




Chapter 7: Anger and Aggression

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Anger and Aggression



This chapter will provide (1) signs of anger, (2) theories about how and why aggression develops, and (3) means of preventing or coping with anger (in yourself and in others).

Introduction

How we deal with stress, disappointments, and frustration determines the essence of our personality. In this chapter we consider frustration and aggression. Anger may do more harm than any other emotion. First of all it is very common and, secondly, it upsets at least two people--the aggressor and the aggressed against. There are two problems: how to prevent or control your own anger and how to handle someone aggressing against you. This chapter attends more to self-control.

The overall effects of anger are enormous (Nay, 1996). Frustration tells us "I'm not getting what I want" and eventually anger is related to violence, crime, spouse and child abuse, divorce, stormy relationships, poor working conditions, poor physical health (headaches, hypertension, GI disturbances, heart attacks), emotional disorders, and so on.

Just how widespread is hostility? Very! *Psychology Today* (1983) asked, "If you could secretly push a button and thereby eliminate any person with no repercussions to yourself, would you press that button?" 69% of responding males said yes, 56% of women. Men would most often kill the U. S. president or some public figure; women would kill bosses, ex-husbands or ex-boyfriends and former partners of current lovers. Another survey of college students during the 80's indicated that 15% agreed that "if we could wipe out the Soviet Union, and be sure they wouldn't be able to retaliate, we should do it." That action could result in over 100 million deaths! The respondents seemed to realize the great loss of life because 26% said, "the United States should be willing to accept 25 million to 50 million casualties in order to engage in nuclear war." What an interesting combination of intelligence and mass violence in the same species. In light of the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union, this kind of pugnacious, arrogant, uncaring thinking is really scary. The problem isn't stupid thinking as much as it is self-centered mean-spiritedness.

Great atrocities are attributed to crazed men--Hitler, Stalin, terrorists, etc. But, several psychological studies cited in this and the next chapter suggest that ordinary people can rather easily become evil enough to discriminate against, hurt, and brutalize others. Likewise, Goldhagen (1995) has documented that ordinary Germans by the thousands rounded up and executed Jews by the millions. It isn't just the prejudiced and deranged that brutalize. There is scary evidence that almost all of us might, under the right conditions, develop a tolerance or a rationalization for injustice. Even the most moral among us may look the other way (certainly the many murderers in Germany and Russia talked to priests, ministers, town officials, etc.). We strongly resist thinking of ourselves as potentially

mean, but we have no trouble believing that others are immoral. Storr (1994) attempts to explain intense human hatred and cruelty to others, such as genocide and racial or religious conflict.

The crime rate soars in the U.S. and our prisons overflow; infidelity and spouse abuse are high; 1 in 5 women has been raped, 683,000 women were raped in 1990 (30% were less than 11!); our murder rate is several times higher than most other countries. We are prejudiced. We distrust and dislike others. Even within the family--supposedly our refuge, our safe place, our source of love--there is much violence. Between 1/4 and 1/2 of all wives have been physically battered which causes great psychological trauma too (Goodman, Koss, & Russo, 1993). Physical fights have occurred within 12-16% of all marriages during the last year. In 50% of these instances it is mutual violence, i.e. *both* try to beat up on the other. But children 3 to 17 are the most violent: 20% per year actually abuse their parents; 93-95% are a "little physical" with parents. In addition, last year 10% of children were dangerously and severely aggressive with siblings. Nearly one third of us fight with our siblings. About 25% of all murders are by teenagers. There are 1.2 million cases of child abuse per year. Pogrebin (1983) says we are a child-hating society.

One in eight high school students are involved in an abusive "love" relationship right now. 40% of youths have been in a fight in the last year; 10% were in four or more fights last year. 25% of young males have carried a weapon at least one day in the last month (of that 25%, 60% carried a knife and 25% a gun). Boys and men are much more likely to carry a weapon than a female, but don't assume that only men act violently. Recent studies suggest that college (not high school) women are more likely than men to kick, push, bite, and slap in anger, especially when they are jealous. Hostile, aggressive young people tend to come from broken, angry, violent homes.

We will study more about how anger develops. Is it innate? Certainly most three-year-olds can throw a temper tantrum without any formal training and often even without observing a model. Is it learned? Why are the abused sometimes abusers? Does having a temper and being aggressive yield payoffs? You bet. How do we learn to suppress aggression? How can we learn to forgive others?

Anger can be the result of hurt pride, of unreasonable expectations, or of repeated hostile fantasies. Besides getting our way, we may unconsciously use anger to blame others for our own shortcomings, to justify oppressing others, to boost our own sagging egos, to conceal other feelings, and to handle other emotions (as when we become aggressive when we are afraid). Any situation that frustrates us, especially when we think someone else is to blame for our loss, is a potential trigger for anger and aggression.

So, what is frustration? It is the feeling we get when we don't get what we want, when something interferes with our gaining a desired and expected goal. It can be physical (a flat tire), our own limitations

(paralysis after an accident), our choices (an unprepared for and flunked exam), others' actions (parental restrictions or torturing a political prisoner), others' motives (deception for a self-serving purpose), or society's injustice (born into poverty and finding no way out).

Anger is feeling mad in response to frustration or injury. You don't like what has happened and usually you'd like to get revenge. Anger is an emotional-physiological-cognitive internal state; it is separate from the behavior it might prompt. In some instances, angry emotions are beneficial; if we are being taken advantage of, anger motivates us to take action (not necessarily aggressive) to correct the situation. Aggression is action, i.e. attacking someone or a group. It is intended to harm someone. It can be a verbal attack--insults, threats, sarcasm, or attributing nasty motives to them--or a physical punishment or restriction. What about thoughts and fantasies in which we humiliate or brutally assault our enemies? Is that aggression? What about violent dreams? Such thoughts and dreams suggest anger, of course, but are not aggression as I have defined it here.

While aggression is usually a result of anger, it may be "cold" and calculated, for example, the bomber pilot, the judge who sentences a criminal, the unfaithful spouse, the merchant who overprices a product, or the unemotional gang attack. To clarify aggression, some writers have classified it according to its purpose: instrumental aggression (to get some reward, not to get revenge), hostile aggression (to hurt someone or get revenge), and annoyance aggression (to stop an irritant). When our aggression becomes so extreme that we lose self-control, it is said that we are in a rage.

Aggression must be distinguished from assertiveness which is tactfully and rationally standing up for your own rights; indeed, assertiveness is designed not to hurt others (see chapter 8).

Anger can also be distinguished from hostility which is a chronic state of anger. Anger is a temporary response, which we all have, to a particular frustrating situation; hostility is a permanent personality characteristic which certain people have.

Recognizing Anger

We know when we are very mad, but anger and aggression come in many forms, some quite subtle. Look inside yourself for more anger. This list (Madlow, 1972) of behaviors and verbal comments said to others or only thought to ourselves may help you uncover some resentments you were not aware of:

Direct behavioral signs:

1. Assaultive: physical and verbal cruelty, rage, slapping, shoving, kicking, hitting, threaten with a knife or gun, etc.

2. Aggression: overly critical, fault finding, name-calling, accusing someone of having immoral or despicable traits or motives, nagging, whining, sarcasm, prejudice, flashes of temper.
3. Hurtful: malicious gossip, stealing, trouble-making.
4. Rebellious: anti-social behavior, open defiance, refusal to talk.

Direct verbal or cognitive signs:

1. Open hatred and insults: "I hate your guts;" "I'm really mad;" "You're so damn stupid."
2. Contempt and disgust: "You're a selfish SOB;" "You are a spineless wimp, you'll never amount to anything."
3. Critical: "If you really cared about me, you'd...;" "You can't trust _____."
4. Suspicious: "You haven't been fair;" "You cheated!"
5. Blaming: "They have been trying to cause me trouble."
6. I don't get the respect I deserve: "They just don't respect the owner (or boss or teacher or doctor) any more."
7. Revengeful: "I wish I could really hurt him."
8. Name calling: "Guys are jerks;" "Women are bitches;" "Politicians are self-serving liars."
9. Less intense but clear: "Well, I'm a little annoyed;" "I'm fed up with...;" "I've had it!" "You're a pain." "I don't want to be around you."

Thinly veiled behavioral signs:

1. Distrustful, skeptical.
2. Argumentative, irritable, indirectly challenging.
3. Resentful, jealous, envious.
4. Disruptive, uncooperative, or distracting actions.
5. Unforgiving or unsympathetic attitude.
6. Sulky, sullen, pouting.
7. Passively resistant, interferes with progress.
8. Given to sarcasm, cynical humor, and teasing.
9. Judgmental, has a superior or holier-than-thou attitude.

Thinly veiled verbal signs:

1. "No, I'm not mad, I'm just disappointed, annoyed, disgusted, put out, or irritated."
2. "You don't know what you are talking about;" "Don't make me laugh."
3. "Don't push me, I'll do it when I get good and ready."
4. "Well, they aren't my kind of people."
5. "Would you buy a used car from him?"
6. "You could improve on..."
7. "Unlike Social Work, my major admits only the best students."

Indirect behavioral signs:

1. Withdrawal: quiet remoteness, silence, little communication especially about feelings.
2. Psychosomatic disorders: tiredness, anxiety, high blood pressure, heart disease. Actually, college students with high Hostility scores had, 20 years later, become more overweight with higher cholesterol and hypertension, had drunk more coffee and alcohol, had smoked more cigarettes, and generally had poorer health (Friedman, 1991). See chapter 5 for a discussion of psychogenic disorders.
3. Depression and guilt.
4. Serious mental illness: paranoid schizophrenia.
5. Accident-proneness and self-defeating or addictive behavior, such as drinking, over-eating, or drugs.
6. Vigorous, distracting activity (exercising or cleaning).
7. Excessively submissive, deferring behavior.
8. Crying.

Indirect verbal signs:

1. "I just don't want to talk."
2. "I'm disappointed in our relationship."
3. "I feel bad all the time."
4. "If you had just lost some weight."
5. "I'm really swamped with work, can't we do something about it?"
6. "Why does this always happen to me?"
7. "No, I'm not angry about anything--I just cry all the time."

Hidden Anger

It is obvious from these "signs of anger" that anger is frequently a concealed or disguised emotion. And why not? Getting mad is scary... and potentially dangerous. One common way of expressing suppressed anger has been given a special name: passive-aggressiveness. It is releasing your anger by being passive or subtly oppositional. For example, such a person may be "tired," unresponsive, act like he/she "doesn't understand," be late frequently, exaggerate others' faults, pretend to agree ("sure, whatever"), be tearful, be argumentative, be forgetful, deny anger ("nothing's wrong"), procrastinate, and frequently be clumsy or sick (Hankins, 1993). Many of these traits and behaviors are listed above.

There is another related form of concealed anger: feeling like a victim. Feeling victimized assumes that someone or some situation has mistreated you. But a person who specializes in constantly feeling like a victim may not identify or accuse his/her abuser. Instead, he/she generally feels that the world is against him/her, that others vaguely intend to make him/her miserable. Victims usually feel helpless; therefore, they take little responsibility for what has happened to them. They think they were terribly mistreated in the past but they

now seem unable to accept love and support, e.g. if you offer them help, they never get enough or if you try to cheer them up, it seldom works. A victim is much more likely to sulk, pout, look unhappy, or lay a guilt trip on something than to get angry. They play games: "Why does it always happen to me?" or "Yes, but" (no one's ideas or suggestions will do any good). The self-pitying, pessimistic, sad, jealous victim is surely sitting on a mass of hostility.

Both the passive-aggressive and the victim are likely to be aware of their anger, even though it is largely denied. In chapter 9 we will discuss "game playing" in which the aggressor plays "You're Not OK" or put down games without being aware of his/her anger. Anger expresses itself in many forms: cynic, naysayer, critic, bigot, etc. Potter-Efron & Potter-Efron (1995) describe ten different styles of expressing anger; this may help you identify your type and help you stop it.

How angry are you?

There are so many frustrations in our daily lives; one could easily become chronically irritated. Perhaps more important than the variety of things that anger us, is (1) the intensity of our anger and (2) the degree of control we have over our anger. That is, how close are we to losing control? About two-thirds of the students in my classes feel the need to gain more control over their anger.

How much of a temper do you have? Ask yourself these kind of questions:

- Do you have a quick or a hot temper? Do you suppress or hide your anger (passive-aggressive or victim)?
- Do you get irritated when someone gets in your way? fails to give you credit for your work? criticizes your looks or opinions or work? gives themselves advantages over you?
- Do you get angry at yourself when you make a foolish mistake? do poorly in front of others? put off important things? do something against your morals or better judgment?
- Do you drink alcohol or use drugs? Do you get angry or mellow when you are high? Research clearly shows that alcohol and drugs are linked with aggression. Drinking decreases our judgment and increases our impulsiveness, so watch out.

You probably have a pretty accurate picture of your temper. But check your opinion against the opinion of you held by relatives and friends. There also are several tests that measure anger, e.g. Spielberger (1988).

A case of jealous anger

Tony and Jane had gone together a long time, long enough to wear off the thrill and take each other for granted. The place where this was

most apparent was at dances and parties. Tony was very outgoing. He liked to "circulate" and meet people, so he would leave Jane with a couple of her friends and he would go visit all his old buddies. This bothered Jane; she would have liked to go along. But what really bothered Jane was Tony's eye for beautiful women. As he moved around greeting his friends, he looked for the best-looking, relatively unattached woman there. Tony was nice looking, a good dancer, and not at all shy. He'd introduce himself, find out about the woman, tell some funny stories about what he had done, and, if it were a dance, ask her to dance. Eventually, he would excuse himself and come back over to Jane and her friends. He just enjoyed meeting new people and dancing or parties.

Jane resented this routine. She had told Tony how she felt many times. He told her that she was being ridiculous. Jane felt much more anger, hurt, jealousy, and distrust inside than she let show. She was usually quiet and "cool" for a little while but pretty soon she would dance with Tony and it seemed like she got over it. Yet, even the next day she would think about what had happened and cry. About lunch time she would wonder what Tony was doing. A little fantasy would flash through her mind about Tony calling up the woman he danced with and asking her out to lunch. That would hurt her too.

Understanding Anger: Theories and Facts



Innate, genetic, hormonal

Freud came to believe in a death or aggressive instinct because he saw so much violence, sadism, war, and suicide. Konrad Lorenz (1966) believed that species, both animal and human, survived by having an aggressive instinct which protected their territory and young, and insured only the strongest individuals survived. The sociobiologists, noting the frequency we go to war, also suggest that we have inherited an aggressive nature, a tendency to lash out at anything that gets in our way, a need to dominate and control.

Research has shown that stimulation of certain parts of animals' brains leads to aggression. Stimulation of other parts stops aggression. We don't know how this works. In 1966, Charles Whitman killed his wife and mother because "I do not consider this world worth living in...", then climbed a tower on the University of Texas campus and fired his rifle at 38 people. He killed 14 before being killed. An autopsy revealed a large tumor in the limbic system of his brain (where the aggression "centers" are in animal brains). In epileptic patients with implanted electrodes, in rare cases violence follows stimulation of certain parts. Abnormal EEG's have been found among repeat offenders and aggressive people. So, aggression may

sometimes have a physical basis. Brain damage can be caused in many ways (Derlega and Janda, 1981).

Aggression may also have a chemical, hormonal, or genetic basis too. A large survey of adopted children has found that living with an adoptive parent who committed crimes is less risky than merely having the genes from a person who committed crimes (Mednick, Gabrielli & Hutchings, 1984). The power of human genes is discussed in chapter 4, but, obviously, within animals certain breeds of dogs, like Pit Bulls, are more vicious than others. More aggressive breeds can be developed, e.g. rats or fighting bulls. Maybe we should develop kinder, gentler, smarter humans.

Other physiological factors seem to be involved. Examples: high testosterone (male sex hormone) is associated with more unfaithfulness, more sex, more divorce, more competitiveness, and anti-social behavior. It is also known that a viral infection, called rabies, causes violent behavior. About 90% of women report being irritable before menstruation. Furthermore, 50% of all crimes by women in prison occurred during their menstrual period or premenstrual period. By chance only 29% of crimes would have occurred during those eight days. Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) increases during the premenstrual period and it causes irritability. About 3 times in a 1000 a male inherits an extra X or Y chromosome, so they are XYY or XXY, instead of XY. At one time it was thought that XYY and XXY males committed more violent crimes. Now it appears that this isn't true but these males are arrested earlier and more often. So we can't forget our inheritance. There is so much we do not know yet.

In all of these possibilities--instinct, heredity, hormones, or brain dysfunction--the aggression occurs without apparent provocation from the environment (although there is almost always a "target"). According to some of these theories, the need or urge to be aggressive is boiling within each of us and seeks opportunities to express itself. There is also clear evidence that alcohol consumption and hotter temperatures release aggression, but no one thinks there is something in alcohol or heat that generates meanness. The socialization process, i.e. becoming a mature person, involves taming these destructive, savage, self-serving urges that probably helped us humans survive one million years ago but threatens our survival today.

Response to frustration—displacement and catharsis

Any observer of human emotions recognizes that certain circumstances and actions by others seem to make us mad. When we are intentionally hurt, insulted, cheated, deceived, or made fun of--all these things arouse anger and aggression (Byrne & Kelley, 1981) and distrustful people have more of these experiences. In each case we had hoped for more--for more consideration, more fairness, more understanding. We were frustrated, i.e. prevented from achieving some desired goal. Some theorists believe that anger just naturally

results from frustration. This is called the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

Our frustration will be more intense if our goal is highly desirable, if we "get close" to our goal and expect to get it, if the barrier to our goal unexpectedly appears and seems unjustified or unfair, and if we "take things personally" (Aronson, 1984; Berkowitz, 1989). There are several physiological reactions that accompany frustration, including higher blood pressure, sweating, and greater energy. Psychosomatic symptoms, such as heart disease, occur more often in people who are cynics and distrustful but hold in their anger. Some of us explode, others swallow feelings. Our blood pressure sometimes goes up more when we explode, at other times it goes up more when we swallow the feelings, depending on the situation. The more physiologically damaging anger reactions seem to occur under two extreme conditions, namely, when we feel utterly helpless, or, the opposite, when we have overly optimistic expectations of reaching unreachable goals.

It is obvious that even though we are frustrated and feel angry, we may not become aggressive--not if such a response might result in our being injured or rejected or fired. Yet, if you think of anger as a drive, an urge inside striving for expression, then merely deciding to placate your boss or an obnoxious football player doesn't do anything to reduce your anger (indeed, probably increases it). We can learn to control our anger but as a basic drive it remains there seeking some expression. That's the theory (both Freud and Dollard and Miller, 1950).

There are two implications (both seriously questioned recently):

1. The unexpressed anger will spill out in other directions (displacement). For example, Dollard and Miller described a teenage boy who was unable to go on a trip because his friend had a cold. Not long after this he got into a big fight with his little sister. This displaced aggression is directed away from the real target and towards a safer target, called a scapegoat. This provides a partial release of the pent up frustration but the initial disappointment may never be admitted and experienced fully. Indeed, displacement can also be a defense against recognizing the real source of anger (see chapter 5). Displacement is referred to several times in this chapter, especially under prejudice.
2. When the angry feelings build up inside, presumably like pressure in a hydraulic system, it is thought by many therapists to be relieving to express the feelings and get them completely "off your chest." This is called venting or catharsis, a cleansing of the system. Early in Freud's career, psychoanalytic therapy depended heavily on catharsis--uncovering old emotional traumas and venting those feeling until we had some understanding of the internal stress and a thorough draining of the pent up emotions. It is a popular and common notion that

feelings need to be expressed openly and completely. Clearly, when a child wants something he/she can't have, it is likely to cry, get angry, and even hit, i.e. vent feelings. We may not like it, but we see the frustration as an understandable reaction.

However, considerable recent research has been interpreted in such a way as to raise doubts about the value of trying to drain off our anger. First of all, it became pretty clear that watching violent behavior (films, TV, sports) carried out by others *increases* our own aggressive responses rather than draining off our anger (Bandura, 1973). It seems reasonable that seeing aggression acted out on the screen might provide a model and some encouragement to an already angry person. Certainly, watching a film is not the same as a catharsis in therapy, where a painful, personal experience is relived in full fury with the specific intention of emptying the person of toxic venom (anger).

Hokanson and others (Forest & Hokanson, 1975; Murray & Feshbach, 1978) have studied how to reduce anger arising from being shocked by an aggressive partner in an experiment. When given a choice among (1) being friendly to the mean partner, (2) shocking one's self, and (3) shocking the partner back, *only attacking back* (with shock) relieved the subject's emotional reaction (unless they were depressed--see chapter 6). However, in later studies, where the aggressive partner's behavior (# of shocks) could be modified by being friendly to him or by being self-punitive, both of these actions yielded a "cathartic-like" emotional relief without anger being released. So, there seems to be a variety of ways we can learn to handle our anger, including learning various means of controlling the aggressor.

Again, being "friendly" to someone who has hurt you and shocking yourself hardly seem to be the same kind of emotionally draining experience as a thorough catharsis or getting revenge (see next section).

Being aggressive and mean towards someone who has angered us does make us feel better but also makes us *more* inclined to hurt them even more later. Why is this? Probably because being hostile is easier the second time and still easier the 100th time; you've overcome your inhibitions against aggression; you've learned about aggression and its payoffs. But there are other reasons. Aronson (1984) points out that our negative feelings increase towards another person or group as we hurt them. The snowballing effect between thoughts and actions goes like this: "We are hurting them. We are decent people. Therefore, they must be bad." So we put them down more, justifying hurting them more, leading to more negative thoughts about them, etc. This mental put down-behavioral violence cycle occurs in abuse and in prejudice, which we will consider in more detail later.

Conclusions about catharsis

Is catharsis helpful or harmful? The problem is, as I see it, that catharsis can mean many things. Several scientists (Aronson, 1984; Lewis & Bucher, 1992; Bandura, 1973; Tavris, 1984) have sloppily accepted many diverse acts as being "catharsis" and prematurely concluded that all kinds of catharsis are ineffective or harmful. What the behaviorists call catharsis (almost any expression or even observation of emotion) is hardly therapeutic catharsis. For instance, Tavris clearly equates a dirty, abusive, vicious marital fight with catharsis. Unfortunately, this equation is naive and implies that therapists using catharsis might even advocate abusive violence.

What is catharsis in therapy? Well, most Freudians would say it was the expression of repressed (unconsciously held back) feelings that are causing problems. Sometimes the initial traumatic situation (often from childhood) is vividly relived, called an abreaction. Most non-Freudian psychotherapists would consider catharsis to be the intense expression (in therapy or alone) of conscious or unconscious emotions for the specific purpose of feeling better, gaining insight, and reducing the unwanted emotion. It doesn't involve watching a model of aggression; it never involves actually hurting someone.

