Five Tips for Taming Anger

Dr. Gary Chapman, Author of *The 5 Love Languages*®

Ever feel angry? That's normal. There's nothing wrong with experiencing this human emotion. This issue is what you do with it. Do you deny it? Do you suffer in silence? Do you lose control?

Anger is a secondary emotion that is typically triggered by something else—usually fear or sadness. When we begin to dig deeper into the reason why we are feeling angry, the more productive our communication regarding it can become. That being said, many people never learn how to process anger properly. As a result, relationships become a battlefield.

*"You fired the first shot!"*

*"No, you did!"*

It's important to understand that love and uncontrolled anger can't coexist. Love seeks the well-being of the other, while uncontrolled anger burns relationships and the people in them.

So what can you do if you find yourself handling your anger in an unhealthy way? Here are five tips:

1.     **Admit it—anger is real**. There's nothing inherently, morally wrong about anger. It's simply a clue that something feels unfair or unjust to you. So give yourself permission to feel angry. Don't deny it. On the flip side, give those you love permission to feel angry too.

2.     **Say it—express your anger**. Don't play "Guess My Mood." When you are angry, don't act all passive-aggressive about it, throwing icy-cold vibes and expecting others to read your thoughts. If someone has done or said something to upset you, express that you're angry and why. The other person deserves to know why there's distance between you. You can't fix something that is hidden.

3.     **Guard it—follow ground rules**. Every conflict needs ground rules. Don't resort to extremes in addressing the situation—"always" and "never" are extremes spoken with gross exaggeration. Be careful to stay focused on the specific action or words that upset you, telling the person how it made you feel. Attacking the person over the behavior is not healthy or acceptable communication.

4.     **Ask—don't attack**. There are two (or more) sides to every story. You see things from one perspective: yours. Don't fly off the the handle and attack the other person. Ask questions, and give the other person a chance to explain his or her perspective. Genuine curiosity about other perspectives is an indicator that you are handling anger in a healthy way.

5.     **Don't discard the relationship**—repair it. Some relationships in life are disposable—the person who sat next to you in the first grade, the person you were dating that was clearly wrong for you. But for the people closest to you, it's worth fighting for and repairing those relationships. Nobody is perfect. Not even you. Therefore, relationships are messy, and no relationship survives long-term without forgiveness. Anger flags something is wrong, but that doesn't mean you have to walk away at first blush. Strive to hear each other out, resolve the issue, learn from the experience, and move on together. Healthy relationships need lots of apologies and forgiveness.

The next time anger rises up inside you, take a moment to ask yourself why you are feeling that way, and use the steps above to navigate a healthy discussion regarding.