On Anger

Anger is an emotion that everyone feels sometimes. Sometimes it arises as a reaction to feeling we are in danger. Often that can help us find our way to safety. Other times our own anger becomes dangerous to others, or ourselves, depending on how we express it.

There are some schools of thought that encourage emotional and physical expressions of anger as a key to release it. Other schools of thought believe such practices fuel anger, rather than relieving it. They teach other methods of transforming angry thoughts and feelings into constructive thoughts, feelings and actions.

We encourage you to become aware of your anger, notice it when it arises, understand it, and find ways of taking care of yourself when that happens.

If you can say, “Oh, I’m angry,” you’ve already stepped outside of your anger. You’re in control of it; it’s not controlling you. Now you can decide what to do next so that you don’t hurt yourself or others.

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When you are angry, you want to ease your suffering. That is a natural tendency. There are many ways to find relief, but the greatest relief comes from understanding. When understanding is there, anger will go away by itself. When you understand the situation of the other person, when you understand the nature of suffering, anger has to vanish, because it will be transformed by compassion. From *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames* by Thich Nhat Hanh

Give attention to the present; give attention to your behavior, to your reactions, moods, thoughts, emotions, fears, and desires as they occur in the present. There’s the past in you. If you can be present enough to watch all those things, not critically or analytically but nonjudgementally, then you are dealing with the past and dissolving it through the power of your presence. You find yourself by coming into the present. From *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle

Usually we are angry about something that happened in the past and are trying to control something that might happen in the future. If we ask ourselves, “Am I okay right now?” Usually the answer is yes. If we can bring our attention to the present moment, we can find relief from past suffering and from fear of the future. That can immediately bring us the freedom to act without violence toward ourselves and others. From *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle

So you’re feeling angry. What are you going to do about it? Take responsibility for your anger and how you express it. Here are some things you can try:

Give yourself a break. Take some time away from the situation or the person you’re angry with. Talk with them later, when you can think clearly and express your thoughts without blame.

If the physical feelings of anger are very intense, you can take a walk, go for a run, or do other physical activity to release muscle tension and regulate your breathing before you address the person or situation that you’ve responded to with anger. Instead of shouting, punching or grabbing someone, you can walk, run, write, sing, dance... change your anger into creative action.

**Parents can:** Refrain from arguing in front of children.
~Teach children to respect others and themselves.
~Encourage the health, safety, and intellectual development of daughters as well as sons, and encourage their self-esteem.
~Avoid hitting children; use nonviolent forms of discipline instead.
~Teach children nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts.
~Teach children in ways appropriate to their ages about sex, love, and interpersonal relationships; emphasize that sex should always be consensual. [http://www.infoforhealth.org/pr/l11/l11pullout.shtml](http://www.infoforhealth.org/pr/l11/l11pullout.shtml)

If someone tells you they’ve been hurt by your anger, it is a good opportunity to listen, apologize and ask forgiveness. It takes a lot of strength to refrain from expressing anger and blame. Learning new ways to take care of your anger will serve you well for a lifetime.

**Myths About Violence**

- People will respect you if they fear you.
- It is a sign of strength.
- It makes you safe.
- You’re in control.
- You win.