Published descriptions of therapy provide thousands of examples of catharsis. Here's one. In the early 1880's, Josef Breuer, Freud's friend, was treating a bright, attractive young lady, Anna O. Among many other symptoms, she had a phobia of drinking water from a glass. She didn't understand the fear. Under hypnosis, Anna O. recalled being disgusted when she saw her tutor's dog (she hated both the tutor and the dog) drink from a glass. After Anna O. expressed her intense anger about the tutor, she immediately understood her rejecting the water (just like she rejected the tutor) and she could thereafter drink water from a glass. None of the current behavioral research has studied such a "cathartic" experience as Anna O's, probably because this kind of repressed experience can't be scheduled as a 30-minute lab assignment for Intro Psych students; it can be recorded in therapy, however. Furthermore, a straight-forward, easily controlled procedure for venting one's anger is available (see chapter 12) and could be researched readily. It focuses on reducing anger, not learning aggression. The same process occurs when you feel better after letting off steam with a friend.



I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe;
I hid my wrath, my wrath did grow.



I suspect intention and expectation of catharsis are crucially important in determining the outcome, e.g. if you beat a punching bag an hour a day thinking how you will punch out people you don't like, I suspect you will become more hostile and aggressive. If you punch the bag thinking that at the end of an hour you will be completely exhausted and cleansed of your hatred and will have a better understanding and more willingness to forgive the irritating person, I suspect you will become less agitated and aggressive. That needs to be proven in the lab.

One final observation about catharsis: many violent crimes are committed by people described as gentle, passive, quiet, easy-going, and good natured (see Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* in which the "nicest boy in Kansas" kills his family). Everyone is surprised. Likewise, many psychological tests describe persons who have committed violent acts as ordinarily being over-controlled, i.e. not emotional or impulsive and very inhibited about expressing aggression against anyone. Thus, it seems that they may "store up" aggression until it is impossible to contain and, then, they explode. Many of us, who have been parents, have had a similar experience, namely, holding our tongue until we over-react with a verbal assault on the child.

The research about hostility suggests that a safe, appropriate way of releasing our anger is badly needed. Athletics are supposed to serve this function for some people but the data is contradictory. Byrne and Kelley (1981) say athletes are less aggressive; Aronson (1984) says they are more. In fact, Walker (1990) says calls to domestic violence centers go up after the man's team loses (displacement?). So, watching certain athletics may increase hostility. There is much we do not know about anger, displacement, catharsis, and the means of controlling our anger.

At the very least, research psychologists and psychotherapists should more clearly define "catharsis." It is not playing or watching sports, writing stories about aggression, fighting in a war, shocking someone in an experiment, watching someone hit a Bobo doll, or watching TV violence. It is well documented that watching, fantasizing, or acting out violence increases the probability that you will be more violent in the future. In contrast, the end result of catharsis is, in some cases, peace and calm, not aggression. Averill & Nunley (1993) say expressing emotions in therapy can change a person's view and interpretation of the situation. Also, expressing an emotion, such as anger, can result in finding ways to change the irritating situation. Once the released emotion is discussed with a therapist or friend, you are in a better position to make plans for coping with the feelings and the circumstances. Obviously, some people can calm themselves down, i.e. reduce their anger. Anger control and health seem to be related to *feeling in control* (see self-efficacy in chapter 14), *trusting and accepting* others or at least not seeing them as mean, selfish, and exploitative, and being able to *assertively* express our negative feelings (see chapter 13). These are skills many of us need to learn (Lewis & Bucher, 1992).

Social Learning Theory

This theory denies that humans are innately aggressive and that frustration automatically leads to aggression. Instead Bandura (1973) argues that aggression is learned in two basic ways: (1) from observing aggressive models and (2) from receiving and/or expecting payoffs following aggression. The payoffs may be in the form of (a) stopping aggression by others, (b) getting praise or status or some other goal by being aggressive, (c) getting self-reinforcement and private praise, and (d) reducing tension. The Social Learning Theory also incorporates cognitive processes, like rational problem-solving, "trial runs" in fantasy to see what might happen if I did _____, and the self-control procedures of self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement. Even children are able to control their aggression if they have some understanding of why someone else frustrated them (Mallick & McCandless, 1966). We have discussed Social Learning Theory in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

We all frequently face an environment that presents frustrating, unpleasant experiences as well as cues that suggest there would be certain payoffs for different courses of action. Inside us are various emotional responses, such as anger, various motivations and urges to seek certain payoffs, and complex cognitive processes for weighing the pros and cons for different alternative responses, including aggression or violence, passive withdrawal, depression, increased striving to succeed, reasonable "assertive" handling of the situation, and other possible responses. Eventually, the person chooses a response and acts, and then the result of that response is observed and evaluated in terms of its effectiveness. If the response is reinforced, it is likely to be used again.

Tavris (1984), a spokesperson for this point of view, argues that anger is a social event, a way of saying "Hey, I'm hurting and you're in my way." She criticizes (a) the ethologists' instincts, (b) the Freudians' unconscious motives, (c) the clinicians' unresearched opinions based on sick people, and (d) the therapists' and pop-psych idea of expressing "built up" anger. She says all these views erroneously suggest that anger is beyond our control and overlook the real causes of frustration. Tavris believes in human choice and self-control. She thinks we continue to use our violence because "aggression pays" and because the other theories provide excuses for being angry.

There is no doubt that aggression pays off. Parents who yell and threaten punishment get results. The child who hits the hardest gets the toy. The brother who is willing to be the most vicious in a fight wins. The teacher who gives the hardest tests and threatens to flunk the most students gets the most study time from students. The spouse who threatens to get the maddest gets his/her way. The male who acts the most macho and aggressive gets the praise of certain groups of males.

It is not necessary that the aggressor be especially mean to get his/her way. The slightest overt hint of anger can communicate. Suppose you and your boy/girlfriend want to do different things some evening. The brief frown, the "roll" of the eyes, the comment "Oh, all right" may clearly communicate, "Okay, have it your way but I'm going to be pissed all evening." Such a message is a powerful threat--and often an effective one, proving once again that, unfortunately, "aggression pays off."

Human nature vs. learned behavior

I'm sure you recognize the old nature-nurture issue in these discussions. The difficulty, as I see it, is that both sides over-simplify and want to claim all the influence; i.e. on the one hand, the genes-instincts-hormones (biological determinism) theorists imply that hostility is "human nature." Indeed, 60% of Americans buy this idea, saying "there will always be wars, it is human nature." How sad that we are not better educated. No wonder the U.S. has used military force 150 times since 1850. There is, of course, a lot of fighting between countries, tribes, religions, spouses, and parents and children. But there is no evidence that we humans have inherited more of a tendency to dislike, fight, be violent, or to make war than to like, trust, be cooperative, or to make friends. Just because humans are biologically capable of being selfish and mean does not mean it is inevitable; we can control our lives. Too many people believe humans are violent because we are naturally and unavoidably aggressive. This widely held theory provides us with harmful expectations, self-fulfilling prophesies, and with excuses for being aggressive (Kohn, 1988).

On the other hand, the currently popular cognitive-environmental theorists emphasize that behavior is a result of a process of learning from observing what actions pay off, what works. This theory over-simplifies human behavior in another way, namely, by neglecting the biological-physiological aspects, the emotions and needs, the unmindful "thought" processes (traditions, habits, unthinking routines), the unconscious processes (perceptual distortion, childhood experiences, unconscious resentments, motives, defense mechanisms--like displacement), and perhaps other significant factors influencing our behavior. For instance, Berkowitz (1993) says sudden unpleasant situations automatically generates negative emotions, including primitive anger feelings and hostile or flight impulses, even *before the person has time to think* about what has happened or what to do about it. Moreover, I am not ready to dismiss the many social-sexual needs that create conflicts for us as being purely "cognitive." And, I refuse to believe that the prejudice, violence, hatred, and greed that abounds in the world (and the love, acceptance, and altruism) are simply a result of our cognitive processes. How do you cognitively explain the raging parent who beats his/her 3-month-old infant to death? Nevertheless, cognitive theory is a very hopeful theory if not a complete one.

Sorry for making things complicated but you need to prepare for a complex world. The good news is that there is overwhelming evidence that humans can, in the right circumstances and with appropriate training, be kinder and gentler by using their higher cognition. But, thus far, we seem to be losing the battle against violence, as we will see in the next topic.

Aggression and child rearing practices

By the time we are five years of age, we have learned to be kind and caring *or* aggressive. What is associated with an angry, aggressive child? Four factors are: (1) a child with a hyperactive, impulsive temperament, (2) a parent who has negative, critical attitudes towards the child, (3) a parent who provides poor supervision and permits the child to use aggression as a means of gaining power, and (4) a parent who uses power-tactics (punishment, threats, and violent or loud outbursts) to get their way (Olweus, 1980). Once a peaceful or hostile way of responding is established (by 5) it tends to remain stable. Olweus (1979) suggests aggressiveness is about as stable as intelligence.

So, the best way to predict that a young adult will behave aggressively is to observe his/her early behavior. Aggression at age 8 correlates .46 with aggression at age 30! Children who were "pro-social," i.e. popular and avoid aggression, at age 8 were, 22 years later, doing well in school and at work, had good mental health, and were successful socially (Eron, 1987). Children who steal, aggress, use drugs, and have conduct problems with peers, family or in school, and then conceal the problems by lying, are the most likely to become delinquent (Loeber, 1990). Of course, many such children become good citizens, so don't give up. But society, schools, parents, and the children could prevent much of the later aggression if they made the effort to detect the problems early and offered help. It is crucial that we all learn "pro-social" (nice) behavior, starting early in life. *Physical punishment teaches that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems.*

Aggressive children often come from aggressive homes, in which not only are their parents and others within the family physical with each other but even the child's own aggressiveness has been harshly punished (Patterson, 1976; Byrne & Kelley, 1981). Research has documented similar aggression from grandparents to parents to grandchildren. In addition, outside the family we learn more hostile ways of responding to frustration, such as in schools, on the play grounds, from friends, and especially from TV, movies and books. It has been demonstrated that we can learn to be aggressive by merely viewing a short film that shows aggressiveness as an acceptable response (Bandura, 1973). So, one doesn't have to have hostile parents or be subjected to noticeable frustration prior to becoming aggressive. One can just see aggression and then imitate it. That's why TV is so scary.

The impact of TV has been studied extensively; it makes us more aggressive (Geen, 1978; Singer & Singer, 1981). This isn't surprising considering the average child of 15 has seen about 15,000 humans violently destroyed on TV. Even though the bad guy (like the aggressive child) is often beaten up by the good guy (the parent), the implication is that aggression is acceptable if it's for a good cause (Derlega and Janda, 1981). So, we are all exposed to a myriad of responses to frustration, but in many ways the message, again, is: "aggression gets results." Examples: the handsome TV star is often quick and powerful with his fists; every night the news documents that the most powerful nations win the wars and that the giant corporations eliminate jobs or do whatever makes a profit.

Self-hatred and understanding

Theodore Rubin (1975) discusses self-hatred, defined as disliking any part of our selves. It involves all of our distortions of our real self, any self-put down, or any exaggeration of one's goodness or ability. When we distort or deny what we really are, it suggests we don't like ourselves. This dislike of self starts in infancy. Babies have all kinds of habits, needs, and emotions that parents prohibit: sloppiness, anger, greediness, jealousy, self-centered demands, etc. As a child, we all learned that parts of ourselves were bad. This self-hatred becomes automated in the form of depression, which both punishes us and drowns out other feelings too.

Parents who are rejecting, neglectful, overdemanding, overprotective, overly punitive, or overbearing increase the self-hatred in a child. "I'm not good enough" becomes a central part of the self-concept. Such a child may be a "good girl/boy" but fear and rage may exist within, even when feeling empty and lifeless. Sometimes the self-hatred is conscious but the connection between self-criticism and other problems (depression, anxiety, and fatigue) is unconscious. Sometimes the self-hatred is unconscious and we feel badly without knowing why.

Self-reports describing anger

James Averill (1983) views emotions as primarily a social phenomenon. He studied self-reports about aggression: most people report getting mildly to moderately angry anywhere from several times a day to several times a week. However, the most common reactions to irritating situations were (1) activities to calm themselves down (60%), (2) talking about the incident to the offender (39%), or (3) talking to a third party (59%) without getting angry. Only 49% got verbally aggressive with the person who made them mad; even fewer--10%--got physically aggressive (1/3 of these incidents were with children). So, anger doesn't lead to much actual aggression; indeed, in 19% of the cases it lead to being "extra friendly." People feel like being verbally aggressive (82%) or physically aggressive (40%) but a wide variety of nonaggressive responses occur instead. So, your extra friendly co-worker may be angry about something!

Over half the time, we get mad at a loved one, relative, or friend, so anger has, in a sense, more to do with love than with hatred. What usually (85%) makes us angry is that we feel the other person has done us wrong. They are at fault; they are to blame for interfering with our plans, our wishes, or for offending or insulting us. So, what are the reported consequences of getting angry? Primarily positive outcomes! 76% of the "targets" of anger said they gained some understanding of their faults and 44% gained some respect (29% lost) for the angry person. 48% of the time anger strengthened the relationship (35% became more distant). No wonder we get angry so often. It certainly has payoffs; however, this research overlooks the misery of constant anger or constant suppression of anger.

Mental processes that generate anger/aggression

If we perceive and label another type of person or their actions as offensive or dangerous to us, then we are more prone to be aggressive towards that type of person. Just like a hungry person thinks more often of food, if we are angry, we see more signs of aggression and suspect more "enemies." It has been said, "a prejudiced person sees a Jew, a communist, or a 'nigger' behind every bush and beneath every bed."

Our society and our subcultures provide us with stereotypes that direct our resentment, prejudice, and discrimination towards certain types of people. Prejudice tends to grow: if we dislike someone, we are more likely to hurt them, and if we hurt them, we are more likely to come to dislike them even more (Scherer, Aveles, & Fischer, 1975).

For example, prior to the shooting of students (4 killed, 9 wounded) by the National Guard at Kent State in 1970, students across the nation had referred to the police as "pigs" (i.e. stupid, coarse, and brutal) and the police had seen students as "hippy radicals" (i.e. long-haired, drug-using, sexually immoral, dirty, foul-talking, violent ingrates). A day or two before sending in 6,000 troops, the governor of Ohio had called student demonstrators "nightriders" and worse than "communists" and promised to eradicate them; President Nixon called demonstrating students "bums;" Vice-President Agnew commented, "we can, however, afford to separate them [student radicals] from our society with no more regret than we should feel over discarding rotten apples from a barrel." It is easy to see how the stage was set for violence. Furthermore, after the shootings, the National Guard action was supported by many people who made comments such as these: "it's about time we showed the bastards who's in charge" and "they should have shot 100 of them" (Scherer, Abeles, & Fischer, 1975). Obviously, our thinking affects our feelings about people and our actions.

Any time a leader speaks in terms of a negative stereotype or we think in such terms, we are sowing the seeds of violence. Every time we demean another human, we increase the potential for aggression.

Every human being has a right to be judged on his/her own merits, not on the basis of a stereotype. Prejudice is discussed more later on.

We dislike people who are different

Research has shown that, in general, we like people like ourselves and dislike people who are different (Byrne, 1969). We naturally like people who reward us and dislike people who punish us; and, similarity is rewarding. If groups are competitive, critical, and punishing of each other, the dislike and aggression between the groups grow.

Groups and cultures tend to create ingroups and outgroups. Thus, Hitler used the existing hostility against Jews to unite, motivate, and deceive the German people in the 1930's. Likewise, the U.S. and Russia used distrust of each other during the "Cold War" to unite each country into uncooperative, hostile but mighty nations. And each person is expected to conform to his/her group's beliefs. Imagine trying during the 1980's to defend communistic ideas among Archie Bunkers, businessmen, or the Moral Majority. Or try to defend blacks among whites or whites among blacks--and see the hostility quickly rise towards you. In short, ingroups are valued. Outgroups are devalued, stereotyped, and scapegoated.

Sometimes the minority that is discriminated against by the majority culture turns the anger inward, resulting in self-destructive behavior, such as low self-esteem, self-blame (like abused women), alcoholism, drug abuse, and passive-resistance to the dominant culture's ideals of what is success. Certainly for a white northern European culture to believe that African, Chinese, and Indian cultures and histories are unimportant and inferior, is to be ignorant and disrespectful. Being poor is enough to make you mad, but to have your ancestors deceived, neglected, and disgraced is too much. Let's hope conditions improve before the wrath is unleashed outward. More about prejudice later on.

Hating people for no reason

Powerful forces within a group increase the likelihood of aggression. We feel compelled to believe and act the way our family or group does (see conformity in chapter 8). We want to be liked by our ingroup. We are taught to be obedient to authority. Finally, if being in a group relieves us of the responsibility for our group's decisions and if we can act anonymously (without being singled out and punished), we humans are very capable of becoming dangerous and cruel. Every human being should be constantly aware of the potential injustice and maliciousness that lurks within ourselves and our groups. See the Milgram study in the next chapter or the Zimbardo study below if you think I am exaggerating.

In his famous "Prison Experiment," Zimbardo (1973) demonstrated how ordinary, well-adjusted college students could transform themselves--with no directions from authorities--in just six days into authoritarian, brutal, sadistic "prison guards" who enjoyed their power to degrade and punish others. A good description of this amazing study is given in the [Zimbardo](#) site, including pictures and a frank admission by the principle investigator of how emotionally involved he became. In another study, Zimbardo (1969) found that in secret normally "sweet, mild-mannered college girls" shocked other girls almost every time they could. He concluded, "it didn't matter that the fellow student was a nice girl who didn't deserve to be hurt."

It is not clear why we are or can be so cruel. In the Milgram study, cruelty was encouraged by an authority, but this was not the case in the Zimbardo studies. Likewise, Berkowitz (1983) believes violence comes from inside us, not from group encouragement. The evidence suggests that we may be mean by following the rules of a violent group *or* the orders of a violent person *or* the urging of a violent feeling inside.

Pain leads to aggression

If two animals are hurt when close to each other, they will frequently start to fight. This is so common and occurs across so many species, the pain-aggression connection may be unlearned. However, it is quite clear that past learning experience can modify the response--many animals prefer to run or to attack only under certain conditions (Berkowitz, 1983). Berkowitz suggests that all kinds of unpleasant stimuli lumped together, not just pain or frustration, give rise to impulsively aggressive tendencies in humans. An amazing variety of events seem to increase our anger: foul odors, high room temperatures, cigarette smoke, disgusting scenes, unpleasant interactions with others, fear, depression, unattractiveness or handicaps in others, expectation of pain, general discomfort, and merely thinking about punishing someone.

Even though cognition can stop an aggressive impulse (you don't punch out your dentist), much of the connection between unpleasantness and aggression escapes our awareness. We all experience pain, frustration, and lots of unpleasant events and, presumably, as we suffer, we are inclined to be indiscriminately aggressive. But we can recognize how unreasonable our anger is. We can recognize that all sources of unpleasantness contribute to our aggressiveness, making some of our hurtful, punitive impulses as unreasonable as the rat attacking an innocent cage-mate. Another example, given by Berkowitz, is when we are suffering from depression, we may become more hostile. Perhaps increased awareness of our irrationality will help us be less impulsive, less inclined to blame the nearest human for our suffering, and more able to control our thoughts (away from revenge and irritating fantasies), our actions, and our group's aggression. I wonder if the pain-aggression connection helps explain our high rate of divorce, child

abuse, and our national tendency to quickly replace an old enemy with a new one?

Internal Dynamics of Aggression

Psychoanalysis

Freud believed the *death instinct* sometimes gets turned outward, and then we hurt and offend others and go to war (the opposite of suicide). Rochlin (1973), another psychoanalyst, believes aggression is our way of recovering lost pride. Given the common human need to feel powerful and to think highly of ourselves, any threat to our self-esteem is taken as a hostile attack. When our pride is hurt, we often attempt to restore our status and self-esteem by hurting the person who offended us.

Toch (1969) found that 40% of aggressive prisoners had been insecure and needed some "victory" to prove they were something special. Other violent men were quick to defend their reputations as tough guys. We, as a militaristic society, need to know more about why our egos are so easily offended and how being cruel and violent can inflate a sick ego.

Erich Fromm (1973) defines *benign aggression* as a brief reaction to protect ourselves from danger. In contrast, *malignant aggression* is hurting others purely for the sadistic pleasure. Fromm believes people feel helplessly compelled to conform to the rules of society, at work, and to authority everywhere. This lack of freedom to make decisions and the inability to find meaning and love in one's life causes resentment and sometimes malignant, sadistic aggression.

How and where does this hostility show itself? Some people get pleasure from hurting, killing, and destroying; Hitler was a prime example: he killed 15 to 20 million unarmed Poles, Russians, and Jews. He reportedly planned to destroy his own country before surrendering. Fromm describes Hitler's life and says, "There are hundreds of Hitlers among us who would come forth if their historical hour arrived." In other cases, there is an underlying feeling of powerlessness which produces a need to be in complete control over a helpless person. Sadists and rapists are like this. Joseph Stalin, dictator of Russia from 1929 to 1953, was a famous example; he enjoyed torturing political prisoners; he killed millions of his own people (when they opposed his policies); he had wives of his own loyal aides sent to prison (the aides didn't protest); he enjoyed being deceptive and totally unpredictable. In milder forms, chauvinists may also be hostile, e.g. the male who puts down his wife and demands she attend to his every need; the angry, threatening, autocratic boss or teacher who enjoys seeing the worker or student break into a cold sweat.

Boredom is another source of hostility, according to Fromm. When life loses its meaning because we are only a cog in a wheel, our

reaction to the senselessness and helplessness is anger. We feel cheated; we had hoped for more in life; the powerlessness hurts. Hurting others or making them mad are ways of proving one still has power, a means of showing "I'm somebody."

Anger-generating thoughts

In chapter 6, we saw how one might react to rejection with depression or with anger. Our own irrational ideas were the causes of these emotions (Hauck, 1974). It goes like this: I wanted something. I didn't get it. That's terrible! You shouldn't have frustrated me; you're no good! You should be punished; I hate you, I'll get revenge!

Hauck described a woman who had been insulted and abused by an alcoholic husband for 30 years. She hated him. He had wasted enormous amounts of needed money on drinks. He was self-centered. When she sought help from a Rational-Emotive therapist, he told her, "Your husband is sick. You are demanding that he change, but he can't." With the therapist's help she started to see her husband as emotionally ill instead of mean. She stopped getting upset and critical or nasty with her husband. As a result, the husband stopped fighting (but not drinking). The woman realized she had been insisting that the world (especially her husband) be different than it was. She had created her own angry misery by saying, "Ain't it awful! Things must be different." (See chapter 14 for more.)

