the stalking, 61% felt the police were helpful. Victims thought the best way for the police to respond was to arrest the stalker, even though that often doesn't stop the stalker for long.

What motivated the stalking? Half the victims thought rejection; others thought it was jealousy or arguments or mental illness. Many just didn't know. Why did the stalking stop if it did? Most didn't know, maybe police warnings or the victim moving to a secret place. We just don't know what makes stalkers stop. Victims would like to have help collecting evidence to use against the stalker, info about protecting privacy, a discussion group with other victims, help from specialized police and psychologists, referral to experts who realize that there are very different kinds of stalkers and, therefore, advice needs to be tailored to specific types of stalkers.

Now you know more about stalking. Try to cut off all involvement very early before the attachment, jealousy, anger or whatever emotion becomes ingrained. If this is a break up of an intimate relationship, especially if it was abusive, make the break complete without offering hopes for reconciliation. Report any threats, even implied ones, to the police (with detailed documentation). Protect yourself well and at all times. If you feel the situation is unsafe, get out and get help.

## Recommended reading about aggressive people

This material might help when you have to deal with angry people and outraged crowds (Griese, 2002), when you have been mistreated at work (Cortina and Magley, 2003), or if your job involves trying to help angry, aggressive drivers—Road Rage (Galovski, Malta, & Blanchard, 2005). Many other writers have suggested ways of coping with generally difficult, aggressive people (Solomon, 1990; Felder, 1987; Elgin, 1985; Carter, 1990). Driscoll (1994) trains you to develop a mental shield to deflect the other person's anger. NiCarthy, Gottlieb & Coffman (1993) deal specifically with how women can deal with emotional abuse at work. Bramson (1981) says you will encounter three kinds of angry people at work: the Sherman tank, the exploder, and the sniper. The "Sherman tank" is ready to arrogantly crush any

opposition; he/she is always right and knows what everyone should do. The "exploder" has temper tantrums; he/she launches a raging attack on whoever frustrates him/her. Bramson recommends handling the "tank" and the "exploder" as follows: (1) let him/her have a little time to run down. (2) Assertively intervene by looking him/her in the eye and saying, "John/Mary, come here and sit down, I want you to clearly understand a different view or approach." You have a right to be heard; so do others. However, never attack a "tank" or his/her ideas directly; you're likely to get crushed. (3) State your opinions briefly, forcefully, and clearly. (4) Try to be friendly and open to compromise.

With a "sniper," who shoots you down with comments or gestures behind your back while smiling to your face, (1) don't let him/her get away with the back stabbing. (2) Confront and ask him/her to state his/her views openly but don't accept the sniper's views right away or let him/her take over. Instead, get other viewpoints and have the entire group get involved in solving the problem. (3) Prevent future sniping by having regular problem-solving meetings and call on the sniper often.

If you are concerned with continuing the relationship after the disagreement is settled, it means more time and caution may have to be taken. Listen to him/her, perhaps privately. Try to see his/her side. Don't try to explain or defend yourself until he/she is finished. Admit your mistakes. Accept his/her anger--let him/her vent it. Be prepared to compromise. Perhaps forgive him/her.

Some people seem compelled, emotionally driven to be angry. You probably can not change such a person (although you should give it your best try for a while). In an organization where trouble makers can't be fired, the best you can do with some perpetual "haters" is to isolate them and, thus, try to minimize their destructive influence.

## Reducing the other person's anger and aggression

First of all, recognize you aren't a therapist. It isn't your job to cure someone of hatred. But, you may be a parent dealing with an aggressive child or teenager (Eastman & Rozen, 1994; Farmer, 1989). And you, of course, want to do whatever you can to bring about peace and cooperation in your group. There are some things to keep in mind

Since persons who feel they have been wronged are more likely to be belligerent and violent, you should be sure they have been dealt with fairly. In addition, it would be wise to help them meet as many of their needs as possible without reinforcing their aggressiveness or discriminating in their favor. Likewise, avoid interactions with them that encourage intense emotions or threats of violence. Certainly do not interact with your angry "enemies" when they are drinking or carrying weapons. Say or do nothing that would incite more anger or, on the other hand, cause you to appear to be scared, weak, and a "pushover."

If you are in a position to do so (e.g. a parent), you might extinguish the other person's aggressive responses. For instance, don't meet your son's

teenage friends demands but agree to discuss the issues calmly. Ignore the teenager's foul-mouth but invite a rational discussion. Or, you might try punishing the anger but this is tricky because your punishment models aggression (thus, taking away their privileges or your services to them would be a better punishment). In most cases, strong retaliation against an aggressive person is the worst thing you can do (Kimble, Fitz, & Onorad, 1977). Nastiness begets nastiness. Hostility escalates. Baron (1977) says punishment might work under certain conditions: (a) if you can punish almost every time, (b) punish immediately, (c) punish in socially acceptable ways, and (d) do not punish harshly or become overly angry. Threats of punishment may also work. Remember punishment is only effective while the punisher is observing--watch out for subtle rebellion.

