
NLP and Anger Management



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Someone asked me about Anger Management and I decided to pay attention to the processes there. There are some really old but useful ways to deal with anger in traditional therapy. This includes:

1. Time out. This means you spend some time to play out the anger before you return to your interaction. This may not always work because you may have anchored the other person's face to anger. So you may end up timing out all the time you need to meet such a person!

2. Rationalize. Cognitive Behavior Therapy often recommends that you rationalize your anger. You could do this by simply focusing on what you have done and provide a positive rationale for your anger. This may not work because you may still be ruminating while creating your positive rationale... sulking while you think about it positively, thereby defeating the purpose of the exercise.

3. Cartharsis. By yelling and screaming, some people suggest that it is good for you. The idea is like that of a balloon filled with water, on the verge of bursting. If you expel the water, you do not risk bursting. Unfortunately, humans aren't balloons and if you scream, you might reinforce your anger. After all, you don't want to always scream when you get angry.

To model the process of anger, I decided... well, to see what happens when I get angry myself (no I don't turn green).

The first thing I realized was that for myself, I could catch myself turning angry. Usually I know most people can't respond rapidly to it, and I sometimes find it difficult to disengage. I discover that one pattern that leads to the release of anger is the feeling of "backing down". In a sense, guilt often follows anger for those who feel the desire to maintain a relationship.

However, I am aware that there are people who get angry for being guilty. Now this turns into a cycle - a vicious cycle.

The Swish Pattern works very well here, but there are a number of steps you need to go through in order to install a great shift for anger management.

Types of Anger

1. Explosive anger
2. Implosive anger

Here are the steps I might suggest. Do test them and let me know the results!

1. Detect signs of anger buildup. This may come in kinesthetic form, or you may see yourself getting angry.
2. Disassociate, dull the images, distance the angry image quickly. During this time, identify the positive intention behind the anger, and acknowledge it. Most of the time, anger happens when you want something but don't get it. For instance, you perceive that you were not appreciated, when appreciation is one of your highest values. Or, someone ignored you when recognition is one of your highest values. Once you recognize the positive reason for anger being there, then obviously it won't be useful if you get angry. Instead, what state would get you another outcome?
3. Use the Swish Pattern to rehearse the pattern such that when you experience anger buildup, you swish it away.
4. Replace the picture of anger buildup with another state that can help you get to another outcome that you desire. States such as gratitude, appreciation or compassion are useful. I find that procrastination for anger often leads to apathy (it may be useful in places where the person you are angry with is NOT a loved

- one), and may not always be useful in that sense. Test other states such as peace, harmony, acceptance and love.
5. Use the swish pattern to rehearse the transition from step 3 to step 4 for as long as it takes to keep the sensation.
 6. Future pace by imagining the anger-building scenario happening again, and notice if the new desired pattern kicks off. If not, use this new imaginary scenario and repeat step 5 to solidify the emotional transition.

Anger is one of our most primitive emotions. It is a survival mechanism. Whatever we do, we won't be able to eliminate it from our lives. However, anger can get us in trouble if we don't manage it properly, and that warrants our attention as we evolve as human beings.

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