Anger-generating fantasies

First, something happens to make us mad--someone cheats or insults us, a child rebels, our lover shows a lot of attention to someone else. We think about it a lot; we talk about it; it becomes an obsession, like a movie played over and over. The more we think about it, the angrier we get. Research supports this notion. Ebbesen, Duncan, and Konecni (1975) interviewed recently fired employees and encouraged them to talk about their hostility towards the company. This talking increased their hostility.

Zillmann (1979) has summarized several studies showing that aggressive fantasies interfere with the reduction of anger. Moreover, just waiting five minutes helps women get over their anger, but not men. Zillmann speculates that men may be more prone than women to ruminate about the mistreatments they have suffered and/or about their inability (or wished-for ability) to retaliate against their annoyer. Thus, men hold anger longer than women.

It is not uncommon to meet a person who is still, years later, seething with anger towards a former spouse or a tyrannical parent or boss. Presumably the unpleasant memories maintain the hostility which, in turn, fuels more aggressive fantasies and perhaps ulcers, distrust of others, and so on.

There seem to be two elements in anger-building: (1) obsessive hostile fantasies and (2) a lack of creative imagination or fantasy. For example, extremely violent persons often ruminate almost continuously about how awful the hated person is. Also, they think of only violent solutions to the problem. Sirhan was obsessed with killing Robert Kennedy. On the other hand, research has consistently shown that people who are frequently aggressive have a very limited ability to think of different or more creative ways of handling the angering situation or person (Singer, 1984).

Tavris (1984) says by talking with friends (or a therapist?) about being upset with someone "you aren't ventilating the anger; you're practicing it." That isn't necessarily so but it is possible. If the talking (or daydreaming) reinforces your beliefs of injustice, blame, and evilness in the other person, your anger increases. If the talking (or thinking) provides more understanding of the disliked person and more ideas about how to cope, your anger decreases. Also, if you believe talking calms you down, it probably does.

Put-down games and psychological put-downs

Eric Berne (1964), founder of Transactional Analysis (TA), wrote a very popular book, *Games People Play*. One kind of game is to put-down others, which certainly is aggressive. The payoffs of such games are building one's ego, denying responsibility for one's problems, reaffirming one's opinion that other people are "not OK," and expressing some of one's anger. Some of these put-down games involve blaming others ("If it weren't for you"), demeaning others ("I know your blemish," "Rapo--men only want sex," "Yes, but you're wrong"), and revenge ("Now I've got you, you SOB"). See chapter 9.

According to TA, it is the "child" part of us that enjoys playing these hurtful games, which are carried out unconsciously. The rational "adult" part of us may never become aware of the destructive, hostile games being played by the "child" part. But if the "adult" part can gain some insight, it could stop the games. If insight happened, however, there would surely be an internal struggle between the "adult" and the "child," resulting in stress and irritability. Let's suppose your "child" part likes to flirt, partly because the flirting (if you are a woman) reaffirms your belief that men are unfaithful animals or (if you are a man) that women are suckers for a smooth "line;" both are hostile put-down games. If your logical "adult" realizes your "child's" motives and stops the "child" from playing these games, the "child" is likely to resent losing some of its fun. But at least the aggression-generating thoughts and experiences of the game are eliminated.

Psychological put-downs

Games are unconscious but we may consciously put-down or degrade or insult another person by "mind reading" or "psychologizing," i.e. attempting to analyze and explain their behavior. First of all, most people resent someone else (unless it's their

therapist) telling them what they really think or feel and what their unconscious motives really are. Secondly, many of these psychological speculations are negative (saintly motives don't need to be repressed). Alan Gurman and David Rice, well known marital therapists, provide many examples:

- Psychological explanations: "He is still a baby and wants to be cared for." "She needs attention all the time, she flirts with everyone." "He is afraid I'll be more successful than he is, that's why he wants me to stay home." "You're just trying to make me mad so you'll have an excuse to go drinking."
- Psychological name-calling: "You're paranoid." "You're a latent homo." "You're a hypochondriac--it's all in your head."
- Accusations about the other person's ability or desire to change: "You're sick, you must want to be unhappy." "You don't care about me, you don't want to change." "You just don't care how I feel."
- Accusations of poor insight: "I have more and more to do at work, why can't you understand that and stop bitching?" "Can't you see I'm upset and want to be left alone." "You just don't get it, do ya?"
- Blaming permanent characteristics (or human nature) in the other person: "He has a terrible temper." "She is super sensitive." "All women are scatterbrained." "Men are so insensitive." "Boy, are you stupid!"

Psychological concepts are often misused. These aggressive remarks are likely to hurt others and harm relationships. The attitude underlying such statements is not acceptance, tolerance, understanding and unconditional positive regard. It is anger and hostility. One of the major tasks of a student of psychology is to, first, recognize these resentments and pet peeves, then learn to understand the causes of the resented behaviors. To truly understand is to forgive.

Anger and anxiety, guilt, depression, dependency, and sex

There are very complex interactions between anger and several other emotions. Examples: Most of us feel anxious or scared when we get angry. We know there are risks involved; we might lose control and others might retaliate. Also, whether we are angry or not, it is scary when someone becomes angry at us. Yet, in some situations we would never express ourselves unless we got angry, so aggression can also help us overcome fear. So, we actually need to be intolerant of injustice.

Hostility and abuse can cause painful guilt; the pain of being an abuser or abused can cause more anger; two aggressive people are likely to form a "vicious circle." We have already seen that feeling put-down may cause us to aggress to inflate our ego.

It is a classical assumption in psychiatry that a weak, submissive, dependent person is resentful of this situation (chapter 8). How many

subservient wives and selfless mothers have experienced resentment when the women's movement increased their awareness? Millions. However, the "super nice" giver, who often feels guilty for not giving enough, hardly has time to recognize his/her resentment for not getting enough appreciation or attention.

Another classical substitution of one feeling for another is when a person cries, a sign usually of sadness, instead of showing anger. My experience in counseling is that when a woman cries, she is really mad about 75% of the time. Check this out.

Anger turned inward on the self is another classical dynamic explaining depression (chapter 6). Some psychologists have suggested the reverse, namely, that the pain of depression causes anger. All these connections are likely.

There are some interesting, often tragic, relationships between sexual feelings and aggression: bondage, sadism, rape, masochism, and the use of sexual swear words when angry. Impotence and frigidity commonly reflect anger. Pornography and prostitution are usually for men's pleasure and profit, while these activities degrade and abuse women. It has been shown, for instance, that males are more aggressive towards females than males after watching an erotic film. The relationship between erotica and aggression is complex, however. Mildly sexual pictures, like in *Playboy*, or in movies that are seen as pleasing seem to distract us and reduce our aggression. Disgusting or crude pornography increases our aggression (Byrne & Kelley, 1981).

Yet, there are some couples who report their best sex is after getting angry. Bry (1976) suggests that many sexual activities are aggressive--"love bites," hickeys, scratching, and vigorous intercourse. She recommends, among other things, that married couples try going to bed to wipe out their anger; it may work for some people but not everyone.

Lastly, it is commonly believed by therapists that one emotion can hide or replace another. Examples: Transactional Analysis describes a game called "Uproar," in which one person starts an argument to avoid intimacy or dependency or sex. Likewise, a partner, who expects to be rejected, may fight and dump the other person first. A teenager and his/her opposite sexed parent may deny the dependency, closeness and/or sexuality between them by fighting. It may also work in the opposite direction: the child would rather be fighting with a parent than be neglected. In some relationships, complaining or arguing becomes a pastime, a way of getting attention from the partner who otherwise might take you for granted.

The effects of gender roles and cultural differences

Boys have far more temper tantrums than girls--and their tantrums last longer. Boys and men, in general, recover from an

irritating experience more slowly than females, partly because they have stronger physiological reactions to frustration than women. It is the action that differentiates males from females, i.e. men and women apparently *feel angry* about the same things and to the same degree (Averill, 1983). However, beginning at age 3 or 4, boys are more *aggressive* than girls. Boys are also aggressed against and punished more than girls. For example, women who cut into line receive less hassle than men. Men kill and are killed four or five times more frequently than women. Boys, but not girls, are encouraged to be physically aggressive. About 70% of parents say it is good for a boy to have a few fights as he grows up. How many parents think that about their daughters?

As culturally prescribed sex roles fade in our culture, however, the gender differences in aggressiveness may decline. But will men become less aggressive or women more aggressive or both? The crime rate for women is increasing much more rapidly than for men. Also, experimental studies of punishment show women administering just as much electric shock to victims as men do (Byrne & Kelley, 1981). Women seem to have a different reaction than men to being aggressive. Apparently, boys and men expect acting aggressive to pay off, girls and women don't. Women experience more anxiety and guilt after aggressing than men do; they also are more empathic with the victim afterwards.

Some studies show that about 50% of college students--both males and females--report having been physically aggressive to some extent (from throwing something to beating up on someone). Yet, college males are far more likely than females to get into a fight in the local bars. And, when asked about going to war against Iraq in Kuwait, 48% of men favored war in late 1990 but only 22% of women did. We will discuss violence with intimates (spouses and children) soon.

It is generally believed that anger is power. Thus, women are at a disadvantage because they are uncomfortable showing their anger. Indeed, their anger is more disapproved than men's anger. That makes displaying your anger, if you are a woman, more dangerous. But, showing weakness is dangerous too. Certainly, if a female manager or leader is seen crying and emotionally disabled in a situation that might be handled aggressively by a strong male, she will lose prestige in the eyes of many people. Therefore, some people have begun to encourage women to show their anger and utilize it skillfully as a tool for getting important changes made. Here are some guidelines for using anger constructively: (1) Don't react impulsively, be sure your anger is justified and have clearly in mind exactly what needs to be changed. (2) Decide in advance how far you will go, e.g. can you and will you fire someone over this issue if it isn't worked out? Are you willing to quit over this issue? Will you demand a hearing or press charges? (3) When ready, state specifically and firmly what you want changed. Don't accuse or blame others. Show anger and strong determination but don't get overly emotional. (4) Expect to get some flack and opposition. (5) Sit down with others involved and work out

detailed plans for making the changes needed. Note: this is similar to "I" statements (method #4 in chapter 13) but in a work setting there is more emphasis on demanding reasonable changes.

Valentis & Devane (1993) discuss anger that uniquely characterizes women and suggest ways of utilizing the energy from anger in positive ways.

Social-cultural attitudes enhance aggression

This analysis of cultural factors is taken primarily from Scherer, Abeles, and Fischer (1975). The rate of homicide in the US is four to eight times greater than in most European countries or in Japan. Obviously, that can't be due to inherited factors and it seems unlikely that there are that many more frustrations in the U.S. There must be something about our society that makes us more prone to violence. First of all, there is a high value placed on success which may lead to more frustration. Secondly, if you can't succeed by legitimate means, you might consider illegal, more violent means. Thus, lower socioeconomic classes are more prone to crime. Thirdly, there are subcultures within our country, such as gangs, crime families, and macho groups, that encourage violence.

Fourthly, several other factors within certain subcultures create stress: (1) having strong conflicts between values, such as believing in white or male superiority *and* equal opportunities, (2) feeling unjustly treated and deprived, (3) experiencing economic, racial, sexual, or other prejudices, and (4) believing the "establishment" (e.g. police or courts) is handling some local situation badly. In summary, if you are poor, discriminated against, stressed, oppressed, within a subculture of violence, and have little hope of improving your situation, your chances of being angry and aggressive go up.

Psychological excuses for aggression; anger may pay off

Resentment has a psychological payoff

Anger is destructive and it drags us down. Yet, we may, at times, become obsessed with misery-causing resentment in order to avoid some even more horrible misery. What could that payoff be? Theodore Dalrymple (1995) says that our resentment of others and of past events *helps us deny our own responsibility for our failings and unhappiness*. If we think of ourselves as the innocent victim of circumstances, we are not bad people or a failure, indeed, we deserve sympathy and help. For some people, our parents are seen as the cause of our problems and our failures (accurately in some cases, falsely in others). Such people obsess over and over again that a critical parent destroyed their self-esteem or an alcoholic parent made them totally ashamed or a busy parent made them feel worthless... Poor parents are made responsible for our lives and we are relieved of any responsibility. That's a big payoff.

If we portray ourselves as mistreated by a cruel world, we appear to be a righteous person, totally blameless, and it seems unnecessary for us to change or do anything about it. We become a helpless victim, which gives us some status. As Dalrymple points out, however, if we, as a victim, actually took action and overcame or corrected the unfair situation, it would suggest that perhaps we never needed to be a victim, that we could have helped ourselves much earlier than we did. So, we often resist trying to change our miserable situation in any way. Who wants to know that *we* have messed up our own lives? Criminals usually have tales of a wretched childhood and bad influences which account for their stealing, attacking people, and killing others. Our resentment of our past glosses over our possible failures in self-direction.

How we justify aggression

One reason for our own aggression is that we excuse it or rationalize it. We may even get an ego boost from it--being a tough, fearless, macho man. How can guilt about our aggression be reduced? See chapter 3 for more discussion of the excuses we use when we are inconsiderate of others. Briefly, Bandura (1973) describes several ways that we, as aggressors, avoid blaming ourselves:

1. *Emphasize the goodness of our cause.* Our violence is often thought of as necessary to stop an evil force.

When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you will find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience (to a national or religious cause) than in the name of rebellion.

-C. P. Snow

2. *"I'm just following orders."* This is said by soldiers. Hitler's SS Troops said it. It was said by subjects in Milgram's study of obedience (see chapter 8).
3. *"I just went along with the crowd."* Individual persons in a rioting crowd or a lynch mob feel little responsibility.
4. *Degrading the victims.* Jews were seen as inferior and despicable in Hitler's Germany. The victim is portrayed as evil, stupid, animalistic, or greedy, and deserving to die.
5. *Blaming the victim* (see Ryan, 1976). This is a situation where the victim--the raped, robbed, insulted person--is blamed for the incident, e.g. "she was asking for it dressed like that." Example: In My-Lai, Vietnam, American soldiers thought the villagers had cooperated with the enemy; children in the village sometimes betrayed or were violent towards our soldiers; "C" company had just lost 20% of its men in a minefield outside the

village. All Vietnamese were feared, hated, called "gooks," and were hard to tell from enemy soldiers. One day, Americans herded 400 villagers--mostly women, children, and babies--into a ditch and shot them. It seemed to some of the soldiers as though the villagers deserved to be shot. Similar events have happened many, many times throughout human history.

6. *Becoming accustomed to violence.* In families, a raised voice becomes a verbal attack which escalates to a raised hand which leads to a shove, then a slap, and finally increasingly severe beatings. Likewise, soldiers are gradually trained to kill: first they see war movies and are told why they must fight, then there are many training exercises where killing is simulated, and finally they hear horror stories about the enemy. The more mutilated bodies one sees, the easier it is to kill. As one soldier said, "If you see their villages bombed and shelled every night, pretty soon the people just don't seem worth very much."
7. *Denying the harm done by our aggression.* "They are probably covered by insurance." "I just slapped her around a little." In war, we forget the life-long pain suffered by the loved-ones of the deceased; we forget the loss of a 18-year-old creative mind or a loving heart.

Read the pacifists' reasons for opposing war and violence under all conditions (Nagler, 1982). See the movie *Gandhi*.

Anger in Intimate Relationships



Marital conflict

The traditional marriage vows are emotionally moving and express a noble commitment: "I take thee, for better or for worse...until death do us part." However, we often come to dislike many things about our partner, leading to serious conflicts. Indeed, although all start with sincere intentions, almost 50% of all marriages end in divorce, in spite of enormous pressures to stay married. Why the pressures? If marriage is considered a sacred public pledge or even "a union made in heaven," then divorce might be regarded a sin (like in the Catholic Church) or, at least, a violation of a solemn promise. In addition to external pressures from family and divorce courts, there are also intense personal needs to "make it work" because it seems as though "you have failed" if your marriage fails.

Many marriages fail but do not end in divorce--the so called "empty shell" marriage. These marriages may not have intense conflicts; indeed, they may be void of feelings. There must be disappointment in such marriages, however. Let's look at some of the sources of conflict in the traditional marriage (see chapter 6 for a discussion of the sadness of breaking up).

Most married people initially try to build a smooth, close, safe relationship, preferably one without friction. In this process, sometimes the

roles for husband and wife become very rigidly defined; there is no freedom, no room for growth or change. Sometimes people think they need to pretend to be or feel some way to appeal to their spouse; there is little honesty and intimacy if you think your spouse may not accept you as you really are, i.e. for better or for worse.

Fullerton (1977), in the mid-70's, explained how "the perfect wife" becomes sad and angry. A woman with self-doubts may be unusually anxious to please her new husband. She tries to do everything the way he would want it done. She believes: "if I'm the good, perfect wife, I will be loved." Eventually being perfect with housecleaning and diapers and children gets tiresome and boring. She becomes resentful. Some evening when her husband arrives home from work late and finds her still mopping the floor, he asks, "Are you *st///*cleaning?" She bursts into tears. She cries because it is either go into a rage against her husband (which she--the perfect wife--can't do) or turn her anger inward on herself. She increases the self-criticism, clings more desperately to the husband, and feels more and more like crying.

The 1970's "perfect wife" was also prone to be jealous. According to Fullerton, a female was likely to get her sense of worth from a male--her father, her boyfriend, her husband, and later her sons. She may have gone from being Daddy's little girl to being someone's wife without ever becoming a person. She was dependent on her looks and on being a "good girl" and "perfect wife" in order to be loved. She saw her husband as having strength and purpose; he was her whole life. Even when he was at work, she carried on an inner dialogue with him. She made her decisions in terms of what he would want and expect. Being so needy and unsure of her worth, naturally she would be jealous of anything that took his time--his work, his friends, his interests, etc. She was too insecure and too "perfect" to confront him, but eventually the jealousy may burst through, especially if she imagined another woman is involved. Once a jealous rage has occurred, it tended to reoccur. If he was innocent, it would be hard to prove. If she found out there is another woman, she was crushed. She felt betrayed, lost, scared, worthless, and angry. She might decide all men are no good or she might look for another one who desires her. Women are changing but any woman over 40 can remember those times. Divorce is discussed in chapter 10.

Husbands may become angry, threatened, and jealous too. An insecure male may, just like the wife, become dependent on his wife's adoration. She makes him feel good about himself. He may want her to "stay home" (too many men out there in the work place). He is jealous of anyone or anything that gets her attention. Tragically, that sometimes includes their own first born child. The man may be ashamed to admit feeling resentful of his own child. Yet, he feels left out and betrayed; the wife is bewildered and unable to relieve his pain because the problem is inside him--his self-doubt (Fullerton, 1977). Men still want to be in control; they haven't changed as much as women have since the 1970's. This causes more problems--girls/women are becoming more independent, boys/men are remaining dependent, tough, macho, and violent. Our culture is still inclined to say, "Boys will be boys," but male possessiveness, dominance, and violence must be condemned and changed.

In some families marital conflict is denied but gets expressed against another family member, often the oldest or the second child. This displaced hostility is very harmful to the child because there is no way to escape (since the child has no control over the real source of the anger). The child may be accused of bad traits a parent has (projection) or of bad traits one parent resents in the other partner. For example, if the wife feels the husband is a liar and a cheat, she may accuse the son of these traits and ask her husband to punish the son (indirectly letting the husband know how much she resents those traits). The husband's shame may get turned into self-righteous wrath with the son. The parental expectations of the son to be dishonest may also become self-fulfilling prophecies, with the son saying to himself "if they never believe me anyhow, I might as well lie."

No one expects his/her marriage to be like this. And, in fact, the problems of a two-career marriage without children would be quite different. But, even though financially better off, the dual career family has its own unique problems.

Dealing with the "intimate enemy"

Like scapegoating, many marital or lovers' quarrels conceal the real conflict. Arguments over money may really be about who has the most power or about not getting enough attention or recognition. In the last section of this chapter we will learn about the possibility of honest, open "fair fighting" with *The Intimate Enemy* (your spouse), according to Bach and Wyden (1968). This kind of "fighting" can confront us with the truth, stripping away phoniness and deception, and giving us a chance to deal with the real problems realistically. (It may also encourage criticism and the expression of raw emotions that damage the relationship, depending on the personalities involved. The pros and cons of "fair fighting" are considered in method #5 of chapter 13.)

All close relationships experience some friction. No thinking person will always agree with us. The thrill of being with your lover wears off. Certain wishes and dreams about marriage will not come true. Partners want things from us we can't or won't give. Criticism and resentment tend to be expressed in irritating ways. So many human traits annoy us; we tell ourselves that people and things should be different. It is frustrating when we can't understand why someone does what they do. What was "cute" when dating may become very irritating, e.g. a partner's loudness or bossiness or indecisiveness. Even good traits, like being understanding or rational or in control of your temper, can be infuriating to a partner who is ashamed of his/her emotionality. A partner may accept one of your traits, say shyness, until he/she meets a good-looking, outgoing person, then he/she may suddenly resent it.

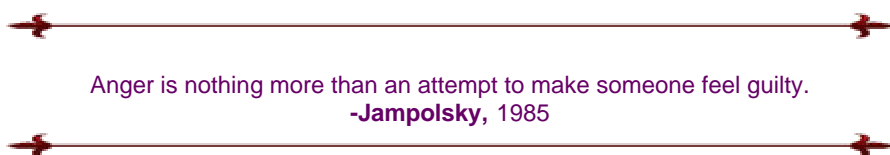
Maslow (1971) had a "Grumble Theory" that says "the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence *and* dead on our side." He felt life was a series of ups and downs; accomplishments and relationships only give us a temporary high, soon we are taking them for granted and grumbling again. Marriage is an example: John and Jane were in love, got married, had two beautiful children. They are supposed to be blissfully happy, but after several

years they take each other for granted--their grass looks brown and uninteresting. So, John is attracted to other women who tell him how talented and interesting he is. Jane is also attracted to successful, attentive males and to a challenging, exciting career. The risk is that John and/or Jane will turn the unexciting "taken for granted" feelings into active dislike or disdain "I can't stand Jane" or "I hate being at home." Maslow observed that high level self-actualizers focused on getting on with living according to their values and avoided blaming and resenting others or discounting the past. Few of us are self-actualizers, however.

When hostility builds inside, eventually it gets released--sometimes on the wrong person or issue. Often the tirade is a repetitious emotional harangue, obviously venting the anger rather than communicating. It may include vicious, nasty, cutting, insulting, offensive accusations. Both people are likely to become hostile and start playing "hard ball." In addition to the release of the poison--which may be hard to forgive--the fighters are usually trying, albeit ineffectively, to change each other. Have you ever noticed how hard we work to change others and how little we work on changing our expectations of others?

