

'The man who gets angry at the right things and with the right people, and in the right way, and at the right time, and for the right length of time, is commended'

– Aristotle –

Anger is a normal, healthy human emotion which, if not expressed, can lead to long-term consequences, such as anxiety, depression, irritability and a variety of physical complaints. Anger can sometimes be a creative source of energy that helps us to move forward, and motivates us to change our lives. Some people, particularly women, are from an early age, discouraged from expressing anger and pay a price for being 'too nice'. We may have internalised a number of unhelpful beliefs that need reassessing.

'Getting angry is not the correct way to behave.'

This is an unreal expectation; many children are brought up to believe it is wrong to express anger. So they live with a feeling of failure every time they get angry. In fact, showing appropriate anger can be positive. Genuine grievances can be brought to the notice of others, and problems can then be resolved by discussion.

'Getting angry is destructive and negative.'

People often assume that anger is destructive to a person or to a relationship. In fact, anger can make the other person sit up and take notice. When anger is expressed at the time of the grievance, it then feels less destructive and explosive.

'If I express my anger, it will completely wreck him.'

People are often unwilling to express anger directly, fearing that the other person is too frail to cope with it. In fact, this is very unlikely; they may have communicated frailty in order to manipulate you. Once you have expressed your bottled-up anger, the realities of the relationship will be in the open, therefore more manageable and less explosive.

'If I allow myself to get angry, I might lose control and cause injury.'

Many people believe that the consequences of expressing anger directly will be catastrophic, for example they might explode or injure or even kill the other person. In fact, letting out angry feelings, when appropriate, helps us to become familiar with the feelings, less frightened of them and better able to control them.

'If I get angry, they will get me back in return.'

This belief usually originates in childhood if expressions of anger were strongly punished by parents or other adults. Many of the consequences of expressing anger, feared from childhood, will in reality not happen in adulthood.

'If I get angry, I will be rejected.'

In some more formal relationships, getting angry may lead to a negative response, but in a close relationship, being able to express anger means you are accepted by the other person as you are, not as an ideal.