If you can divert the angry person's attention to some meaningful task or to cartoons or TV or a calm discussion of the situation, the anger should subside. Also, offer him/her any information that would explain the situation that upsets him/her (Zillmann, 1979). Point out similarities or common interests between him/her and the person they are mad at (you). Let him/her see or hear about calm, rational ways of resolving differences. Almost anything that gets him/her thinking about something else will help. Baron (1977) distracted irate male motorists (blocked by a stalled car) with a female pedestrian on crutches, in a clown outfit, or dressed scantily. All three drastically reduced the cussing, gestures, and horn blowing.

The Institute of Mental Health Initiatives (202-364-7111) provide a brief list of ways to calm an angry person: reduce the noise level, keep calm yourself, acknowledge that the irate person has been wronged (if true) or, at least, acknowledge their feelings without any judgment, ask them to explain their situation (so you can tactfully correct errors), listen to their complaints without counter-attacking, explain your feelings with non-blaming "I" statements, show that you care but set limits on violence ("I'd like to work it out with you but I'll have to call the police if you can't control yourself").

## The angry child or violent teen

Several books describe the development and treatment of the aggressive, acting out child (Whitehouse & Pudney, 1996--highly recommended by psychologists; Riley, D. (2002); Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Garbarino, 2000; Parens, 1987, 1993; Crowell, Evans, & O'Donnell, 1987; Feindler & Ecton, 1986; Bartocci, 1985). Eastman (1993) helps parents deal with a child's "sulks and storms." Paul (1995) helps us understand that a child's anger is a normal way of saying "I need something."

Several games, books, and programs for controlling a child's anger are available from Childsworld/Childsplay, The Center for Applied Psychology, Inc., P.O. Box 61586, King of Prussia, PA 19406. Fighting among siblings is natural, so how can you tell when it becomes excessive? See Ames, 1982. Research Press in Champaign, IL have books and videos for controlling aggression in the class room. Vivian Tamburello at the John Hopkins Counseling Center in Baltimore have a self-control program for adults and children. Aggressive children *can* be taught to tolerate frustration and to

handle the situations without getting belligerent (Gittelman, 1965). Role-playing and lots of practice were effective.

Bullies, boys and girls, have and cause serious problems. It is more common than you might think. Perhaps as many as 20% or 30% of children have some experience--doing or getting--with bullying during any one school term. *Psychology Today* has a good article about bullying (Marano, 1995). Boy bullies use physical threats mostly ("let me have your bike or I'll hit you"). Girl bullies use social threats ("I won't be your friend if you don't..." or "I'll tell them you are a slut if you..."). How are bullies produced? By ineffective parenting: parents repeatedly make requests ("Stop bothering your brother") and then threats, but nothing is done when the child is defiant. Thus, defiance is taught. Finally, at least for boys, the parent blows up and hits the disrespectful child, teaching that brute force and meanness gets you your way. The bully, if untreated, will eventually alienate everyone, except other bullies and outcasts. Then, they are likely to progress to antisocial behavior, unemployment, drugs, poor mental health, crime, spouse abuse, child abuse, etc. The victim, usually an already sensitive, scared, tearful, physically weak, socially passive, easily intimidated person, is at risk of also being rejected by peers, remaining passive, frightened, insecure, unable to cope, and eventually becoming self-critical, lonely, and depressed. This is not behavior to be neglected. It isn't just "boys being boys." Bullying requires community attention. Sweden outlawed bullying in 1994 as part of a society's effort to make hostile aggression unacceptable.

## If You Are a Victim of Violence or Bullying



There is a lot information available from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention about many aspects of violence ( <http://www.cdc.gov/>), [National Youth Violence Prevention Center](http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/bullying.asp) (<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/bullying.asp>), [The Violence Prevention Institute](http://www.preventioninstitute.org/violenceprev.html) (<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/violenceprev.html>), and [National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm) (NCIPC) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm>). For parents, MTV and the American Psychological Association provide information to [help youth avoid violence](http://www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=38) at <http://www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=38>. This Website lists the warning signs that might help a young person to anticipate and avoid violence, including controlling their own anger and avoiding others who could be dangerous.

Handling a rapist, a mugger, a spouse abuser, a bully, an abusive boss, etc. is a complicated, risky matter. But the first rule is: if someone is seriously threatening you, protect yourself immediately and well. Take no chances. Especially, if you have already been hurt by this person, protect yourself from further attack, because repeated attacks are common. You must recognize that there are dangerous risks when dealing with any irate teenager or adult. Anger kills. If an angry person is highly emotional and threatening or violently yelling at you, leave him/her alone, it is unsafe to be near him/her.