Trying to get our way

There are two tactics for getting our way: (1) reasoned arguments and (2) manipulation via bargaining, hinting, and use of emotions, deceit, or coercion. According to Johnson and Goodchilds (1976), 45% of women use emotions (usually sadness) and 27% of men do (usually anger). Four times as many women as men use helplessness as an appeal. You lose self-respect and the respect of others when you use weakness to manipulate others, however. Three times as many men as women use knowledge and present facts as a basis for winning an argument. Androgynous women are more like men. Unfortunately, the woman who takes a direct, rational, factual approach is considered "pushy" while a similar male is seen as competent. Fortunately, this is changing. See the no-lose method #10 in chapter 13 and see chapter 8 for more about arguments in marriage. I'm assuming that you will be less likely to fall into the psychological pitfalls of using manipulation, if you know they exist.



Finding better ways to resolve anger in relationships

Lerner (1985) considers anger to be a signal that something is wrong in a relationship. Often, we are angry because we are feeling put down, neglected, dealt with unfairly, infantilized, insulted, or cheated in some way. Therefore, the real problem is *not* the anger, but rather the task is to right whatever is wrong in the relationship. This is Lerner's main theme. She points out that the usual ways of handling irritating circumstances in a relationship--either being

"nice" or being hateful--do not ordinarily change the situation. For example, the suppression of negative feelings (being "nice") usually means being weak, passive, and compliant, which stores up more and more anger and eventually results in an ineffective hateful "explosion" or in "emotional distancing." On the other hand, the 1960's notion of "letting it all hang out" (and venting your anger), whenever you feel like it, is not only ineffective but has its hazards too: low self-esteem, feeling unable to relate, and guilt. Thus, neither the nasty attacks and hateful bitching of unfair fights, as we've seen, nor the uncommunicative empty shell marriages are capable of solving the underlying marital problems. They only make things worse. What will help?

Lerner lists four useful approaches: (a) finding out what is really bugging you (your needs, frustrations, regretted choices, blocked dreams, etc.), (b) learning to use new, better communication skills, such as "I" statements, (c) gaining insight into your "dance of anger" and adopting new "steps" out of the old routine, and (d) recognizing both parties' efforts to maintain the status quo of destructive fighting or passive withdrawal, rather than maturely resolving the underlying problems.

Resistance is a common barrier to changing the anger "dance." When desirable changes are initiated by one person in a relationship, Murry Bowen, a family therapist, says the partner frequently opposes the changes. For example, if the wife decides to develop her own social life, rather than beg and badger her reluctant husband to go out more, the husband's opposition to change often takes these forms:

- "What you are doing (or about to do) is wrong."
- "Stop being this way and it will be okay."
- "If you don't change back, some serious things will happen."



It takes courage to stand up to these challenges and threats, and proceed with improving your life, rather than keep on dancing the anger waltz.



There are various dances of anger. There may be disagreements--how much to socialize, spend, see relatives, watch TV, have sex, etc.--and anger flares, but nothing changes. One may seek more attention and love, while the other is emotionally unresponsive; both may get irritated, but nothing changes. One partner is over-involved with the children; the other is under-involved, and both complain, but nothing changes. One partner tries to change the other person but can't. Actually, the frustrated partner could change his/her own behavior and meet his/her own needs in other ways, but too often this independent action is not seriously considered and/or the partner strongly resists such changes. To meet your own needs requires a clear sense of purpose, confidence, independence, and persistence.

This willingness to be our own person and to move in our own direction, alone if necessary, is important but very scary (even in this age of sexual equality). It stops us from clearly expressing our basic disappointments in a

relationship--so the troubles never get resolved. Also, we are often afraid of unleashing our own anger, as well we should be, but the fear frequently inhibits our clear thinking about alternative ways of resolving the problems, including tactfully asserting our rights and preferences in that situation. The anger and these fears (of separation and destruction) also interfere with our exploring the sources and background of our own anger. This lack of self-understanding also reduces the keenness and flexibility of our problem solving ability. Some quiet contemplation of our history, our situation, and our true emotions might help.

Triangles often play a role, without our awareness, in the creation of conflict and anger with a person. That is, we suppress anger towards one person (a boss or a spouse) and displace it to a scapegoat (a supervisee or a child). The scapegoat often never suspects that the anger is generated by someone else; he/she just feels disliked and persecuted. This arrangement permits us to use displacement to avoid facing and working on our own interpersonal difficulties. Whenever anger becomes a chronic condition--an unending dance--ask: Where might all this emotion come from? Is it a "left over" from your original family? Is this displaced anger yielding a pay off to someone, e.g. do you and your spouse get to work on a "problem child" together? Is over-involvement between two people (say, father and daughter) a cause for mom and dad to fight? What would happen if the third party avoided forming a triangle and stayed out of any conflict between the other two people, e.g. if mom let father and son resolve their own fights? Does constantly worrying and working on relationship problems (your's or someone else's) divert your attention away from running your own life wisely?

The major unhealthy roles we tend to act out under stress and when angry are (a) the blamer, critic, or hot head, (b) the withdrawn, independent, or emotionally unreachable person, (c) the needy, "let's talk," or overly demanding partner, (d) the incompetent, "sick," or disorganized one, and (e) the know-it-all, "I have no problems; I'll handle yours" rescuer. Do you recognize yourself and the people you have conflicts with? Try to avoid these roles. Start to change in small, carefully planned ways using good assertiveness (chapter 13). Also, avoid talking to anyone (beyond a brief factual consultation--no gossiping) about a third person who is upsetting you; if your underlying purpose is really to recruit support for your side, it may set up a triangle which is unhealthy. Deal directly with the person who is bothering you; keep others out of it (unless you seek therapy). Of course, older children or relatives can be told that you are having marital problems, if that is needed, but don't ask them to take sides.

Two more recent publications can help you understand anger and marital fights (Wile, 1993; Maslin, 1994). Both books suggest ways to resolve the cognitive origins of anger and reestablish love in the marriage.

Abuse of spouses and children

Many of our conflicts are hand-me-downs from our original family, our grandparents, and even further back. A generation or two ago most parents whipped their children. Just a few generations ago there was a "Rule of Thumb:" you may beat your wife with a stick if it is

smaller than your thumb. If your grandfather beat your father, it is not surprising that you are beaten. If your mother was always envious and angry with her brilliant, perfect older sister, it is not surprising if mother is very critical of you, if you are her oldest daughter. If your dad's youngest brother was thought to be emotionally disturbed, he may watch carefully for problems in his youngest son...and find them. Know your history to know yourself and to understand others' reactions to you. Messina (1989) has a series of workbooks for adult children from dysfunctional families. The workbooks help you become aware of your abusive history and find ways to get rid of the anger.

What backgrounds and conditions lead to abuse?

Battered women tend to be less educated, young, and poor with low self-esteem, from an abusive family, passive-dependent, and in need of approval and affection. If women are violent against their husband, they tend to have a history of violent acts against others. Abusive men often have a need to control their partner and tend to be unemployed or blue-collar, a high school drop out, low paid, from a violent or abusive family, between 18 and 30, cohabiting with a partner with a different religion, and occasionally use drugs. Don't let these specific findings mislead you, however. Abusers come from all economic and educational levels. Most hit their wives only occasionally and feel some remorse; a few are insanely jealous and a scary few simply appear to coolly relish being violent.

How do we start abusing someone close to us?

The common belief that abusers (of children) were themselves abused as children may only hold true in general for males, not females. In fact, physical abuse may mean different things to women and men. In a dating or marriage situation, the beginning steps toward severe abuse may involve psychological aggression--yelling, swearing, threatening, spitting, shaking a fist, insulting, stomping out, doing something "for spite"--and slapping, shoving, or pinching (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). There is some evidence that early in a relationship, women do these things as often as men, maybe more so, but men eventually cause more physical damage than women. There is a great difference between an opened female hand slap to the cheek and a hard male fist crashing into the face, knocking out teeth, and breaking the jaw. The slap expresses hurt feelings; the blow reflects raw destructive, intimidating anger. It would be wise to never start the cycle of abuse; so, try to avoid psychological aggression, such as name calling, insulting, and yelling (Evans, 1992). The evidence is clear that once mild physical aggression of pushing and slapping has started, it frequently escalates into fist fights, choking, slamming against the wall, and maybe the use of knives and guns. *Psychological or verbal aggression by either party must be considered an early warning sign* that physical abuse is possible in the near future. Take verbal assaults and rages very seriously.

Steps taken to build anger... or to stop it

It is helpful to think of 5 steps (choices!) taking us from the initial frustration to intense anger in which we feel justified to express primitive rage: (1) deciding to be bothered by some event, (2) deciding this is a big, scary issue or personal insult, (3) deciding the other person is offensive and evil, (4) deciding a grave injustice has been done and the offender must be punished--you must have revenge, and (5) deciding to retaliate in an intensely destructive, primitive way. By blocking these decisions and thinking of the situation differently, we can learn to avoid raging anger. Examples of helpful self-talk at each step: (1) "It's not such a big deal," (2) "Calm down, I can handle this rationally," (3) "There is a reason why he/she is being such a b____," (4) "Let's find out why he/she is being so nasty," (5) "I'm not going to lower myself to his/her level... is there a possible solution to this?" When you practice these self-control responses in fantasy, you are using stress inoculation techniques (see method #9 in chapter 12).

McKay, Paleg, Fanning & Landis (1996) have studied the effects of parents' anger on their children. It is a serious problem that parents can handle with better self-control, especially by giving up false beliefs that fuel anger and by learning problem-solving or communication skills (see chapters 13 and 14).

Physical abuse follows a pattern

First, there is conflict and tension. Perhaps the husband resents the wife spending money on clothes or he becomes jealous of her co-workers. The wife may resent the husband drinking with the boys or his constant demands for sex. Second, there is a verbal fight escalating into physical abuse. Violent men use aggression and fear as a means of control (Jacobson, et al, 1994). When the male becomes violent, there is little the woman can do to stop it. Actually, women in violent relationships are as belligerent and contemptuous as their husbands but their actual violence tends to be in response to the man's aggression. Nevertheless, over half of abused women blame themselves for "starting it." Third, a few hours later, the batterer feels guilty, apologizes, and promises it will never happen again, and they "make up." Sometimes, the couple--or one of them--will want to have sex as a sign that the fight is over. The sex is good and they may believe (hope) that the abuse will not happen again, but almost always within days the cycle starts over and the tension begins to build.

Statistics about abuse of loved ones

The O. J. Simpson case stimulated interest in spouse abuse, including death. About 1400 women, 30% of all murdered women, are killed by husbands, ex-husbands, and boyfriends each year; 2 million are beaten; beatings are the most common cause of injury to 15 to 44-year-old women. The statistics are sobering and truly scary (Koss, et al, 1994). A 1983 NIMH publication says, "surveys of American couples show that 20 to 50 percent have suffered violence regularly in their marriages." In 1989, another survey found physical aggression in

over 40% of couples married only 2 1/2 years. 37% of 11,870 military men had used physical force with their wives during the last year (Pan, Neidig, & O'Leary, 1994). Walker (1979, 1993) says 50% of women are battered. The latest research (O'Leary, 1995) shows that 11% to 12% of all women were physically abused during the last year. Among couples seeking marital counseling, 21% were "mildly" abused and 33% were severely abused in the past year. Yet, they seldom volunteer this information; therapists must ask.

Research also shows that men and women disagree about the frequency and degree of their violent acts. However, men and women beat each other about the same amount but the injury rates are much higher for women. One early study found that 4% of husbands and 5% of wives (over 2 million) are *severely* beaten each year by their spouses. Another study said that 16% of all American couples were violent sometime during the last year. It is noteworthy that 45% of battered women are abused for the first time while pregnant. The FBI reported that battering *precedes* 30% of all women's trips to emergency rooms, 25% of all suicide attempts by women, and 25% of all murders of American women. World-wide the abuse of women is even worse (French, 1992). This is very serious. In addition, female infants are frequently killed by their parents in India. We must not deny these problems.

Much abuse is still hidden, not only is marital abuse kept a secret but sibling abuse is also. Within the privacy of our homes and even unknown to the parents, brothers and sisters physically, emotionally, and sexually mistreat each other (Wiehe, 1990).

Spouse abuse dynamics

Why does wife abuse occur? Many writers believe the cause is *male chauvinism* --a male belief that men are superior and should be the boss, while women should obey ("to honor and *obey*"), do the housework, and never refuse sex. A male abuser is described as filled with hate and suspicion, and feels pressured to be a "man." That sounds feasible but new findings (Marano, 1993; Dutton, 1995) suggest that the chauvinistic facade merely conceals much stronger fearful *feelings in men of powerlessness, vulnerability, and dependency*. Other research has found abusive men to be dependent and low in self-esteem (Murphy, Meyer & O'Leary, 1994). Many of these violent men apparently feel a desperate need for "their woman," who, in fact, is often more capable, smarter, and does take care of their wants. These relationships are, at times, loving. The husband is sometimes quite attentive and affectionate. Often, both have found acceptance in the relationship that they have never known before. Then, periodically, a small act of independence by the wife or her brief interaction with another man (perceived as intended to hurt him) sets off a violent fight. The abusive man becomes contemptuous, putting the woman down in an effort to exercise physical-emotional control and build up himself. Of course, the insecure aspects of many abusers are well concealed within the arrogance.

Likewise, battered women have been thought of as weak, passive, fearful, cowering, self-depreciating partners. Of course, some are, but recent findings (Cordova, Jacobson, Gottman, Rushe, & Cox, 1993) suggest that many battered wives, during an argument, are outspoken, courageous, hot-tempered, equally angry and even violent, but they are overwhelmed by the husband's violence. They don't back down or de-escalate the argument; they respond with verbally aggressive, offensive comments. The women were often "unmothered" as children. The male abuser often grew up in a violent environment, where he was sometimes (30%) abused himself or (30%) saw his mother abused. So, we often have a situation in which two insecure but tough, angry, and impulsive people are emotionally compelled to go through the battering ritual over and over (Dutton, 1995).

Researchers are just now studying the complex details of battering by males. There are many theories about male violence: hormonal or chemical imbalance, brain damage, misreading each other's behavior, lacking skills to de-escalate or self-control, childhood trauma, genetic and/or physiological abnormality, etc. Also, beneath the abuser's brutality, therapists look for insecurity, self-doubts, fears of being "unmanly," fears of abandonment, anger at others, resentment of his lot in life, and perhaps a mental illness (Gelb, 1983). Several TV movies, such as *The Burning Bed*, have depicted this situation. In short, we don't know the causes of wife abuse; it is a safe bet that they are complex.

Okay, then why does husband abuse occur? We know even less about husband abuse. Some women probably have the same fears, needs, and weaknesses as battering men and are in a situation where they can physically abuse their partner. Most psychologists believe women are much less abusive than men, but the data isn't clear on this point. It is known that women are victims of 11 times more *reported* abuse than men (Ingrassia & Beck, 1994). But, men may be hesitant to label themselves as "battered husbands." Spouse abuse occurs in all social classes and with independent as well as dependent women. Society and strangers, even the police, seldom interfere with family fights but society pays the bills in the emergency rooms.

Abuse should not happen but no treatment is a sure cure, probably we don't even have a good cure. About half of batterers will not get treatment and half of those that do, drop out. In most cases, it is wise to report the abuse to the police. Most police have had some training in handling "domestic violence" cases; however, officers in New York, which has a mandatory-arrest law, arrest only 7% of the cases and only report 30% of the domestic calls (Ingrassia & Beck, 1994). Police are supposed to provide the victim some protection (of course, this is hard to do and can't be guaranteed). Recent research confirms the benefits of pressing charges in these cases, however. *If the abuse is not reported* to the police, about 40% of the victims were attacked again within six months. *If the abuse is reported* by battered wives, only 15% were assaulted again during the next six months. So, protect yourself.

To the outsider the real question is: Why do they stay together? Why doesn't she leave? There must be varied and complex dynamics which tie an abusive couple together. We have much speculation; we need more facts. Clearly, there are likely to be emotional bonds, fears, shame, guilt, children to care for, money problems, and hope that things will get better. Many abused women are isolated and feel unable to find love again. Some women assume abuse is their lot as a woman; this is an expected part of life. A few women even believe a real, emotional, exciting macho "man" just naturally does violent things. Some violent men are contrite later and even charmingly seductive. Some women believe they are responsible for his mental turmoil and/or are afraid he will kill himself or them. She may think she deserves the abuse. Many (accurately) believe he will beat them more or kill them, if they report the assaults. The abused woman often becomes terrorized and exhausted, feeling totally helpless. Walker (1979, 1993) says the learned helplessness (within a cycle of violence and making up) keeps women from breaking away from the abuser. Celani (1994) suggests that both the abuser ("she can't leave me") and the abused ("I love him") have personality disorders, often originating in an abusive childhood.

The Horrors of Domestic Violence

No person should ever physically hit, slap, or shove another person, certainly not a supposed loved one. Physical threats should not be made either. Yet, the frequency of physical/emotional aggression (see statistics given above) is horrible. Lenore Walker (1979, 1993) describes the victim as traumatized and cruelly dominated to the point she feels helpless and, often, worthless. The abused becomes so unable to confront the abuser that she can not walk out. The most dangerous time is when she is walking out. Walker's work is regarded as one of the best self-help books for battered women (Santrock, Minnett & Campbell, 1994; Norcross, et al, 2000). The two reference books just cited about self-help resources, along with many other sources, suggest many helpful and more recent books: (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Geller, 1992; Martin, 1989; Strube, 1988; Follingstad, Neckerman, & Vormbrock, 1988; Deschner, 1984; Fleming, 1979; NiCarthy, 1982, 1987, 1997). NiCarthy is especially good for women still in the abusive situation.

Abuse comes in several forms. Two well written books address verbal/psychological abuse (Evans, 1996; Elgin, 1995). There are books specifically for violent men (Sonkin & Durphy, 1992; Paymar, 1993), but, abusers often resist therapy, so how many would read and faithfully apply a book? There is also a book for partners of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Davis, 1991). The Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire publishes a large bibliography covering all forms of family violence. Get informed. It will help you get out of this situation.

Books aren't the only source of help. There are many Web sites. For general information, check out National Sexual Violence Resource

Center (<http://www.nsvrc.org>) (1-800-877-739-3895), Violence Against Women (<http://www.vaw.umn.edu/library/>), Office of Violence Against Women (<http://www.usdoj.gov/vawo/>) , Blain Nelson's Abuse Pages (<http://www.blainn.cc/abuse/>) (he is a former abuser), and Feminist Majority Foundation (<http://www.feminist.org/other/dv/dvhome.html>) . Moreover, there are many sites that focus on a more specific problem or on a special population. One Web site, for instance, counsels young girls and women who might be experiencing [When Love Hurts](http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/) (<http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/>) . It describes how unhealthy abuse subtly infiltrates a "love" situation. Since the abuse victim is unable to defend herself or escape, it is crucial that the community provide help and protection. The Nashville Tennessee Police Department has a model program for [Domestic Abuse](http://www.tcadsv.org/tnprograms) (<http://www.tcadsv.org/tnprograms>) . In addition, there are hotlines [1-800-799-SAFE or 1-800-FYI-CALL or 303-839-1852] and specialized groups, like Domestic Violence (415-681-4850) and Batterers Anonymous [909-355-1100]. Many online support groups exist, see several at [Abuse-Free Mail Lists](http://blainn.cc/abuse-free/) (<http://blainn.cc/abuse-free/>) and at [Violence Against Women](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/) (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/>) . Most communities have Women's Centers, Domestic Violence shelters, and Mental Health Centers where help is available. Please get help. In some extreme cases, getting out is a life or death situation.

There are several sites that advise women (mostly) about protecting themselves: "Is Your Relationship Heading into Dangerous Territory?" (<http://www.google.com/u/universityoftexas?domains=utexas.edu&site=search=utexas.edu&q=Relationship+violence&x=14&y=6>), [A Community Checklist](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/about.htm) (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/about.htm>) then click on publications, and [Why Women Stay](http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/domviol.htm) (<http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/domviol.htm>) . [The National Domestic Violence Hotline](http://www.ndvh.org/) (<http://www.ndvh.org/>) [800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224] is a source of information and place to get referrals to a local clinic or shelter for women.

There are, of course, sites attempting to help abusers: [Treatment for Abusers](http://www.edvp.org/AboutDV/forabusers.htm) (<http://www.edvp.org/AboutDV/forabusers.htm>), [Domestic Violence Resources](http://www.daniel-sonkin.com/) (<http://www.daniel-sonkin.com/>), and others. Counselors working with abusers have compiled long lists of excuses and rationalizations often used by the out-of-control partner. Such a list of excuses can sometimes dramatically illustrate to the abuser how many ways his mind distorts and denies reality. (See other books and groups above.)

Finally, there are sites about many different kinds of abuse: [Online Abuse](http://www.haltabuse.org/) (<http://www.haltabuse.org/>) , [Child Witness Domestic Violence](http://www.dvirc.org.au/publications/childrendv.htm) (<http://www.dvirc.org.au/publications/childrendv.htm>), [Child Witness Abuse and Incest](http://www.dvirc.org.au/) (<http://www.dvirc.org.au/>), and [Help Overcoming Professional Exploitation](http://www.advocatweb.org/hope/default.asp) (<http://www.advocatweb.org/hope/default.asp>) . Remember, books about verbal and emotional abuse are cited above. Norcross, et al. (2000) also provide several additional sites concerned with abuse by a priest, therapist, lesbian or gay partner, religious leader, self, elder caretaker, etc.

Child abuse is our next topic. Rape will be dealt with later in this chapter, because the act of rape is a hostile, cruel, aggressive, demeaning act, not really a sexual experience. In chapter 9, child

sexual abuse, such as incest, is briefly discussed. It is located there because it is often a family affair. In chapter 10, date rape is covered as part of the dating process. As you can see, abuse comes in many different forms.

Child abuse

Physical abuse, in the classic myth, is meted out by an evil step-parent or by a cruel stranger. Many people also believe sexual abuse is the most common kind of abuse. Research (Mary Marsh, National Council for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children--Nov, 2000) shows that those myths are wrong. Actually, serious physical abuse is seven times more common (1 in 14 children) than sexual abuse. Also, birth parents are more likely to be violent than step-parents. Mothers are more likely to be abusive than fathers (of course, they are with the children more). Siblings and playmates are more physically (and sexually) abusive than adults are.

