

DEALING WITH ANGER AT YOURSELF

Most of us who have a strong sense of self-contempt have cultivated that feeling over a period of years. Thus there are no quick remedies or easy solutions. The following perspectives and suggestions may be of some worth to you.

First, begin a regular program of Bible study. The devotional suggestions at the end of this book should be of significant help to you. Bible study and prayer help us grow closer to God and make us more aware of God's concern for us and the world.

Second, begin keeping a journal or notebook of your experiences and feelings. The devotional suggestions at the end of the book should help get you started. Discipline yourself to write down the GOOD things you have done as well as the bad, stupid, or bumbling events of your life. Develop skill in recognizing the good that you have done for others.

Third, DO something every day that will make you feel good about yourself. Share a compliment with someone; visit a lonely neighbor; visit a nursing home; write a letter to a friend; make a small donation to a charitable concern; clean a room at the church; . . . The possibilities are endless. But get in the habit of doing things that make you feel good about yourself.

Fourth, take the time to analyze what is happening when you are angry at yourself:

- Should the focus of the anger be at yourself or at someone else? We sometimes focus anger on ourselves when it should actually be directed at another person.
- Have you ACCURATELY interpreted what another person meant? What you are taking for anger or disgust toward yourself from another person may mean something different. It could mean that the other person is actually mad at himself or herself. It could mean that the other person is sick or tired. Don't ASSUME that you are the cause of another person's displeasure unless you are absolutely sure that is true.
- Have you actually done something that different from what hundreds or thousands of other people do every day? The fact that you have made a mistake does not make you a wicked, horrible person. If it does, then the world is filled with wicked, horrible people. Learn to forgive yourself.

Fifth, find someone with whom you can talk about your feelings. Although some people seek a professional counselor for this kind of help, you may find that a friend or relative who cares a great deal about you can give you considerable help. Find someone with whom you can be honest about your feelings of self-hatred, and seek that person's help in looking more realistically at yourself and at the world around you.

If we were asked to give a word that expressed the common denominator of each of the "What Would You Do?" incidents, the word would be **anger** (write on board). Like guilt, anger is a feeling that is in itself neither good or bad. The reason that anger is most often thought of as a negative feeling is that people often act on their anger in negative ways. Harsh words, silent treatment, and violence are three negative ways to express anger. Out of the six role plays we just watched, how many of the responses were negative? (call for answers) How many were positive? (call for answers) Let's take a closer look at three of the ways people express anger:

Does an **aggressive** (write) expression of anger always have a negative result? Not necessarily. There have been many athletes, artists, writers, and business people who have aggressively expressed their anger in a positive way associated with their skill. Ty Cobb, for example, became one of the great baseball players of all time due in part to the anger he felt in never being able to live up to his father's expectations. But most aggressive expressions of anger do have negative results. Typically, a person who expresses anger aggressively is not concerned with the consequences of the action, or the rights or feelings of others. Harsh words, hurt feelings, serious bodily injury, and death are results of aggressive action.

A **repressed** (write) expression of anger is more than a non-expression. Not expressing one's anger has an effect on both parties, the person who carries the anger and the person to whom the anger is directed. For the person who is angry, the feeling of anger festers, perhaps moving deeper below the surface but never completely going away. Sometimes destructive actions like abuse of drugs or alcohol, or abuse of a spouse or a child are attributed in part to a person's repression of anger involving an earlier and similar incident that involved him or her. In fact, the more you repress an angry feeling, the more likely you are to be preoccupied with it.

Three Responses to Anger

1. BLOW UP: Shout and argue in rage.
2. BOTTLE UP: Give in, walk away or silently try to get over it.
3. STEP UP: Say you're angry but you won't take it out on that person, and ask for a chance to talk.

Honest answers to the following questions can help you evaluate a hurtful situation.

1. How badly do I hurt? Am I overreacting?
2. Did I give the person who hurt me a chance to know how I feel, to explain or ask my forgiveness?
3. Am I capable of accepting an apology or understanding another point of view and letting my hurt go?
4. Am I able to look for the good rather than concentrate on the shortcomings of the person who hurt me?

NEVER DRIVE A CAR IF YOU ARE TOO ANGRY TO MAINTAIN CONTROL.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Hard physical exertion can be an excellent means of ventilating hostility. While a punching bag can certainly provide that, you can also find release in:

- Taking a long walk
- Having a hard run
- Swimming
- Playing a game of exertion like basketball
- Riding a bicycle
- Jumping a rope

Or any other kind of physical exercise which you enjoy.