It is smart to know how to protect yourself (Rafkin, 1993), but in situations where violence is threatened or possible, it is better, if possible, to let someone else handle the aggressor. Examples: If another person threatens you physically, call friends or the police for help. If you are mistreated at school or work, there are official ways to effectively complain. Don't hesitate to report a bullying, threatening person to authorities or to the police (be sure you can protect yourself after the authorities leave). Please report all aggressors; they are likely to go on hurting others if the community doesn't do something. If we let a bully get away with it, we are insuring that others will be emotionally abused.

If the person is very mad (but not dangerous) and seems determined to dislike you, avoid him/her as soon as you recognize his/her fixation on hating. He/she needs to cool off. You might approach him/her later, never alone but with supportive friends, parents, or school officials. You can not "make" anyone like you, so don't try it.

It is estimated that 30% of teens have been involved in bullying in some way, as bullies or targets of bullies. So, it is a serious problem and it has become a common prevention and/or treatment program in schools. For useful [information for both parents and teachers](#), look up <http://www.lfcc.on.ca/bully.htm>. Google will also lead you to a lot of information and to several programs designed for schools. See [Stop Bullying Now](#) (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.com/>) and [Safe Youth Now](#) (<http://www.safeyouth.org.>)

How to handle a bully: (1) avoid them! (2) Be assertive, "Leave me alone or I will tell the teacher... police... my parents... the supervisor" (AND DO IT!). (3) Have a friend accompany you. (4) Build a bunch of friends and recruit support. Get several people--other victims, school officials, your parents, the bully's parents, counselors, police, etc.--to come together and jointly confront the bully demanding that he/she stop forever. (5) Take self-defense or social skills, such as assertiveness, courses. (6) Role-play over and over handling the situation. (7) Become active in sports, build your body and strength--get self-confidence. But, DO NOT FIGHT (violence is a bad idea even for a good cause, and the bully is almost always stronger and meaner). There are some good books for children (or to read with children) who are upset by bullying or teasing (Carter & Noll, 1998; Namka, 1996; Verdick, 1997; Cohen-Posey, 1995). It is very distressing to the young person to be picked on. They often need help coping with mean peers.

Be aware that victims of violence are often pressured by society and by their own psychological fears and needs to use poor "survival strategies." These might involve several reactions: (a) denial of the abuse ("It didn't happen"), (b) minimization ("It doesn't matter, I'm OK"), and (c) self-blame ("I started it all"). As abuse is repeated, we become more helpless and more willing to accept the blame. Guard against such thinking. Walker (1990) describes the situations of battered women who used these poor strategies but finally kill their abuser (often in kill-or-be-killed situations). Get help to get out of those situations (see discussion of abuse in this chapter and in chapter 9). Most communities have emergency phone numbers for child abuse, sexual abuse, women's crisis center, and, of course, the police. If you

have trouble finding help with domestic violence, call the National Organization for Victim's Assistance (NOVA) at 1-800-TRY-NOVA or 1-800-879-6682. To find Women's Shelters in your area call the National Domestic Violence Hot Line at 1-800-799-SAFE.

## Social-Educational Solutions to Violence

A major part of the violence problem in this country is that we, as a people, have little faith that human aggression can be controlled. Some people think aggression is some men's nature. Others believe that dire circumstances lead some people to criminal and cruel behavior. On the other hand, Lore and Schultz (1993) and Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel (1995) make the point that *violence can be controlled*. These researchers review the causes of violence, such as guns and gangs. There is clear evidence that aggressive animals, including humans, are able to inhibit their violence when it is beneficial for them to stop it. Thus, they think it is a choice; it is optional! Yet, extensive research hasn't proven that stiff laws inhibit murder and assault.

The long delayed, uncertain punishment threatened by our criminal justice system hasn't worked well; at least the number in prison keeps increasing. For one thing, violence is usually carefully hidden so the law breaker won't be caught by the law much of the time. Moreover, the rate of violence may be influenced by many more subtle social factors--violence on TV, crime reports, empathy for the disadvantaged, glorification of police work, and even going to war (our murder rate goes up after a war, especially if we win). We must pay attention to our social environment. For instance, action TV shows and films with a lot of violence are immensely profitable to the film maker because dramatic shows of this nature can be sold around the world. Every culture understands a chase, a fight, and a little sex without a translator. Psychologists have studied these kinds of influence.

My belief is that personal experience usually has much more powerful emotional impact on my views than research (oh, yes, I rely a lot on research findings because I can't have personal experiences in all the important areas of life). For example, I first saw serious poverty in Korea—hungry families living in one room cardboard shacks with a tin roof, wearing rags, and gathering greens along the roads to have something to eat. Although I knew well the poverty of a farm hand family in Indiana, I was exposed (about 20 feet away, through a barbed wire fence) to poverty I hadn't known before. I quickly became impressed with the differences between their situation and mine (a Marine Lieutenant); I started to wonder how could this difference in poverty level exist...or, more accurately, how could such differences be moral or right? I still wonder about that. Fifty years later, I have no answer.