Nevertheless, parenting is almost always a mixture of love and frustration. Surely most parents are, at times, angry and dominated by this irksome emotion (see Samalin, 1991). Most mothers and fathers have, in fact, at some time, become furious at her/his child. There will probably be an urge to physically hurt the child--to spank, hit, or shake him/her. It is hard to know if your urge to hurt your child is truly dangerous. However, if you sense you are getting close to becoming violent, something must be done immediately. Call your spouse, a friend, a person from church, a neighbor or someone--anyone. If at all possible, have someone else care for the child for a while. Also, make an appointment for psychological help and/or call the local Parents Anonymous organization (see your phone book) or Childhelp USA's National Child Abuse hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD) for local on-going sources of help. Calling for help is hard to do. But don't run risks with your kids' physical and emotional health. A traumatic childhood may stay with a child for a life-time. Professional help is usually needed (and add to therapy the Parents Anonymous meetings). People who beat kids are under enormous emotional pressure. They need relief. It is important to honestly determine just how much risk you are to your kids and to lower that risk as soon as possible. Often treatment needs to involve both parents and the child.

There are certain warning signs you can use: *the excessively physical parent* often has been *abused* or neglected themselves (less true for woman than men). They are often *isolated* from other adults and have a passive, ungiving partner. They often don't like themselves and feel *depressed*. They may have *impossible expectations* of their children, e.g. that a 16-month-old will stop dirtying his diaper, that a 13-month-old will stop crying when the parent demands it, and so on. They often *see the child as bad* or willful or nasty and mean or constantly demanding or angrily defiant. They have *strong urges to hurt* the child and have previously acted on those urges to some extent. They are often *in a crisis*--a fight with the spouse, have

recently been fired, or can't pay bills. If a parent is being battered, the child is also at risk, especially a boy.

If you have such a background and find yourself in several of these conditions, try to become more and more aware of your potential of becoming abusive and be especially cautious. Start reducing your frustrations; make it a self-help project to find ways to control your anger (see the last section of this chapter and chapter 12). On the other hand, don't immediately over-react and panic--you aren't an awful parent--just because the kids bother you and you end up spanking them (without any injury). It is better if you never hit a child, but a rare mild spanking isn't awful. Abuse is much more violent and harsher than discipline (see chapter 9); psychological harm happens when you are "out of control." Remember, too, that anger expressed in the form of psychological abuse or criticism or neglect ("I hate you," "I wish you have never been born," "you're stupid", "I don't want to see your face again") may also be very damaging (Garbarino, Guttman, & Seeley, 1987).

Whether you were abused as a child or not, as soon as you admit to yourself that you are close to abusing your children, start right away the long process of healing yourself and, please, seriously consider getting therapy (Sanders & DeVargas-Walker, 1987). There are sources of information in books, such as Helfer's (1968, 1999), *The Battered Child*, which was a "classic" and has been updated. Other books help us to understand the abused child (Heineman, 1998).

[Parents Anonymous](http://www.parentsanonymous.org/) (<http://www.parentsanonymous.org/>) was mentioned above; it is the major national organization of groups for abusive parents. Call them at 909-621-6184 or fax 909-625-6304 or email to parentsanon@msn.com. Parents Anonymous mutual-helping groups are safe and offer advice and understanding support to parents wanting to gain control. Another confidential source of crisis counseling about abuse and referrals is [Child Help USA Hotline](http://www.childhelpusa.org/) (<http://www.childhelpusa.org/>) (800-422-4453). There are Web sites offering information: [Child Abuse Prevention](http://child-abuse.com/) (<http://child-abuse.com/>) and [National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse](http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/) (<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/>) [1-800-422-4453]. Remember, all states have an 800 number to which all professionals, teachers, and law enforcement officials are required by law to report all suspected child abuse and neglect. This "child investigation and protection agency" is probably NOT the best place for a parent to call for help with poor anger control. But it is important that such a person seek treatment.

If you are merely irritable with your children and spanking them moderately, read Samalin (1991) or Straus (1994) who persuasively argue against physical punishment and for tolerance. The research evidence is clear: physical punishment, even if it isn't violent, produces children who are more aggressive with their peers. The more violent the parents are, the meaner the children will be (Strassberg, 1994). A good book for men who were abused as boys and want to

deal with the left-over consequences is Daniel Sonkin's (1992), *Wounded Boys, Heroic Men*.

For information about abuse resulting from a [parent's addiction](#), go to chapter 9. For information about [child sexual abuse](#) and incest, also go to chapter 9.

Parent-teenager conflicts

About 60% of the students in my college classes have gone through difficult conflicts with their parents (the others had acceptable or good relations). This is the usual sequence: until puberty there is a closeness with one or both parents. Conflicts usually start during the 12 to 17-year-old period. Friends become more important than parents. Parent-teenager fights range in intensity from quiet withdrawal to raging arguments on every issue.

Conflicts may begin with the teenager stopping doing certain things that please their parents--or that would indicate closeness or similarity to the parents, like going to church or to the movies with the parents. They want to be on their own, to "do their own thing," which sometimes evolves into having the responsibilities of a 5-year-old and the freedom of a 25-year-old. Parental rules and values are often challenged or broken. This is called "boundary breaking;" in moderation it is natural, normal, necessary, and healthy. Depending on the peer group, the teenager may do some things partly to "shake up" or defy the parents (and the establishment)--dress, talk, dance, and "have fun" in their own way. Using drugs, reckless driving, drinking, staying out late, getting "too serious," and other behaviors may be for excitement but boundary breaking may be involved too. When the parents object or refuse permission, the teenager may intensely resent their interference (which is why the topic is covered in this chapter).

The parents may respond just as strongly to the teenager's new behavior. When the agreeable kid starts to argue about everything, it is baffling to them. Parents resent defiance, especially authoritarian, I-make-the-rules parents. They may feel like a failure as a parent. The teenager's ideas seem totally unreasonable to them. The parents' emotional reaction is more than just reasonable concern for the teenager's welfare, it is an intense reaction--either panic that the son or daughter is headed for disaster or boiling resentment of the teenager's rebelliousness. When both respond with strong resentment, it is war.

Why this war? In some families these quarrels may be necessary in order for the young person to become "his/her own person" and free him/herself from parents' control. Sonnett (1975), Robertiello (1976), Ginott (1969) and many others have speculated about the underlying causes somewhat as follows: Teenagers are unsure of themselves but they pretend to be confident. They fear admitting their doubts because that might lead to being taken over again--almost smothered--by their

parents' opinions and control. Yet, there are temptations to not grow up, to be taken care of, to avoid scary responsibilities. This danger--of remaining a weak, dependent, controlled child--provides the intense force behind the drive to be different from and to challenge the parents. Teenagers deny the importance of their relationships with parents; they give up hugging and kissing; they show little gratitude; they emphasize their differences from their parents and their similarity to their friends. All attempts, in part, to get free.

Bickering, insulting, and getting mad push the parents away. Disliking parents and not getting along with them makes it easier to leave. What do the parents do? Some say, "I've taught you all I know, now go live life as you choose and learn from your experiences. I'll always love you." Other parents feel crushed and/or furious when teenagers decide to go a different direction. These parents wanted their children to accomplish their goals and to conform to their values and way of life. They perhaps hoped to live life, again, through their children. At least, they wanted the son/daughter to follow their religion, accept their morals, marry the "right kind" of person, get an education and "good" job, have children, etc. They may be very hurt if the son/daughter wants to go another direction.

In the final stages, when the parent-teenager conflict becomes bitter, usually it is a power struggle between controlling parent and resisting young person. The conflict becomes a "win-lose" situation where no compromises are possible and someone must lose. The more dominating, controlling parents (who tend to produce insecure, resentful but independent teenagers) don't like to lose and struggle hard for continued control. The teenager can almost always win these conflicts eventually, however, by just not telling the parent what he/she is doing or by being passive-aggressive (forgetful, helpless, ineffective).

How to resolve parent-young adult conflicts

When the young person is 16 or 17, the parents have to accept reality that they have lost control--they can't watch the son or daughter all the time. They are on their own. The parent can still help the young person make decisions by sharing their wisdom (if it is requested). Both parents and young persons can control their anger (chapter 12) and adopt good communication skills: "I" statements, empathy responses, and self-disclosure (chapter 13). Both can develop positive attitudes. Teenagers can realize that parents don't universally go from "wise" to "stupid" as they age from 12 to 17. They can also realize that responsibility comes with freedom; if you are old enough to declare your independence and make your own decisions, you are old enough to accept the consequences (meaning=don't expect your parents to get you out of trouble). Parents can remind themselves that making mistakes is part of growing up; we all learn from our mistakes, including drinking and getting sick, getting pregnant, being rejected, dropping out of school, being fired, etc. Young adults, like all of us, need support and love when they are

"down." Give it. Avoid criticism, anger, rejection, and, the parental favorite, you-should-have-listened-to-me comments. When they are hurting, show love and concern--but don't rush in to rescue them, let them deal with the problems they made for themselves. Farmer (1989) provides help to parents trying to be caring, loving, and at peace with their teenagers. As we will see in chapters 8 and 9, there are also three especially good general self-help books for parents and teens: Ginott (1969), Elkind (1984), and Steinberg & Levine (1990). Straus (1994), writing more for clinicians, focuses on understanding the violence in the lives of teenagers, both the abuse to them and their striking out at others.

If you are a young adult who has gone through "the wars" with one or both parents, it may be wise and rewarding to try to get closer again. Try to see your parents as real people: how old were they when you were born? What problems did they have? Do you suppose they often wondered what to do and if they were being good parents to you? Did being parents interfere with important goals in their lives? Were and are they desperately wanting you to "turn out all right" and make them proud? Are they longing for a close relationship with you? If they get disappointed and angry at you, is that awful?

Some day when you are feeling reasonably secure about yourself and positive about your parents, take the initiative and open up to them. Share your feelings: fears, self-doubts, regrets about the fights, how difficult it was to break away, and your hope for a mature, equal, accepting, close relationship with them in the future. Emphasize the positive. If they have been helpful, show your appreciation. Forget and forgive the "war," if possible, or, at least, avoid letting the poison keep festering. The students I work with find this "reunion" with their parents scary to plan. But it is extremely gratifying, once it is done, to have taken some responsibility for this relationship--almost certainly the longest, deepest, and most influential relationship you will ever have. Many people are amazed at how hard it is to say "I love you" and to hug or touch their mother or father or child again. But it feels so good. Many of us cry.

If you are grown and independent and love your parents openly and never had to fight with your parents to get where you are, be sure to thank them for doing so well in a difficult job. If you are wishing your parents had been better, ask yourself: "Although they weren't perfect, weren't they good enough?" They did what they had to do (see determinism in chapter 14). If you feel you need total agreement and unfailing support from your parents, ask yourself why that is needed. Does it reflect some dependency and self-doubt?

Try to use your insights into these conflicts. The teenager is trying to find "his/her own place"--their unique personality and life-style. Look for unconscious forces: children may delight in driving parents up a wall, parents may get some secret pleasure from seeing their children fail or make mistakes in certain ways, a parent's dreams may be frustrated when the young person decides to "do his/her own

thing," parents may be especially upset when children do things they prohibit but are tempted to do themselves, etc. Most importantly, the teenager may be slowly "cutting the umbilical cord" by creating an "uproar" which makes it easier for him/her to leave the love, warmth, and stifling dependency of home. Viewed in that light, maybe having a few uproars ain't so bad. Don't let the "fights" become permanently hurtful. Be forgiving.

Jealousy

The case of Tony and Jane described early in this chapter illustrates the complicated and intertwined nature of anger and fear. Jealousy is a fear of losing our loved one to someone else. Thus, it involves an anticipated loss (depression) and a failure in competition with someone else (anxiety and low self-esteem). In addition, when your partner shows a love or sexual interest in someone else, there is a "breach of contract" with you and a disregard for your feelings. When Tony went flirting and dancing with attractive women, even if it was merely innocent fun, he callously placed his need for fun over Jane's plea for consideration of her feelings. That makes Jane mad. Also, if Tony and Jane were married or engaged, Tony seemed (to Jane) to break a solemn oath to forever "forgo all others" within 10 minutes of meeting an attractive woman at a party. That too makes her mad...and distrustful, and rightly so in my opinion. Yet, many of us are jealous without any valid grounds for feeling mistreated or neglected; we are just afraid of what might happen.

Jealousy is discussed at length in chapter 10 (and see White & Mullen, 1989). Concerning Jane's anger, she could try to reduce it either by honestly disclosing to Tony how upsetting and hurtful his flirting is (coupled with an assertive request for reassurance and that he stop) or by reducing the intensity of her anger response. Her anger could be reduced in a variety of ways, e.g. by desensitization or stress inoculation, by correcting her thoughts about how terrible it is that Tony flirts, by building her self-esteem, or by changing her view of Tony's flirting from being an indication of his infidelity to being a reflection of his doubts about his attractiveness. Other methods for controlling anger are mentioned in the last section.

Distrusting Others



Distrust of others and honest self-disclosure

One of the things we dislike most is to be deceived or cheated, to be lied to. To call someone a liar is a serious charge made when we are very angry. It is surely going to cause a fight. Yet, common sense tells us that some distrust is appropriate. People do deceive others, even best friends and loved ones. So, in some ways society encourages distrust. We teach children not to

accept rides from strangers. We warn kids that others might touch them in the "wrong places." We don't believe ads and salespersons. We know people put their "best foot forward." Teenagers know the line on the second date, "I love you, let's do it." Politicians say what we want to hear. We believe people are pushed by unconscious forces and don't really know themselves. We know people respond to stereotypes instead of real people. So is it best to trust or distrust? to be honest or dishonest? The answers are not simple. But, in general, trusting people have better interpersonal relationships. People low in trust tend to be more angry, competitive, resentful, and unempathic (Gurtman, 1992).

We must realize though that each individual is so complex and has so many feelings, needs, opinions, etc., he/she couldn't possibly reveal all sides of him/herself to a new acquaintance. So we play roles, at least we show only parts of our real self(s). What else is related to hiding parts of ourselves? Our fear of rejection, our own sensitivity or vulnerability. Few people want to pretend to be something they aren't. Yet, others have to be accepting before we are likely to be open and honest. Or we have to be strong enough to say "it's OK if they don't like me." Examples: if you feel homosexual urges are disgusting and sick, your friend probably can't tell you about his/her homosexual concerns. If you are very sexually attracted to someone, you probably can't tell them the truth about why you are approaching them. A article in a women's magazine was entitled "My Life in a 39EE Bra." The writer said that most men made a point of telling her they were "leg men" but that wasn't her impression later. We often tell people what we think they want to hear, what is most acceptable. Or, we must be willing to run the risk of criticism and rejection.

Among the better antidotes for a fear of rejection are self-confidence, self-acceptance, a willingness to find another friend if necessary, and an ability to accept and profit from criticism. For example, you can handle criticism better if you:

- Avoid over-reacting to the criticism or rejection so you can understand what is being said about you. Remember, you don't have to be loved by everybody all the time (see chapter 14). But, make constructive use of the person's opinions.
- Assess the accuracy of what was said. Try to understand the motives of the source. Are emotions being displaced on to you? Is the critic's opinion based on valid information? Is he/she projecting? Is he/she playing put-down games? Is he/she afraid of or competing with you?
- a. If the critics seem accurate (and especially if several people agree), ask for all the information and help they can give. Make plans to improve.
- b. If the critic seems in error and biased, then discount the information or "take it for what it's worth." It would still be valuable to understand how and why the situation arose. Depending on the circumstances, you'll have to decide whether to counter-attack or forget it.

How to become more trusting

The major point, however, is that you can take greater risks in trusting and in being honest in relating to others (trying for a deeper friendship) *if* you are less vulnerable or less dependent and more self-accepting. The stronger and more secure you are, the more honest you can be and the more open others will be with you. Clearly, distrust and dishonesty are appropriate in some situations, but they are few. Trust and honesty are more often preferred, especially as one becomes more secure and independent. Interesting research, which we now turn to, has confirmed the merits of trusting others.

The Trust Scale

Julian Rotter (1980) developed an "Interpersonal Trust Scale," which measures the belief that another person's word or promise can be relied upon. It includes items like these: To what extent do you agree with these statements?

1. In dealing with strangers, one is better off trusting them--within reason--until they provide evidence of being untrustworthy.
2. Most people can be counted on to do what they say the will do.
3. The courts give fair and unbiased treatment to everyone.
3. Most elected public officials are really sincere in their campaign promises.
4. Most salesmen are honest in describing their products.
5. Very few accident claims filed against insurance companies are phony.

You can get a feel for how you would answer such questions (all these questions reflect a trusting attitude, but in the extreme they would reflect a naive, too trusting attitude).

Trusting (but not naive) people tend to be happier, better liked by others, more honest, and more moralistic do-gooders than less trusting people. Of course, not all distrustful people are dishonest themselves; however, there is a trend in this direction. Some would say that trusting is pretty dumb. But high and low trusters are about the same in intelligence. You might think, "OK, but surely trusters are more gullible." Rotter's research says "no." It's true the high truster does take the view, "I'll trust them until they do me wrong." But, they seem just as able to detect the cues of a dishonest deal or statement as a distrustful person. Indeed, Rotter (1980) says it is the distrustful person who is more likely to be "taken" by the con artist. How come? Well, since the dishonest person believes the world is crooked--"that's how everyone makes a fast buck"--when a "drug dealer" comes along and offers \$1000 in 10 days if he/she will invest \$500 today to fly a spare part to the stranded plane in Mexico, the dishonest person hands over his/her \$500. The moralistic, trusting person would more likely say, "I don't want to get involved in something dishonest or illegal."

Another disadvantage of distrusting is that it disrupts honest dealings and puts up barriers to open, intimate relationships. Rapoport (1974) has studied trust and cooperation for 20 years. He found people tended to be distrustful, especially in a competitive rather than cooperative situation. A betrayal of trust is hard for most people to forgive. But, trusting people are more likely to "give someone a second chance." Unfortunately, competing nations, like people, are not trusting and are too self-centered to be rational. Rotter (1980) gives an excellent but scary example. It seems that the U.S. had prepared a disarmament plan, but before it was presented, the Russians came forth with a very similar plan. We should have been pleased, right? No. Since we didn't trust the Russians, the plan was thought to have had some secret advantage to them, so the US couldn't possibly accept the plan. We had to think of another plan, one they wouldn't like. That kind of thinking could have killed us all. Maybe the message is: don't trust governments to do all *your* thinking for you.

Rotter also developed the Internalizer-Externalizer Scale (see chapter 8). Externalizers (people who believe that external forces determine what happens in their lives) tend to be more distrusting. On the other hand, Internalizers, believing they are in control and can change things, are more likely to be aggressive when they are frustrated or provoked (Singer, 1984). So it appears that Internalizers and Externalizers handle anger differently. Internalizers initially are more trusting but when frustrated or hurt by someone they act out aggressively. Externalizers are distrustful and passively accept the unkind actions of others which re-confirm their already skeptical views of others.

How can you become more trusting? Have trusting parents. Beyond that, Rotter suggests that you frequently put your distrust to a test. When someone says something you tend to doubt (without any hard evidence), act as if you believe it and see what happens. Rotter thinks you will learn to be more trusting *and* the person you are trusting will learn to be more trustworthy (like a self-fulfilling prophecy) as well.



It is better to suffer wrong than to do it, and happier to sometimes be cheated than not to trust.
-Apples of Gold

Disliking Others without Valid Reasons: Prejudice



Where Do Prejudices Come From?

Prejudice is a premature judgment--a positive or a negative attitude towards a person or group of people which is not based on objective facts. These prejudgments are usually based on stereotypes which are oversimplified and overgeneralized views of groups or types of people. Or, a prejudgment may be based on an

emotional experience we have had with a similar person, sort of our own personal stereotype. Stereotypes also provide us with role expectations, i.e. how we expect the other person (or group, like all Japanese) to relate to us and to other people. Our culture has hundreds of ready-made stereotypes: leaders are dominant, arrogant men; housewives are nice but empty headed; teenagers are music crazed car-fanatics; very smart people are weird, and on and on. Of course, sometimes a leader or housewife or teenager is somewhat like the stereotype but it is a gross injustice to automatically assume they all are.

Prejudice, in the form of negative put-downs, justifies oppression and helps those of us "on top" feel okay about being there. Prejudice can be a hostile, resentful feeling--an unfounded dislike for someone, an unfair blaming or degradation of others. It is a degrading attitude that helps us feel superior or chauvinistic. Of course, the misjudged and oppressed person resents the unfair judgment. Discrimination (like aggression) is an act of dealing with one person or group differently than another. One may be positively or negatively biased towards a person or group; this behavior does not necessarily reflect the attitude (prejudice) one feels towards that person or group. You might recognize your prejudiced feelings are unreasonable and refuse to act in unfair ways. Common unfavorable prejudices in our country involve blacks, women, Jews, Arabs, Japanese, Germans, poor (welfare), rich, farmers, rednecks, obese, handicapped, unattractive, uneducated, elderly, Catholics, Communists, atheists, fundamentalists, homosexuals, Latinos, Indians, and lots of others.

When we are prejudiced, we violate three standards: reason, justice, and/or tolerance. We are *unreasonable* if we judge others negatively without evidence or in spite of positive evidence or use stereotypes without allowing for individual differences. We are *unjust* if we discriminate and pay men 1/3 more for the same work as women or select more men than women for leadership positions or provide more money for male extra-curricular activities in high school than for female activities. We are *intolerant* if we reject or dislike people because they are different, e.g. of a different religion, different socioeconomic status, or have a different set of values. We violate all three standards when we have a scapegoat, i.e. a powerless and innocent person we blame for something he/she didn't do.

Prejudices are hard to change most of the time and hard to recognize part of the time. Gordon Allport (1954) illustrates how a prejudiced person resists "the facts" in this conversation:

Mr. X: The trouble with the Jews is that they only take care of their own group.

Mr. Y: But the record of the Community Chest campaign shows that they give more generously, in proportion to their numbers, to the general charities of the community, than do non-Jews.

Mr. X: That shows they are always trying to buy favor and intrude into Christian affairs. They think of nothing but money; that is why there are so many Jewish bankers.

Mr. Y: But a recent study shows that the percentage of Jews in the banking business is negligible, far smaller than the percentage of non-Jews.

Mr. X: That's just it; they don't go in for respectable business; they are only in the movie business or run night clubs.

A prejudiced person, like bigot Mr. X, is so inclined to hate Jews that a few facts won't stop him/her. Sounds bad and it is. Are we all prejudiced? Probably, in some ways. Certain prejudices are so ingrained in our society it would be hard to avoid them. Examples of negative prejudices you might not think of: against eating grasshoppers, caterpillars, or ants, against a female doctor (we think she is less competent than a male), against a man in a typically female occupation like nursing or typing, against a person who has just lost (we see losers as less hard working or less competent--especially males who lose because males are "supposed" to be successful), and against a couple who decide to reverse the usual roles, i.e. the wife works while the husband stays home with the children.

Historians would contend that prejudice can not be understood without a sense of history. For example, slavery 150 years ago is related to today's anti-black attitudes. Likewise, the religious wars 400 years ago between Catholics and Protestants that killed thousands are related to today's distrust of each religion by the other. Almost 800 years ago during the Crusades, Christians on their way to wars in the Holy Land slaughtered (in the name of the Prince of Peace) thousands of eastern European Jews. Hitler reflected their attitudes. Anti-Semitism still lives. History accounts for many cultural stereotypes, but our own personal history accounts for many of our biases too, e.g. you almost certainly have a unique reaction to women who remind you of your mother.

Gordon Allport (1954) has deeply influenced psychologists' thinking about prejudice, namely, that it is a natural, universal psychological process of being frustrated or hostile and then displacing the anger from the real source to innocent minorities. This explanation implies that prejudice takes place in our heads. On the other hand, ninety years ago, a great black scholar, W. E. B. DuBois, reminded whites that prejudice doesn't just spring from the human mind in a vacuum (Gaines & Reed, 1995). It is exploitation, not just a mental process, which contributes to *prejudice against* the minority and to *self-doubts within* those discriminated against. For example, Blacks, women, Orientals, the poor, the unattractive, etc. are all discriminated against and, thus, constantly reminded that they are a minority. Blacks, as a result of extreme prejudice, have dual identities; they are both "American" and "Black" but neither identity is entirely acceptable to many blacks. Thus, many blacks have ambivalent attitudes about both

"Americans" and "Blacks," and about who they are. White America is devoted to individualism; African culture emphasizes caring for the group. For Blacks, this is a no-win situation, a choice between trying to be like Whites (and better off than others) or being Black (and worse off than most Americans).

Following DuBois, many sociologists see prejudice as caused by social problems, such as over-crowding in urban areas, overpopulation, unemployment, competition between groups, etc. It has been found, for example, that persons who are low in socioeconomic status or have lost status are more prejudiced, perhaps because they look for people to blame--for scapegoats. Rural and suburban America have always looked down on the poor, urban dweller--80 years ago it was the Jews, Italians, and Irish, today it is the blacks, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc. In effect, the *victims* of city life were and are blamed for the crime and deterioration there. That's not fair, is it? Also, competition between groups, as we will see, increases the hostility: Jewish and black businesses compete in the slums, black and white men compete for the same intensive-labor jobs, men and women compete for promotions, etc.

Experimentally created prejudice

The Zimbardo "Prison Experiment" created negative, prejudiced attitudes just by placing some people in power over others who were powerless. One might wonder if the same thing happens between management and workers in industry. There are other examples of instant prejudice. One third-grade teacher in Riceville, Iowa, gave a lesson in discrimination. The teacher divided the class into two groups: blue-eyed and brown-eyed. Each group got the same special privileges and praise on alternate days. On the days their group was favored, the students felt "smarter," "stronger," "good inside," and enjoyed keeping the "inferiors" in their place. The same children on the deprived days felt tense, unsure of themselves, and did poorer work. They learned within a few hours to feel and act negatively toward "friends." Humans seem much better at learning prejudices than math.

In a famous study, Sheriff and others (Sheriff & Hovland, 1961) designed a boys' camp to study relations between two groups. The boys did everything with the same group, soon friendships and group spirit developed. Then the psychologists had the groups compete with each other in tug-of-war and various games. At first, there was good sportsmanship, but soon tension and animosity developed. There was name-calling, fights, and raids on the "enemy" cabins. Anger was easily created via competition, but could the experimenters create peace? The psychologists tried getting the groups together for good times--good food, movies, sing-alongs, etc. What happened? The anger continued. The groups threw food at each other, shoved, and yelled insults.

Next, the psychologists set up several situations where the two groups had to work together to get something they wanted. There was

a break in the water line that had to be fixed (or camp would be closed). The food truck broke down and it took everyone's cooperation to push it. When they worked together on these serious, important tasks, they didn't fight. Indeed, friendships developed. Just as competition led to friction among equals, cooperative work led to positive feelings. Ask yourself: when did our country last cooperate with the Russians, the Japanese, the Chinese, or the Cubans to educate or feed hurting people? Or, when did *you* last work meaningfully with the people you view negatively?

Psychologists have other explanations

Psychologists suggest we learn prejudiced attitudes via several other processes. Examples: We may learn to discriminate because prejudice pays! Slave owners certainly profited greatly from slaves. In the past, parents profited from having lots of obedient children. Factories profit from low paid workers. Bosses profit from bright, able secretaries who work for 40% less than males. We can impress certain people and curry favor with them if we are prejudiced, e.g. a prejudiced parent, friend, or boss likes us to hold the same views.

Prejudice also comes as part of our familial inheritance! As children we may identify with bigoted parents and adopt prejudiced attitudes without thinking. Most families utilize certain stereotypes, such as "only men go to bars," "women can't fix mechanical things," "old people are boring," etc. Gender roles may also have been assumed (and taught by example) in your family--the women and girls always did the cooking and the housecleaning and the men always fixed the cars and joked about sex. These biased views are deeply embedded in our mind.

Larry King (1971) in *Confessions of a White Racist* exemplifies this subtle learning of prejudiced stereotypes from parents, siblings, and friends:

"Quite without knowing how I came by the gift, and in a complete absence of even the slightest contact with black people, I assimilated certain absolutes: the Negro would steal anything lying around loose and a high percentage of all that was bolted down; you couldn't hurt him if you hit him on the head with a tire tool; he revered watermelon above all other fruits of the vine; he had a mule's determination not to work unless driven or led to it; he would screw a snake if somebody would hold its head.

Even our speech patterns were instructional....One's more menial labors could leave one 'dirty as a nigger' or possibly 'sweating like a nigger at election.'...I don't remember that we employed our demeaning expressions in any remarkable spirit of vitriol: we were simply reciting certain of our cultural catechisms, and they came as naturally as breathing."

Such beliefs are a terrible injustice and an insult to human intelligence. Belittling beliefs are just as destructive as being hit with a tire tool or refused a job; yet, the beliefs were learned and used without realizing the ignorance and unfairness involved. This unthinking conformity to beliefs of our social group happens frequently. As we saw with Mr. X, these stereotypes are resistant to change. By their unpleasant, hostile nature, stereotypes discourage intimate contact with the "target" persons so that one doesn't discover what individuals of that type are really like. However, if one does have contact, the prejudice may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. For instance, if you falsely believe that supervisors or teachers are uninterested in you, then you may approach them in such a shy, uncomfortable way that they avoid interactions that make you uneasy; consequently, they seem uninterested--just like you expected.

Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1968) observed, in a famous experiment, the self-fulfilling prophecy in the class room. They told the teachers that certain students would be intellectual "late bloomers" during the school year. Really these "bloomers" were chosen at random. But because the teachers expected them to do better, they did! This was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Another interesting finding in regards to prejudice was that the predicted and actual "bloomers" were liked by their teachers, but the students who were not expected to bloom *but did* were not liked by their teachers. Apparently, we humans like to be right. When others don't behave as we expect them to, we don't like being wrong (and don't like the people who prove us wrong).

The authoritarian personality and prejudice

During World War II, Hitler's Germany openly declared war on most of the world and secretly murdered six million Jews. Hitler had been elected by claiming his country was threatened from within by rioting students and from without by Russian Communists; he called for law and order. Jews were Germany's readily available scapegoat. Hitler became a strong, authoritarian leader and many of the German people accepted his control. Why do some people idolize leaders? Why do some parents demand obedience and harshly punish any misbehavior, especially anger towards them? Why are certain people more "straight," stern, distant, intolerant, and hostile while others are nonconformists, tolerant, and loving?

What kind of people would follow an aggressive, arrogant, critical, prejudiced leader? The classic book on this topic is *The Authoritarian Personality*. These authors (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson & Sanford, 1950) described several traits of authoritarian leaders, like Hitler, and their followers, like the German people:

1. Rigid, unthinking adherence to conventional, middle-class ideas of right and wrong. The distinction has to be made between (a) incorporating (as in Kohlberg's stage 6--see chapter 3) universal values and (b) having blind allegiance to traditional social-political-

religious customs or organizations. Examples: an egalitarian person who truly values one-person-one-vote, equal rights, equal opportunities, and freedom of speech will support a democracy, not a dictatorship. A person who says, "I love my country--right or wrong" or "America--love it or leave it" may be a flag-waving, patriotic speech-making politician who is secretly an antidemocratic authoritarian (similar in some ways to Hitler). For the authoritarian the values of respecting and caring for others are not as important as being a "good German" or a "good American" or a "good Catholic" or a "good Baptist."

Important values to an authoritarian are obedience, cleanliness, success, inhibition or denial of emotions (especially anger and even love), firm discipline, honoring parents and leaders, and abhorring all immoral sexual feelings. This was the German character. Authoritarian parents tend to produce dominated children who become authoritarian parents. Egalitarians produce egalitarians.

2. Respect for and submission to authority--parents, teachers, religion, bosses, or any leader. This includes a desire for a strong leader and for followers to revere the leader, following him (seldom her) blindly. It was believed by the psychoanalytic writers of *The Authoritarian Personality* that recognizing one's hostile feelings towards an authority was so frightening that the authoritarian personality was compelled to be submissive. There is an emphasis on following rules and regulations, on law and order. Everyone has a proper role to play, including gender role.

3. They take their anger out on someone safe. In an authoritarian environment (family, religion, school, peer group, government), the compliant, subservient, unquestioning follower stores up unexpressed anger at the authority. The hostility can't be expressed towards the authority, however, so it is displaced to an outsider who is different--a scapegoat. Unconsciously, the authoritarian says, "I don't hate my father; I hate Jews (or blacks or unions or management or ambitious women or Communists or people on welfare)." The "good cause" to which one is dedicated often dictates who to hate, who to be prejudice against.

4. They can't trust people. They believe "people who are different are no good." If we believe others are as bad as or worse than we are, we feel less guilt: "Everybody looks out for #1" or "Everybody would cheat if they had a chance." Such a negative view of people leads to the conclusion that harsh laws and a strong police or army are necessary. Also, it leads people to foolishly believe that humans would "go wild" and be totally immoral if they lost their religion.

5. Because they feel weak, authoritarian personalities believe it is important to have a powerful leader and to be part of a powerful group. Thus, they relish being in the "strongest nation on earth," the "master race," the "world-wide communist movement," "the wealthiest nation," the "best corporation," the "best part of town," the "best-

looking crowd," the "best team," etc. The successful, the powerful, the leaders are to be held in awe. And the authoritarian says, "When I get power, I want to be held in awe too. I'll expect respect, just like I demand it from my children."

6. Over-simplified thinking. If our great leaders and our enormous government tell us what to do, if our God and our religion direct our lives, then we don't have to take responsibility for thinking or deciding. We just do what we are told. And, in general, we, "the masses," are given simple explanations and told the solutions are simple by authoritarian leaders. Examples: "The source of the trouble is lenient parents (or schools or laws)," "God is on our side," "Get rid of the Jews (or Capitalists or Communists or blacks or Arabs)." For the authoritarian if things aren't simple, they are unknowable, e.g. he/she endorses the statement, "science has its place, but there are many important things that can never possibly be understood by the human mind."

7. Guard against dangerous ideas. Since the authoritarian already has a handle on the truth, he/she opposes new ideas, unconventional solutions, and creative imaginations. They believe an original thinker is dangerous; he/she will think differently. It's considered good to be suspicious of psychologists, writers, and artists who probe your mind and feelings--such people are scary. Governments who observe subversives are OK, though. Indeed, censorship of the media may become necessary, especially if the media becomes critical of our leaders or sexually provocative. A businessperson produces needed products; an intellectual is a threat.

8. I'm pure, others are evil. The authoritarian represses his/her aggressive and sexual feelings, then projects those traits on to stereotyped persons in the outgroup (see defense mechanisms in chapter 5). For example, it was Larry King's and other white men's dishonesty, laziness, hatred, and sexual urges that got projected to the black man (see quote above). The authoritarian, therefore, feels surrounded by people preoccupied with sex and/or violence. The psychoanalysts who wrote *The Authoritarian Personality* say the sexual fears come from an unresolved Oedipus or Electra complex. The hostility comes from childhood (see #2 & #3 above) too and throughout their lives authoritarians expect criminal acts nearby and terrorists' attacks around the world. They become paranoid, believing many people want to hurt them (which justifies their aggression?).

9. Ethnocentrism: Everything of mine is better than yours--my country, my religion, my kind of people, my family, and my self. Research has also shown the authoritarian is more prejudiced and more prone to punish people (including their own children) to get them to work harder or to do "right" (Byrne & Kelley, 1981).

This picture of an authoritarian isn't pretty. How many of these people are there? Zimbardo's "prison study" suggests that the potential for authoritarianism may be quite high, given the right

circumstances. It is estimated that at least 80% of us have prejudices. Hostility (especially the you-are-not-my-equal and I-don't-care-about-you type) abounds in the world. Milgram's study of obedience (in chapter 8) suggests 65% of us would physically hurt someone if told to do so by an authority. Also, in that chapter we will see that most of us conform to social pressures in dress, in opinions, in behavior. Maybe there are parts of an authoritarian personality inside all of us.

Like all behavior, prejudice has multiple causes

Duckitt (1992) summarized the causes of prejudice: (1) universal psychological processes in all of us, such as displacement of anger, projection of our undesirable personality traits to others, disliking people who are "different," etc., (2) dynamics between groups, such as competition for jobs, exploitation of one group by another, etc., (3) passing on of prejudiced attitudes, such as family-subgroup pressures to favor and discriminate against certain types of people, explanations of behavior (crime, desertion of family, drug use) are handed down to young people, etc., and (4) certain individual tendencies to be critical and unfair, such as authoritarians, angry people looking for someone to attack, persons with low self-esteem, etc. Since the causes are complex, the solutions may be complex too.

Integration: Does it reduce racial prejudice?

In the last 45 years we have had a lot of experience with integration as a solution to racial discrimination. We should feel proud of those efforts but how well have they worked? It depends on how desegregation is done. Is it true that as we get to know each other better we will see that our prejudices are untrue? Only under certain conditions. If blacks and whites live as equals in integrated housing where it is easy to have frequent and informal contacts in the laundry rooms, elevators, and play grounds, the answer is "yes," they start to trust and like each other. Likewise, in the military service, after living, fighting, and dying as equals together, blacks and whites liked each other better than did soldiers in segregated army units. On the other hand, when schools were integrated by law and the families involved vigorously opposed integration, many students, who never interacted intimately with the other races, became *more* prejudiced (Aronson, 1984).

So, what are the important factors in making integration work? (1) *Cooperation between groups for shared goals*, like in the boys' camp. (2) *Frequent, casual contact between equals*, like in integrated apartments. Contact of blacks with their white landlord or between the black maid and her wealthy white housewife don't help much. Inviting poor folks over to your \$200,000 house for Thanksgiving dinner, no matter how good your turkey dressing is, won't help. (3) A *long-term cooperative working relationship*. In the late 1960's, there were two kinds of black-white groups at Southern Illinois University: encounter groups meeting for only a few hours and year-long groups for educationally disadvantaged students. There were many verbal battles

in the encounter groups--some groups had to be terminated to avoid violence. Yet, the long-term groups, which tried to help each other survive in school, had no major racial problems.

(4) The *general social environment needs to be supportive of integration* and good relationships. If your family or friends think you are foolish for tolerating an outgroup or if property value is expected to go down if "their kind" move in, it is not likely that your prejudice will decrease with exposure to this group of people, unless you are strong enough to contradict your own social group. (5) The political and community *leaders should make it clear that integration is inevitable*. If I know I must work with you, I will convince myself that you are OK. As long as people think integration can be "experimented with" and possibly delayed, the unthinking hate remains active inside. Human rights are not negotiable, even if the majority of people are prejudice against you, you still have *equal* rights. The Bill of Rights, in fact, is ingeniously designed to protect the minority against an unfair majority. Quick acceptance and integration of an outgroup is better than a gradual process that creates more prejudice (Aronson, 1984).

(6) How we work together is important--we *need to become mutually helping equals*. Just throwing different groups together in schools is not enough--we must work closely, cooperatively, and cordially together. Aronson (1984) developed a teaching technique that reduced the competition and rivalry among students. He called it the "interdependent jigsaw teaching method." It is now called "cooperative learning" and it works this way: students are placed in random groups of five or six. Each student is given 1/5th or 1/6th of the lesson to learn and, then, teach to his/her small group. Rather than making fun of slow students or disregarding uninvolved students, the students now help each other grasp and communicate the information. They need each other's information. Each student plays a vital role in helping every one do well on the exams. Furthermore, students get to know each other better, respect and like each other better, gain in self-respect, empathize with each other more, like school better, and disadvantaged students do better on exams without any loss among the other students.

Unfortunately, the forced integration of schools in the 1950's and 1960's did not result in intimate contact between the races during the 1970's and 1980's. Few blacks are in the "advanced" classes, many are sent to Special Ed classes which they never escape. Aronson's cooperative learning method is not being used widely. Blacks dominate the athletic teams; Latinos seldom try out. Social groups are separated by race and socioeconomic class; they gather in racial-economic clusters in the lunch room. There are still relatively few inter-racial friendships (unless they talk, dress, and act alike) and even fewer inter-racial love relationships. Why aren't we working together as mutually helping equals? It seems that racial biases are still strong and are getting all mixed up with old well entrenched cultural-intellectual-economic class biases. We still have a lot of work to do.

It is never safe to consider individuals in groups, classes, or races. To ascribe virtues or vices to all the individuals of a group is as senseless as it is unjust and inaccurate.

-Wings of Silver

Self-help efforts to reduce our own prejudices

First of all, we must recognize what prejudice really is. It isn't limited to having an intense hatred of a group who are different, and plotting to exterminate all of them. It is much more subtle...and, to a considerable extent, its temporary, spontaneous generation is unavoidable. But we could become intelligent enough to quickly reject those unreasonable feelings. For example, if you hear on the evening news that a local 15-year-old girl was brutally assaulted by a huge, blond, handsome, white man, and the next day a big, attractive, white man walks into where you work, it is the nature of our species to wonder if this could be the assailant or, at least, if this man could be dangerous too. You might even be a little less friendly and avoid getting physically close. You have prejudged this stranger! If big white men were constantly coming into your work area, your suspiciousness would quickly extinguish because most would be nice. But if white men rarely came to your work place, your prejudice might last for weeks and months...or even grow. You couldn't have avoided the evening news.

Thus, any negative information--even false rumors--you have heard about any person or any group--murder among black men, sexual sinfulness among preachers, drinking among college students, etc., etc.--forms the basis for a prejudgment. Likewise, any person associated with a negative life experience--the first kid to beat up on you, the first boy/girl to two-time you, the first boss to fire you--forms expectations of others who look or act as he/she did. This acquiring of prejudged expectations may be beyond our control. It may be a natural, innate coping mechanism of humans. And, unfortunately, in this way, we are constantly adding new prejudices to the deeply entrenched cultural and familial ones from childhood. However, reacting to these prejudgments with rational judgments may be well within our control, if we know what is going on inside of us.

Patricia Devine, University of Wisconsin at Madison, distinguishes between prejudice with compunction (guilt or regret) and prejudice without compunction. *High-prejudice people* without compunction respond automatically and strongly, seeing nothing wrong with their attitude and reactions. The *low-prejudice person* with compunction has less of a negative reaction and often realizes that his/her emotional reaction is not "what it should be" or not rational; thus, he/she regrets his/her prejudicial attitudes or suspicions. This kind of low-prejudice people constantly tries to monitor and correct their thinking. Examples: "Just because one big white man assaulted someone is no

reason for me to suspect this man" or "okay, this person is unattractive (or handsome/beautiful), but that isn't related to how well he/she can do the job." People with high self-esteem, optimism, and tolerance are more aware and better able to control their prejudiced judgments. It is possible.

In my opinion, since all of us have many irrational feelings (prejudices) and constantly develop new ones, all of us must learn to recognize these prejudgments as soon as possible and correct them. It is hard, sometimes, because these prejudices show themselves in subtle ways known only to you, e.g. holding on to your purse or valuables especially carefully while you are next to a black man, being reluctant to vote for a woman or a Jew, dreading your daughter dating someone of another race, believing women shouldn't serve in combat, feeling a little resentment if a female becomes your supervisor, wondering if a well dressed black person is into crime, avoiding sitting next to an old or a fat person, feeling reluctant to work with a homosexual, etc. Race, gender, age, attractiveness, education, wealth, ethnic background, etc. tell us almost nothing about the basic nature of a specific individual. If we prejudge a person on any of these bases, and most or all of us do, we are prejudiced. Low-prejudice people with compunction have a good chance to correct their errors. We don't yet know how to get the high prejudiced people to see the irrationality and unfairness of generalizing from a stereotype to a specific unique individual. But, I think they will eventually learn from the rest of us to have compunction.

Finally, we can all try to be as forgiving of others as we are of ourselves. When we do poorly, we blame the situation. When someone else does poorly, we conclude they are dumb or lazy. In competitive situations, if our rival is successful, we say he/she was lucky. In cooperative situations, we can be as generous with others as we are with ourselves, i.e. their successes are due to skill and their failures are unfortunate breaks to be avoided next time. We could be generous towards everyone.



Nothing will make us so charitable and tender to the faults of others as to thoroughly examine ourselves.



If Mr. X and Larry King can learn prejudice by hearing ignorant, hateful comments by family and friends, why can't they learn to be unbiased by reading about blacks (if they can't interact directly), reading about prejudice, and challenging their own unreasonable thinking just like an overly self-critical person might? Why not tell yourself: "A black or woman or homosexual or body builder or unattractive midget or atheist or _____ could be an excellent

president or boss in my company." Or: "In selecting a mate (or preparing to be one), pimples and bra or jock size are not nearly as important as brains and personality."

Only we can do something about our subtle prejudices--it is our responsibility to "clean up our act." If you are not almost constantly checking your views and opinions of others for bias (prejudgments), you are probably not successfully controlling your prejudice and discrimination. It is not easy. But please, while you are failing to detect your prejudices, keep on trying to detect your errors of prejudgment and remain contrite about doing others wrong.

It does seem that as a society we are reducing prejudice, but slowly. In 1942, only 30% favored desegregation in schools, in 1956, 49% did, in 1970 75% did, and in 1980 about 90% did. But, as we have seen, even with desegregation, there is a long, long way to go before we "love thy neighbor as thyself." Unfortunately, the highly prejudiced people can't see their irrationality and unfairness; their hate unconsciously overwhelms their logic. Each minimally prejudiced person has to keep confronting the highly prejudiced people with reason.