At that time as a young man, I realized if I were placed in my Korean neighbor's situation, I would have become upset, probably planned how to steal some of the Marine's food, clothing, guns, vehicles, etc. When I, as a father, realized that my attractive 16-year-old was being lured to eat, party, wear sexy clothes, and sleep with the Marines on the other side of the fence, I would have been distraught and irate...and probably dangerous, although I could have maybe understood my daughter's situation.

One doesn't have to go far to realize that dire poverty overwhelms many families. The daily solicitation of donations reads "Every 3 seconds a child dies from malnutrition or preventable diseases." I'm not sure people grasp that message if and when they read it, but what if the Air Force would fly each of us living in a \$200,000 house to feed a hungry child for a week? That would make an impression on us.

It is easy to find poverty and unfairness. Just a few days ago (March 20, 2006) the New York Times published an article by Erik Eckholm about "Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn." A huge group of young Black men (about 5 million in their 20's and 30's) are poorly educated and becoming very alienated from our society. In spite of 20 years of good economic times for middle-class America, joblessness among high school dropouts has steadily increased among inner city Black men. As Eckholm points out, in 2000, 65% of Black males in their 20's were jobless. By 2004, that percent of unemployment had increased to 72%, compared to 34% of whites and 19% of Hispanics. Even if you include Blacks who graduated from high school, half of Black men in 2004 did not have jobs.

Note also, that less than 50% of inner city Black men finish high school even now. Also note that 21% of Black males are in jail. By the time Black males are 35 or so, 60% have "done time." The New York Times story quotes Joseph T. Jones, Director of a Fatherhood and Work Skills Center, as explaining the troubles of young Blacks by blaming "terrible schools, absent fathers, racism, decline in blue collar jobs, and a subculture that glorifies swagger over work..." Of course, like the prostitutes in Korea, the young Black men have other income choices, namely, stealing from or selling drugs to wealthy middle and upper class Americans.

Violence in America will probably not be solved until social-economic conditions become more fair and parent-school efforts focus more on children's mental health, self-control, and morality. And peace may not be wide spread around the world as long as there is such a gap between the 'haves' and the "have nots."

Deutsch (1993) advocates that schools utilize cooperative learning, conflict resolution training, controversy-centered teaching techniques, and actual mediation of real conflicts by students. He called this "educating for a peaceful world." Our focus in this book is on self-help, not education, but each of us can insist that our schools and all

parents do a better job of producing better, less aggressive children. Training to reduce violence in the world is available here:

The American Psychological Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children have joined together to offer a training program called "ACT against violence." ACT stands for Adults and Children Together Against Violence Program. ACT believes training is very important because violence can be prevented if it is started early. The training is designed to teach adults that violence is mostly learned and primarily at an early age. Adults are encouraged to pay attention to what they say and do in front of the children, becoming nonviolent models. Considerate, fair, and non-aggressive methods of discipline are taught. Children are shown how to solve problems using words and reason, not actual or implied threats. Adults learn the importance of monitoring their children's TV and games so violence can be avoided.

The APA Website, booklets, and workshops are available to interested adults—they learn child development, the consequences of being exposed to violence, and coping skills, such as anger management, problem solving, positive discipline, etc. Training is provided in several ways to enable adults and communities to protect children from violence. See the [Act Against Violence Website](http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/) at (<http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/>) For more information write Julia Silva at [jsilva@apa.org](mailto:jsilva@apa.org).

It would be difficult to find a more important goal than to reduce the anger and aggression in the world. But it is a very ambitious undertaking. Such a task would have to involve most of the children and parents in the world. The training would require several hours and needs to be repeated periodically. Follow up consultation would be needed in families where the results were not good. Careful evaluation of the training methods would also be necessary. And on...and on.

So much needs to be done. We have little idea of why groups dislike and struggle violently with each other (Eidelson, R. J. & Eidelson, J. I., 2003). We know so little about why people become criminals. We don't know how to teach people to live by a moral code and how to be good to each other (See Chapter 3). We know so little about rehabilitating people who have been inconsiderate and mean to others.

Some intelligent people have hope:

"Evidence from around the world suggests that violence can be prevented by a variety of measures aimed at individuals, families and communities."

Dr. Etienne Krug, Director, Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention, in the World Health Organization Report.

Let's get on with it.

First justice, then peace.

## Bibliography

References cited in this chapter are listed in the [Bibliography](#) (see link on the book title page). Please note that references are on pages according to the first letter of the senior author's last name (see alphabetical links at the bottom of the main Bibliography page).