Why does it take so long to remove prejudice, unfairness, and discrimination? Partly because prejudice and discrimination pays off in many ways. Actually, the egalitarian idea of giving everyone in the world an equal chance is a terrible threat to our affluent world; it's almost un-American. Think about it. How do we resolve this conflict between fairness and greed? Melvin Lerner (198) in *The Belief In A Just World* demonstrates that we Americans (and maybe everybody) tend to accept the way things are and assume that people get what they deserve, the good are rewarded and the sinful, lazy, or ignorant are punished. We look at an unfair, cruel world and conclude it is just. How do we do this? We denigrate the victim, deny the evidence, or turn the whole situation around in our minds. For example, Lerner cited a study in which 1000 people had viewed a film of a woman being painfully shocked in a psychological learning experiment (it was staged, not real). At first, many viewers became irate at the experimenter shown in the film. But by the end of the experiment, most viewers believed the victim was really weak or a fool to sit there and allow herself to be shocked. Not one out of 1000 subjects made an effort to protest such experiments; it is more comfortable to believe "everything is fine." But we are living a lie; everything is not fine in the real world.

Another example of this re-interpretation of an unjust world is Colette Dowling's (1988) book, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. Dowling blames women's problems on their weakness and unassertiveness--lower pay, fewer promotions, double work (outside and inside the home), domination by men, and so on. This is more "blaming the victim." Men benefit and must, as profiteers and decision-makers, take most of the blame for the injustice to women.

It seems that we need to learn both tolerance for others and intolerance for injustice. The great black writer, Frederick Douglass, said, "The power of a tyrant is granted by the oppressed." He also pointed out that one must have a dream--must have hope--before one can rebel against injustice. He wrote, "Beat and cuff your slave, keep him hungry and spiritless, and he will follow the chain of his master like a dog; work him moderately, surround him with physical comfort, and dreams of freedom intrude."

The people who are oppressed but still hopeful need to be joined by more and more people with a determined sense of justice. As Tavis (1984) suggests, thinking and talking about injustice may generate a useful anger. Anger has been called the handmaiden of justice. Perhaps controlled anger, as in non-violent social action, or a combination of threatening rebels (bad guys) and more reasonable peace-makers (good guys) offers the best hope of changing this cruel world.



It is only imperfection that is intolerant of what is imperfect. The more perfect we are, the more gentle and quiet we become toward the defects of others.

The only safe and sure way to destroy an enemy is to make him/her your friend.



Possible efforts by society to reduce prejudice and hatred

Morton Deutsch (1993) has recommended changes in the schools to "prepare children to live in a peaceful world." The first step is the use of *cooperative learning techniques* which get us interacting with others and teach positive interdependence. It takes teachers 2 or 3 years to learn these methods. Second is teaching *conflict resolution techniques* which are important skills for all of us to know (see method #10 in chapter 13). Training in handling conflicts would require several courses and workshops for students, plus lots of practice. Third is using *constructive controversy techniques* which get students arguing about important issues in such a way that the discussion promotes critical and empathic thinking. Fourth is the use of *mediation techniques* in schools by students and teachers to resolve all kinds of disagreements. We see that all disagreements are resolvable if we will be rational and fair. Learning to be a mediator takes 30-40 hours. Everyone needs that training which, when used, provides great, practical experience with handling anger.

Read the controversial book about racism by D'Souza (1995). It is thought provoking and, among other things, suggests the ultimate solution is interracial marriage. Why not?

I realize you can not do these things all by yourself, but you can urge your schools to try to reduce animosity between people and groups. You can think. You can volunteer to participate. At least, some schools around the world should be honestly evaluating anger and prejudice reduction programs.

Methods for Handling Our Own Aggression and Anger



An important long-term concern

We have seen that anger is common but dreadfully destructive in human relations. Most of us dislike certain kinds of people, maybe "prejudiced, redneck clods," maybe "rude, demanding, lazy people on welfare," maybe "critical, arrogant bosses or teachers." If we are lucky, we can avoid conflict situations. However, if all of us would learn to control our irritation, jealousy, resentment, violence, prejudice, psychological putdowns, etc., wouldn't it be a much better world? Of course it would, but such goals seem so idealistic to many people, they think it is nonsense. People say "you can't change human nature." These defeatist attitudes prolong human misery. I don't think it is impossible (in a couple of generations) to get people to tolerate, even to love each other. It is an enormous task but such a worthy one that we must not give up. Instead, we must dedicate ourselves to improving the world, starting with our selves.

The pessimist, who believes there will always be hatred and war, should note that the most primitive people on earth (discovered in the Philippines in 1966) are gentle and loving. They have no word for war. How do they control their aggression? What is their system? The entire tribe discourages mean, inconsiderate behavior and encourages cooperation from an early age. Everyone is expected to provide a good, loving model for the children (Nagler, 1982). Please note: This non-aggressive culture was developed without modern education, without great scholars, research and books, without powerful governments working for peace, and without any of the world's great religions. If that primitive tribe can learn to love, why can't we? It may not be too difficult after all. Nagler makes an impassioned plea for non-violence in our time. The other bit of history I want to share with you is from Seneca, a Roman philosopher-educator, who served several Emperors until Nero executed him in 65 AD at age 61. He was an extraordinary person. Seneca wrote a book, *De Ira* (Of Anger), which has been summarized by Hans Toch (1983). In it Seneca proposed theories about aggression and self-help methods remarkably similar to the best we have today. It is humbling but it suggests that common anger problems may not be that hard to solve (we have been too busy waging war for the last 2000 years to work on reducing

violence). Seneca said "hostile aggression" is to avenge an emotional injury. "Sadistic aggression," with practice, becomes habitual by frightening others and, in that way, reduces self-doubts (negative reinforcement). He noted that anger is often an overkill because we attribute evil to the other person or because the other person has hit our psychological weak spot, lowering our self-esteem. Sounds just like current theories, right?



There are some subjects about which you will learn the truth more accurately from the first man you meet in the street than from people who have made a lifelong and accurate study of it.

-George Bernard Shaw



What were his self-control techniques? (1) Avoid frustrating situations by noting where you got angry in the past. (2) Reduce your anger by taking time, focusing on other emotions (pleasure, shame, or fear), avoiding weapons of aggression, and attending to other matters. (3) Respond calmly to an aggressor with empathy or mild, unprovocative comments or with no response at all. (4) If angry, concentrate on the undesirable consequences of becoming aggressive. Tell yourself: "Why give them the satisfaction of knowing you are upset?" or "It isn't worth being mad over." (5) Reconsider the circumstances and try to understand the motives or viewpoint of the other person. (6) Train yourself to be empathic with others; be tolerant of human weakness; be forgiving (ask yourself if you haven't done something as bad); and follow the "great lesson of mankind: *to do as we would be done by.*"

Remarkable! Seneca was clear and detailed. He covered the behavioral, skills, unconscious and especially the cognitive-attitudinal aspects of self-help. He did no research; he merely observed life around him. Now, if we can add research to those ancient "clinical observations," we may be able to make more progress in the next 2000 years. By the way, Seneca also advocated child-rearing practices and humanistic education designed to build self-esteem, model non-aggressive responses, and reward constructive non-violent behavior. Sadly, an angry political leader killed him.

Self-help methods must be tailored to each person's needs

First of all, it seems clear that we have two basic ways of dealing with our own anger. We can (a) *prevent it*, i.e. keep anger from welling up inside of us, or (b) *control it*, i.e. modify our aggressive urges after anger erupts inside. The preventative approach sounds ideal--avoid frustrating situations, be assertive when things first annoy you, eliminate irrational ideas that arouse anger, etc. But, we can't

avoid all frustrations and all thoughts that arouse anger. Secondly, in the situations where we haven't, as yet, learned to prevent an angry reaction, we seem to fall into two easily recognized categories: (a) "*swallowers*" or repressor-suppressor or (b) "*exploders*" or hotheaded expressers. Do you recognize yourself and others you are close to? The "swallowers" haven't prevented the anger, they have just hidden it--suppressed it. (Don't let the fact that "swallowers" may eventually erupt in fits of rage, much like the "exploder," confuse you.) In "exploders," angry feelings and aggressive responses are immediate--little time for prevention, little time to think about avoiding anger, the emotions just spew out.

In time we will probably have a much better classification system. But for now, the swallower-exploder distinction can help us. It seems obvious that the self-help methods of most benefit to you will depend on (a) the nature of the frustrations which still upset you (anger has not been prevented) and (b) your personality type, "swallower" or "exploder." For instance, swallowers might find certain methods, especially stress inoculation (#10 below), venting feelings (#14), and assertiveness (#18), to be helpful. Exploders might use the same methods too but others might be more effective, e.g. self-instructions (#2 & #10), avoiding rewards (#7 & #8), learning tolerance (#12 & #25), challenging irrational ideas (#24) and strengthen your philosophy of love (#28 & #31).

Of course, there are times when anger is appropriate and effective. Carol Tavis (1984) says anger is effective only under these conditions:

1. The anger is *directed at the offending person* (telling your friends may increase your anger).
2. The expression *satisfies your need* to influence the situation and/or correct an injustice.
3. Your approach seems *likely to change* the other person's behavior, which means you can express yourself so they can understand your point of view and so they will cooperate with you.

If these conditions are not met, you are usually well advised to "bite your lip" or "hold your tongue" and vent your anger privately (by yourself alone), if that helps, or forget it. You will be surprised how often the suppression of hot, vile, cutting remarks avoids a nasty scene.

Both prevention-of-anger and control-of-anger methods are given in this section. The self-help methods are arranged by levels to help you plan a self-improvement project. Make use of science and your personal experience to decide what might work best for you.

Level I: Anger or aggression-control methods that focus on simple behaviors and thoughts

Reduce your frustrations. You know who makes you mad, what topics of conversation upset you, the situations that drive you up a wall, and so on. Can you avoid them? This could be the best way to prevent anger. Even if you can't permanently avoid a person whom you currently dislike, staying away from that person for a few days could reduce the anger. See method #1 in chapter 11.

You may need to clarify or change your goals. Having no goals can be uncomfortable. Having impossible goals can be infuriating. You may need to plan ways of surmounting barriers in your way.

Reduce the environmental support for your aggression. How aggressive, mean, and nasty we are is partly determined by the behavior of those around us (Aronson, 1984). Perhaps you can avoid subcultures of violence, including gangs or friends who are hostile, TV violence, action movies, etc. More importantly, select for your friends people who are not quick tempered or cruel and not agitators or prejudiced. Examples: if you are in high school and see your friends being very disrespectful and belligerent with teachers or parents, you are more likely to become the same way. If your fellow workers are hostile to each other and insult each other behind their backs, you are more likely to be aggressive than if you were alone or with tolerant folks. So, choose your friends carefully. Pleasant, tactful models are very important (Lando & Donnerstein, 1978).

Explain yourself and understand others. It is remarkable what a difference a little understanding makes. For example one of Zillmann's (1979) studies shows that a brief comment like, "I am uptight" prior to being abrasive and rude is enough to take the sting out of your aggressiveness. So, if you are getting irritated at someone for being inconsiderate of you, ask them if (or just assume) something is wrong or say, "I'm sorry you are having a hard time." Similarly, if you are having a bad day and feeling grouchy, ask others (in advance) to excuse you because you are upset. This changes the environment.

Develop better ways of behaving. See method #2 in chapter 11. Although we may feel like hitting the other person and cussing them out, using our most degrading and vile language, we usually realize this would be unwise. Research confirms that calmly expressed anger is far more understandable and tolerable than a tirade. Moon and Eisler (1983) found that stress inoculation (#10), social skills training (#18-#21), and problem-solving methods training were all effective ways to control anger.

Try out different approaches and see how they work. Almost anything is better than destructive aggression. Use your problem-solving skills as discussed in chapters 2 and 13. If you are a yeller and screamer, try quiet tolerance and maybe daily meditation. If you are a

psychological name-caller, try "I" statements (chapter 13) instead. If you sulk and withdraw for hours, try saying, "I have a problem I'd like to talk about soon." If you tend to strike out with your fists, try hitting a punching bag until you can plan out a reasonable verbal approach to solving the problem.

Baron and others (Biaggio, 1987) have shown that several responses are incompatible with getting intensely angry, i.e. these responses seem to help us calm down. Such responses include empathy responding, giving the offender a gift, asking for sympathy, and responding with humor. Other constructive reactions are to ask the offensive critic to clarify his/her insult or to volunteer to work with and help out the irritating person. This only works if your kindness is genuine and your offer is honest.

In addition to incompatible overt responses, there are many covert or internal responses you might use that will help suppress or control your anger. Examples: self-instructions, such as "they are just trying to make you mad" and "don't lose control and start yelling," influence greatly your view of the situation and can be very helpful in avoiding and controlling aggression. Indeed, one of the major methods of anger control (Novaco, 1975) uses relaxation, Rational-Emotive techniques (#24 below), and self-talk (#10 below, plus self-instructions--method #2 in chapter 11--and stress-inoculation--method #7 in chapter 12).

Stop hostile fantasies. Preoccupation with the irritating situation, including repeatedly talking about it, may only increase your anger. See method #10--thought stopping--in chapter 11. Also, punishing your anger-generating fantasies--methods #18 and #19 in chapter 11--or substituting and rewarding constructive how-to-improve-the-situation thoughts--method #16 in chapter 11--might work to your advantage in this case.



I am too busy with my cause to hate--too absorbed in something bigger than myself. I have no time to quarrel, no time for regrets, and no man can force me to stoop low enough to hate him.

-Lawrence James



Guard against escalating the violence. When we are mad, we frequently attempt overkill, i.e. hurt the person who hurt us a lot more. There are two problems with retaliating excessively: the enemy is tempted to counterattack you even more vigorously and you will probably start thinking of the enemy even more negatively (in order to convince yourself that he/she deserved the severe punishment you gave him/her) which makes you want to aggress again. Thus, the saying, "violence breeds violence" is doubly true--violence produces

more hate in your opponent and in you. Research has shown that controlled, moderate retaliation so that "things are equal" (in contrast to "teaching them a lesson") feels better in the long run than excessive retaliation (Aronson, 1984). Better yet, walk away from the argument, let them have the last word.

Record the antecedents and consequences of your anger. As with all behaviors, you need to know (a) the learning history of the behavior (angry reactions), (b) the antecedents or situations that "set you off," (c) the nature and intensity of your anger, (d) your thoughts and views of the situation immediately before and during the anger, (e) what self-control methods did you use and how well did they work, and (f) the consequences (how others responded and other outcomes) following your emotional reaction. If this information is *carefully and systematically* recorded for a week or two, it could be enlightening and valuable. Examples: By becoming aware of the common but subtle triggers for your emotional reactions, you could avoid some future conflict situations. By noting your misinterpretations and false assumptions, you might straighten out your own anger-causing thoughts. By realizing the payoffs you are getting from your anger, you could clarify to yourself the purposes of your aggression and give up some of the unhealthy payoffs. Remember: "Aggression pays!" Perhaps you could gain the things and reactions you need from others in some other way.

Suppress or disrupt your aggressive responses, find a distraction, or use humor. The old adages of "count to 10" or "engage brain before starting mouth" are probably good ideas. Do whatever you can to stop your impulsive aggression, like hitting or yelling. Even a brief delay may permit you to think of a more constructive response. Actually the longer the delay the better, perhaps sleep on it or talk to a friend first. Research with children has confirmed Seneca's opinion that thinking about other things helps reduce our frustration and ire. Do something you enjoy, something that occupies your mind. Listen to music, take a bath, meditate, see a good comedy. Or use a little comedy, but it is hard to control the sarcasm.



Lady debater: Mr. Churchill, if I were your wife, I'd put arsenic in your tea!

Winston Churchill: Lady, if you were my wife, I'd drink it.

Abraham Lincoln to a large lady visitor who accidentally sat on and crushed his favorite top hat: If you'd just asked me lady, I could have told you it wouldn't fit.



Tavris (1984) says the best thing, sometimes, to do about anger is nothing, including thinking nothing about the incident. The irritating event is frequently unimportant; its memory may soon fade away; if you stay quiet, the relationship stays civil and respectful.

When it comes to anger, you are sometimes damned if you do express it and damned if you don't. Swallowing anger may be unwise. Some theorists say that self-instructions to suppress anger for a long period of time may be risky, because it lowers our self-esteem, increases our sense of powerlessness, and increases health risks. Other theorists point to a phenomenon called "laughter in church," i.e. holding back the expression of an emotion--a laugh--may strengthen the feeling. Watch for these problems if you are holding back your feelings. If you have suppressed the emotional outburst but the anger still rages inside, you may need to vent the anger privately (#14).



He/she who can suppress a moment's anger may prevent a day of sorrow.



Stop using your temper to get your way, i.e. extinguish your aggression (see method #20 in chapter 11). Several years ago, Gerald Patterson suggested that the aggressor and the victim could both be reinforced by the other. If the aggressor gets what he/she wants by making demands, threatening, yelling, calling people names, being nasty, etc., this hostile behavior is positively reinforced. But the victim who submits or gives in to these demands is also reinforced! He/she escapes the stress and stops the aggression (negative reinforcement) by letting the aggressor have his/her way. In this way, perhaps dominant-submissive or abusive relationships are maintained for long periods.

As the payoffs for your angry feelings and behavior become clear to you, try to eliminate the rewards. Example: if your anger intimidates someone into giving you your way, enter an agreement with them that they will no longer make concessions following your hostile responses. If you feel stronger, "more of a man (or stronger woman)" after being nasty, tell yourself that such a reaction is foolish, that anger is a sign of weakness not of strength, that being understanding shows more intelligence and is admired by others more than aggressiveness. Most importantly, ask the other person to help you avoid aggression by refusing to reinforce it; instead, you should be rewarded for having more pleasant interactions with them.

Record and reward better control over your temper.

Considerable research with children has shown that the consistent

reward of constructive, pleasant, non-aggressive behavior (while ignoring aggressive behavior) reduces aggression and prepares the child to accept future frustrations much better. If kindergartners can learn this, why can't we as adults? Review your notes about anger at the end of each week; note how the events seem trivial later and how your emotions seem excessive. See if you don't find your pre-anger thoughts to be rather amusing. Start rewarding yourself for avoiding frustrating situations, for curtailing your anger responses, and for substituting more controlled, constructive responses, like empathy responses. For instance, if you dislike a relative, say a brother or a father-in-law, reward yourself whenever you increase the pleasant, interesting interactions with that person. This may counteract the conditioned negative reactions you have. See methods #3, #8 and #16 in chapter 11. Novaco's (1975) techniques also involve self-rewards (see #10, stress inoculation, below).

Self-punish aggression. Like any other unwanted behavior, you can punish your own angry behavior. Also, you can *atone or over-correct or make up for* your inconsiderate behavior. But make sure this latter approach, the "let's make up; I'm very sorry" stage, isn't a con or manipulation. Many abusive persons apologize, promise it won't ever happen again, and become very loving afterwards for a while...until they get mad and abusive the next time. The idea in this method is not for you to be forgiven but to be self-punished--to make your angry aggression unprofitable and unpleasant to you as the aggressor so you won't do it again.

Level II: Methods for reducing or controlling anger

Use stress-inoculation. The cognitive-behavioral therapists have developed an elaborate method, called stress-inoculation, for coping with anger. It involves self-awareness of the irrational ideas we tell ourselves which increase anger, learning better self-statements to encourage and guide ourselves, and rehearsing over and over how to be more calm and controlled in specific situations. See method #7 in chapter 12 for details. This is probably the best researched method, showing this technique allays anger but does not increase assertiveness.

Use desensitization. This method was originally designed to break the connection between non-dangerous situations and fear. But presumably the method would work just as well to disconnect anger from overly frustrating situations. Usually there are specific people, behaviors, or situations that prompt your aggression. These could be used in a hierarchy for desensitization; indeed, that is essentially what is happening in the rehearsal stage of the last method, stress-inoculation. A recently married woman was extremely resentful and jealous when her handsome husband talked with any other woman, even if she knew they had some business to discuss. By using desensitization, she was able to reduce these resentments and fears. (Yes, you're right, if you are wondering if her self-confidence or his fidelity might not also be problems.) See method #6 in chapter 12.

Evaluations of desensitization have only found moderate effectiveness with anger (Warren & McLellarn, 1982). It has not worked with some people with violent tempers. Leventhal (1984) speculates that physiological arousal (which is what desensitization reduces) is not a critical part of becoming angry (e.g. people who are almost totally paralyzed get mad). Emotions are partly mental. Relaxation may not counter anger as well as it does fear. Still it has some effect.

Consider frustration tolerance training. Just as one can learn to avoid hot fudge sundaes, one can learn to control his/her fists and tongue and even gut responses to some extent. The procedure is to expose yourself to the irritation over and over until you can handle it. This can be done in fantasy (basically desensitization) or in role-play (a friend could play your pushy boss or critical father) or in reality (the jealous woman above seeks out the experience rather than trying to stop it--which becomes paradoxical intention--see method #12 in chapter 11).

Meditation and relaxation. Meditation or yoga and relaxation can be used to allay anger as well as anxiety (Carrington, 1977). Suinn (1990) and his students developed a training procedure involving the arousal of anxiety or anger (by imagining an irritating scene) and then practicing avoiding or reducing the anger response by relaxing. This procedure--relaxing, arousal of anger, attention to anger signs, replacing anger with relaxation--is repeated over and over for 4 to 8 sessions. The advantage of this procedure is that the relaxation techniques, such as a pleasant scene, deep muscle relaxation, or deep breathing, can be immediately used anytime unwanted anger occurs. This is similar to method #10. Also see chapter 12 and #11 above.

Use catharsis. Privately vent your feelings, get them off your chest. There are three skills involved: (a) realizing your feelings, (b) learning to express feelings, and (c) learning to drain or discharge your feelings. Some of the hotly debated pros and cons about this method have already been reviewed under "Frustration and Aggression" above. The pro-catharsis side is made up of dynamic and psychoanalytic therapists and popular folklore (Lincoln recommended writing down your feelings, then tearing up the paper). The anti-catharsis side is made up of personality researchers who believe that venting anger is just one more trial of learning to be aggressive. Certainly, one has to be on guard against this happening. Recall that under "Internal Dynamics" we discussed that one way for anger to build was via anger-generating fantasies, i.e. reliving an irritating experience over and over and getting madder and madder in the process (actually if you remained calm, it would be desensitization!). Thus, current theories make all kinds of predictions: anger is thought to grow if it is fully expressed *or* unexpressed *or* imagined *or* totally denied. In other words, psychologists don't agree, strongly indicating we don't understand anger very well yet.

The practical distinctions between a "swallower" and an "exploder" are especially clear when applying this method. An inhibited, suppressed person must first learn to accept all of his/herself, including the scary boiling rage. The "swallower" has had years of socialization: "Don't get so mad." "Stop acting like a little baby." "Wipe that smirk off your face before I knock it off." So one of his/her first tasks is to recognize his/her anger and learn to express it when alone. Part of method #8 in chapter 12 deals with the "swallower's" difficulties with expression. On the other hand, the "exploder" should have no difficulty venting his/her anger; it comes naturally, except now he/she has to learn to do it alone so it won't hurt anyone.

Healthy, effective venting will probably involve (a) *exhaustion*, i.e. vigorously expressing the feelings (punching a pillow, crying about the hurts) until you are drained, (b) *an intention and belief* (or self-suggestion) *that venting will rid you of the accumulated anger* forever, and (c) an *open-mindedness to new insights* as the angry feelings are expressed physically, verbally, and in your thoughts. *See method # 10 in chapter 12* for a full description. Observe the consequences of your venting carefully, if it isn't working, try some other approach.

Even a major anti-catharsis writer like Tavris (1984) cites Scheff (1979) and says, "Ventilating anger directly can be cathartic, but only if it restores your sense of control, reducing both the rush of adrenaline...and reducing your belief that you are helpless or powerless." In other words, expressing anger right in the other person's face feels good and gets the venom out of your system if it works for you, i.e. rights some wrong or gets the other person to change, and, at the same time, avoids creating more conflict and stress. She admits that it is risky business when directly confronting the person you are mad at. I agree and *I'm not recommending direct, explosive, face-to-face attacks*. Tavris never seems to consider *private* catharsis.

Catharsis occurs quite often in therapy where it is almost universally considered therapeutic. But there is very little research into the effectiveness of self-generated fantasy and exercises (like beating a pillow) for venting and reducing anger. There is some evidence that expressing anger at the time you are upset reduces aggression later (Konecni, 1975). So, in spite of having little relevant scientific information to guide us, I'd rely on extensive therapeutic experience (Messina, 1989) that says it helps to "get angry feelings out of our system." Namka's (1995) book specifically helps a family express their anger constructively. We need more and better research.

Deal with anxiety, guilt, and low self-esteem. All environmental stresses and internal tensions seem to intensify our aggressive responses. Karen Horney thought chronic anger was a defense against emotional insecurity. Perhaps a sagging self-concept is particularly prone to prompt a hostile reaction to even minor offenses. Stress inoculation methods have been shown to reduce anger and increase self-esteem (Meichenbaum, 1985; Hains & Szyjakowski,

1990). Chapters 5, 6, 12, and 14 help change the emotions that may increase aggression.

Deal with depression and helplessness. Our first response to frustration is often anger--a quick vigorous (but often unwise) reaction to "straighten out" the situation. If we are unable to escape or overcome the frustration, however, we eventually lose hope and become apathetic. See chapter 6.

Make constructive use of the energy from anger. In contrast to the lethargy of depression, when we are angry, adrenaline flows and increases our blood pressure, we have lots of energy. Instead of using this "natural high" to hurt others, we can use it in constructive ways. Examples: if a smart student in your class annoys you, use your anger-energy to study more and be a better competitor. If it irritates you that you are out of shape and can't play some sport as well as others (or as well as you used to), use the resulting energy to get in shape, don't just eat or drink more and criticize others. I am not proposing you become a more competitive Type A personality; I'm not suggesting more anger but rather a more beneficial use of the anger already present. For instance, try starting your own self-help group for angry people; try helping others, such as by joining a local MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

Level III: Skills involved in avoiding or reducing anger

It may be reasonable to assume that aggression and violence occurs when we do not have a better way of responding to the situation. In other words, we lack problem-solving and interpersonal skills. Isaac Asimov said, "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."



If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to treat everything as if it were a nail.



Learn to be assertive with others. Assertiveness is tactful but firm; it is reasonable. Aggressiveness is inconsiderate, unreasonable, abrasive, and often an unfair angry over-reaction. Obviously, there will be less anger if you can be assertive rather than aggressive. Again the distinction between "swallowers" and "exploders" is useful. Swallowers need to learn to express their feelings, to stand up for their rights, to state their preferences and opinions, to immediately negotiate minor inconveniences or irritants. This is assertiveness. Quick effective action avoids the build up of anger, ulcers, and explosions. Exploders need to reduce their impulsive, hurtful anger, find better tactics for reducing conflicts, and, perhaps, learn ways to be more positive and empathic.

Both swallows and exploders need to be assertive. See method #3 in chapter 13.



Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way--that is not easy.

-Aristotle



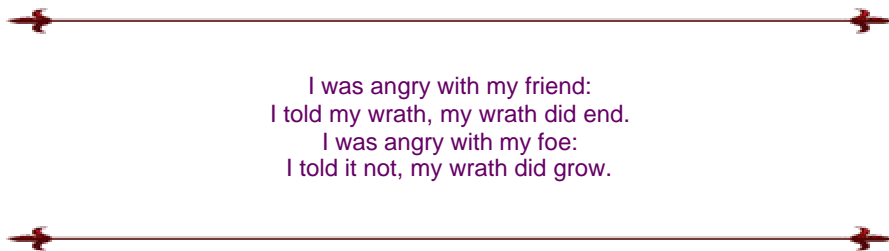
Be empathic. See the Longfellow quote at the beginning of this chapter. The least angry people are the most able to understand others, able to put themselves "in the other person's shoes" and realize their motives and pain. It is a life-long, unending task to know or intuit the inner workings of others and to view every human life as a kindred spirit, in the sense of "but for the grace of God, I would be that person." See method #2 in chapter 13 for empathy responding and method #4 in chapter 14 for tolerance through determinism. The most soothing reaction to hostility (your own or someone else's) is genuine empathy.

Practice emotional control by role-playing. There is no better way to learn new and better ways of interacting in difficult situations than to practice over and over with a friend. Watch how others handle the situation. Try out different approaches, get feedback, and practice until you are ready for real life. See method #1 in chapter 13.

Learn to "fight" fairly. When you find out someone has been lying to you, you may feel like yelling at them or even hitting them. That isn't very smart. A reasonable solution is unlikely to come out of a big nasty verbal or physical fight. So, chill out. Some therapists recommend fighting "fairly." To fight fairly, first of all, you need to know why you are mad. For example, if you are over-reacting because you have had a bad day or because you are displacing anger from another person, that isn't fair. Then you and the other person (who lied) need to talk about how to fix the situation; you can even cry and shout about how upset or hurt you are, but no name-calling, no nasty put downs, no terrible threats, etc. Find out his/her viewpoint; get the facts. Stick with the current problem, don't dig up old grudges. Finally, state your views, hurts, fears, and preferences clearly; arrive at an "understanding," if possible, and an acceptable arrangement for the future.

Some therapists (Bach & Wyden, 1968) believe that frustrations especially in an intimate relationship are better expressed--fully and dramatically--than suppressed. Yet, few relationships could survive frequent, uncontrolled, all-out expressions of raw, negative, permanently hurtful emotions. So, there are guidelines for verbally fighting in such a way that the couple can vent their feelings, resolve

their conflicts, and continue liking each other. See method #5 in chapter 13.



Hold back your anger. Act like a mature, responsible adult. Like the debate about catharsis, therapists disagree about the best way to handle anger towards a loved one. Mace & Mace (1974) and Charny (1972) point out that anger is the greatest destroyer of marriages. Thus, instead of "fighting," as just suggested, they recommend that you (a) admit your anger, (b) moderate or control it, and (c) ask your partner for help in figuring out what two committed, caring people can do about the situation. Then work out an agreement. This is not a total suppression of anger, i.e. the conflict is resolved, but the intense emotions are never expressed as they are in fair fighting.

"I" statements express anger constructively. There is great skill in knowing when, where, and how to resolve conflicts. Here are some steps to consider when planning how to handle a situation that upsets you:

- a. Have we chosen a time and place where both of us feel free to discuss our problems? If the other person brings up the problem at a bad time, tell him/her that you are also eager to resolve the problem and suggest a better time or place.
- b. Have I tried to find out how the other person sees and feels about the conflict? Ask questions to get his/her point of view. Give empathy responses (#19). Don't counter-attack. Put yourself in his/her shoes. Understanding will replace anger.
- c. Have I asked the other person to listen to my point of view? Be specific and accurate (no self-serving exaggerations) about what was said and done, explaining why you are upset. You should talk about your feelings (you *are* the expert here). But, do not blame, "analyze," or "psychologize" about the other person's motives, feelings, or negative traits (you are *not* the expert here). Tactfulness and respect are important, so clearly communicate your needs and preferences but not your rage and resentment. There are ways of constructively communicating your unhappiness without going into an accusatory tirade. For example, an important skill is "I" statements. These "I feel _____ when ____ (not: when you are a

SOB)_____ " statements not only tactfully ask for changes but they also convey that you are assuming responsibility for your own feelings, not blaming others for how you feel. *Method #4 in chapter 13* describes "I" statements in detail and why they work so much better than a stream of hateful insults and demands.

- d. Have I made it clear to the other person exactly what I want done differently? (Making it clear that you are willing to change too.)
- e. Have I asked the other person to tell me exactly what he/she would like me to do differently? (Without implying you will do whatever he/she wants.)
- f. Have the two of us agreed on a mutually acceptable solution to our difficulty? Am I sure he/she knows exactly what I have in mind? Do I know exactly what he/she thinks the plan is? (Better put the agreement in writing.)
- g. Have we planned to check with each other, after a given time, to make sure our compromise is working out?
- h. Have I shown my appreciation for the positive changes the other person has made?

Level IV: Cognitive processes involved in reducing aggression

Quietly and calmly reading this book as adults, it may be hard to imagine how some teenagers get into fights, sometimes lots of fights. Susan Opatow of Columbia University says that almost all of the 40 seventh graders she studied in a New York City minority school had no idea how to handle their anger except to emotionally "retreat inward" or "explode outward," i.e. fight. Only 2 out of 40 said they would "verbally express their feelings of anger." Not one considered "trying to reason with the other person" or "having an open discussion of both peoples' feelings" or "exchanging information or views" or "trying to find a satisfactory compromise" or any other solution. Perhaps it isn't surprising, since these students think fighting and swallowing their anger are the only solutions. Actually, over 50% think fights are constructive. These 13-year-olds say that without fights you would never find out who you are and what you want out of life, that you learn about people and how they react by fighting, that fights sometimes build a relationship, that fights settle arguments, and that fights can be fun.

Opatow says these kids consider nothing but "their gut reaction" when they are mad. They are spewers or swallows; almost never smart copers. Surely a wise society could teach them other possible ways of resolving conflict. Indeed, given a supportive environment and a little encouragement to ponder, I'll bet the seventh graders could devise their own effective, non-violent ways of handling these

situations. The point is: we have to think things out ahead of time and practice responding in better ways than with our furious fists or combative mouths. The cognitive approach has a lot to offer (for a good general discussion see Hankins, 1993).

Williams (1989) and Williams & Williams (1993), advocates of reducing your level of anger for health reasons (heart disease and immune deficiencies), give this advice about expressing or suppressing your anger. When angry, ask yourself three questions: (a) Is this worthy of my attention? (b) Am I justified? (c) Can I do anything about it (without anyone getting hurt)? If you can answer all three "yes," perhaps you should express your feelings and try to do something. If any answer is "no," better control your emotions by thought stopping, attending to something else, meditation, reinterpreting, etc.

Challenge your irrational ideas. Anger-generating irrational ideas or beliefs come in various forms: your own impossible, perfectionistic standards make it impossible for anyone to please you; you feel a person is despicable when he/she lies about you or deceives you; you believe that others *make* you mad but really you are responsible for what you feel; it may seem perfectly clear to you that some peoples' behavior is immoral and disgusting; you feel sure that certain kinds of people or groups are causing serious trouble for all the good people in the community and these people should be severely punished. All these ideas may generate anger; look for the "shoulds" and the "ain't it awfuls" in your thinking. They are *your* ideas causing *your* anger.

Another viewpoint is that you can get a just and reasonable resolution of a conflict without hating, hurting, or humiliating anyone. Cognitive and Rational-Emotive therapy provide a way to change these anger-producing beliefs into more rational ideas and solutions. See method #3 in chapter 14. Two good books present the RET approach to handling your own anger (Ellis & Lange, 1994; Dryden, 1990).

Take a deterministic view of the world. The beauty of determinism is that it provides a way of experiencing life--all of it--as an understandable, "lawful," astonishingly beautiful, marvelously complex, and ever changing process. There are reasons for everything; thus, everything that happens must happen and everything that doesn't happen is impossible or "unlawful" at that moment. Therefore, we should be accepting of ourselves, warts and all, and tolerant of others, hostility, greed, and all. See determinism in method #4 in chapter 14.



No man was to be eulogized for what he did or censored for what he did or did not do, because all of us are the children of conditions, of circumstances, of environment, of education, of acquired habits and of heredity molding man as they are and will forever be.

-Abraham Lincoln



By understanding our enemy's background, needs, attitudes, and dreams, we can see how they feel and think. We may not agree with them but we "know where they are coming from." We can understand his/her actions and feelings. Understanding leads to acceptance.

Try cognitive reality checking and reinterpretation. Clearly, how we see our situation determines our emotional reaction. Example: you are in a fender bender: if you believe you were not paying attention, you may feel anxious and cry, but if you believe the other driver was reckless, you may feel angry and become verbally abusive. Some people (aggressive males, drunks, and people with little empathy) are much more prone than others to see hostile intentions in others. How biased are your perceptions? Are you frequently mad and thinking critical thoughts of others? Do you often think of others as stupid, lazy, jerks, losers, ugly, crude, disgusting, etc.? Try to test out your negative hunches about specific people. Try to realize you are over-simplifying, dehumanizing, and vilifying others, possibly to rationalize your own hostility and maybe as a coverup of your own self-hatred.

Anger can be reduced by (a) asking yourself if there are other less hostile ways of seeing (interpreting) this situation, (b) actually trying to see the situation from the other person's viewpoint (try describing the situation from their point of view), and (c) thinking about the likely consequences before acting aggressively. Yes, people *can* do this, reducing their own chronic hostility.

Suppose the irritating person can't be stopped or avoided, e.g. a cantankerous boss or a rebellious child, you can consciously try to attribute the irritating behavior to new, more acceptable causes. Examples: you may assume that the boss is under great pressure. You can see your immature 16-year-old as "trying to find him/herself," "scared of growing up," or "well trained to be dependent," rather than being "obnoxious" or "hateful and headed for trouble."

People who work in provocative situations, like police and bus drivers, can be inoculated against anger by learning self-control (method #10) or by viewing the other person's behavior in a new light. For instance, New York City bus drivers are taught that riders repeating questions over and over, e.g. "how far is 49th street?" may be bothered by high anxiety or by language or hearing problems. Also, they are taught that apparent drunkenness may be caused by cerebral palsy, epileptic seizures, mental illness, medication, etc. Now, rather than getting mad, the bus driver is more likely to think "hey, this person may be sick." You can become more open-minded by yourself and, thus, less addicted to anger-generating thoughts about the other person's behavior or situation.

Love. Jampolsky (1979) has a best-selling book, *Love is Letting Go of Fear*, which helps some people. The ideas are simple: We have a choice to love or to hate and fear (fear is really a cry for love). For peace of mind choose love and be concerned with giving, not getting. Through loving forgiveness we can avoid judging others and eliminate our own guilt. We believe the world makes us upset; but really, we (our thoughts) make the world. So, we can change the world by changing our thoughts--from fear or hateful thoughts to loving thoughts. We can't hurt others without first hurting ourselves (thinking bad about ourselves), so *give up your attack thoughts*. Do not judge, have only tolerant, understanding thoughts. It's your choice: love or fear.

There are many similar popular books that focus on attitudes. They sell well. Unfortunately, science has not evaluated the effectiveness of such books. My impression from reading self-reports from thousands of students is that this kind of change-your-attitude approach may have a temporary impact, but often needs to be repeated or re-learned after a few days or weeks because we forget and revert to our old angry ways of thinking.

Accumulate logical and moral arguments against aggression and for love. Psychologists apparently believe rational arguments are powerless against emotions as powerful as anger. Aronson (1984) writes, "such arguments probably would not significantly curtail aggressive behavior, no matter how sound, no matter how convincing." Such pessimism may account for the lack of effort with our children to curtail violence. Doesn't it seem strange that humans can learn the malicious, vile, sick, destructive ideas in racial and sexual stereotypes but we can't learn logical, cogent reasons for not abusing, slandering, or cheating on someone? Many people have become vegetarians and pacifists, how do we explain them? Didn't they hear and accept the arguments against killing animals and then change themselves? Are arguments against killing and mistreating humans less persuasive? Nagler (1982) gives many rational arguments for non-violence.



The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you can not murder the lie, not establish the truth. Through murder you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate...

Hate can not drive out hate; only love can do that.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

We believe there is an inward teacher...by this inward teacher we are convinced that there is a way of death, and a way of life. The way of death is the way of threat and violence, hatred and malevolence, rigid ideology and obsessive nationalism. This way is all too easy to find.

The way of life is harder to find... Neither rulers, nor parties, nor nations, nor ideologies, nor religions can command the legitimate

loyalties of people unless they serve the way of life.
-Quaker Readings on Pacifism



Increase your self-confidence. The more confident you are the less hurt you will be by criticism and rejection. The less hurt you are, the less angry you become. You are also less likely to be prejudiced. Self-confident people are probably self-accepting; self-accepting people are probably tolerant of others, i.e. less hateful. See method #1 in chapter 14 for self-concept building methods; you can come to see yourself as thoughtful, tolerant, understanding, and forgiving.

A part of confidence is believing you can control the inborn tendencies and childhood influences that make you bad tempered. Don't be a slave to your past; you can be smarter than that. If you are prone to feel powerless, you need to build your self-efficacy by demonstrating to yourself that your temper is controllable. Plan some self-help projects and work for self-control (see method #9 in chapter 14).

Differentiate thoughts from deeds and the person from their action. My actions are not me; part of me, maybe, but not all of me. Haim Ginott (1965, 1971) and Samalin (1991) make this so clear with children. Your son's room, filled with month old dirt, dust, dirty clothes and decaying food, may make you furious but that is different from saying to him, "you are a filthy, lazy, defiant, no-good punk." A dirty room doesn't make him a completely despicable person, as the statement implies. Likewise, there is an important distinction between thoughts or urges and actual deeds, e.g. feeling like hitting someone differs drastically from actually doing it.

Every human being should be respected. The Quakers might be right, God may be in every person. No thought or feeling is awful, it doesn't hurt anyone until it gets transformed into action. So, accept everyone as an important, worthy person, regardless of what they have done. Be tolerant of all ideas and feelings. Concentrate on solving the problem at hand rather than on any personal affront you may have suffered.

Live a non-aggressive, loving, and forgiving philosophy. There are many possibilities: Christian "love thy enemies" or "love one another" or "turn the other cheek" philosophy is one. Other approaches are the Quakers', Gandhi's, and Martin Luther King's non-violence philosophy, and the Kung Fu or Yoga philosophy of detachment and acceptance of the inevitable. Also, Carl Rogers and humanistic psychologists speak of "unconditional positive regard" for every person. Similarly, Martin Buber (1970) prescribes reverence for others, as implied in his title, *I and Thou*. This involves a deep respect for every person, considering them priceless, irreplaceable, vital, and a

fascinating, unique miracle to be cherished, even if you don't like all that they have done. Every person has a right to be different, perhaps a responsibility to be his/her unique self.



To be wronged or robbed is nothing unless you continue to remember it.

-Confucius

By taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior.

-Francis Bacon



Anger consists of our bitter responses to insults, hurts, injustices, rejection, pain, etc., and the bitterness is repeatedly rehearsed and remembered. Hatred is a memory that we are unwilling to let go, to dismiss, to forgive. If we could forgive the person who offended us, we would no longer be so angry and stressed. For many of us, however, forgiveness is especially hard because we confuse it with other reactions. Making these distinctions may help you become forgiving:

- a. Forgiveness is *not* forgetting nor is it a promise to forget. You can never forget being hurt. In fact, if you had forgotten, you couldn't forgive.
- b. Forgiveness is *not* promising to believe the other person was not guilty or not responsible for the wrong things he/she did. If he/she were blameless, there would be nothing to forgive.
- c. Forgiveness is *not* praise or a reward; no reward was earned, none is given.
- d. Forgiveness is *not* approval of what was done. You are not conceding that the wrong he/she committed is viewed as any less serious than it has been heretofore.
- e. Forgiveness is *not* permission to repeat the offense. It does not mean that your values or society's rules have changed. It is not based on an assumption that the hurt will never be repeated on anyone but it implies such a hope.

Forgiveness, as defined here, *is your decision to no longer hate the sinner*; it is getting rid of *your* venom, *your* hatred; it is your attempt to heal yourself, to give yourself some peace (Smedes, 1984). There is research evidence of a positive relationship between forgiveness and self-acceptance, i.e. the more you accept others, the more you like yourself, and the reverse. By knowing clearly what forgiveness is and

what it is not, we may be able to forgive more easily (also see #25 and #30 above), using these steps (Simon & Simon, 1991; Felder, 1987):

a. Be sure you really want to forgive. If you are still boiling inside and feel there could never be even a partial justification of what was done, you aren't ready to forgive. You still have unfinished business with this person. If and when you want to get these bad feelings off your chest, want to remove some of the emotional barriers from the relationship, and want to see the other person's side of the situation, you may be ready to consider the remaining steps in forgiving. To get to the point of forgiving someone, try expressing the anger and pain with people you trust, but follow this with a genuine discussion of how and why you may be "nurturing and prolonging the pain." Then consider what you would gain if you let go of the resentment. Ask yourself if you have ever let down or hurt someone. Are you ready to give up your revenge against this other person?

b. Make a serious effort to understand the circumstances, thinking, motives, and hopes of the person who hurt you. Look for background information--cultural influences, painful childhood experiences, abuse, addictions, psychological problems, resentment, envy, ambitions, etc.--that would explain (not excuse) the resented behavior. Talk to relatives and friends of the person who offended you, get their opinions about the offender's situation and motives. Had he/she had experiences that made his/her actions towards you likely to occur?

c. Use this background information to look at what happened from the other person's point of view. As best you can tell, what was his/her psychological condition and educational background? What do you suppose he/she thought would be the outcome of treating you the way he/she did? What loss might he/she have been trying to handle or prevent? What emotions might have been dominating the other person? How do you think he/she saw you and your situation at the time? Look at the offender's behavior as a determinist would (see chapter 14). Example: suppose a spouse has been unfaithful; try to realize the past experiences that made him/her feel sexually insecure, realize why sexual conquering or another love was important to him/her, try to see how he/she was feeling about you at the time and how your feelings were overlooked, etc.

d. Another factor to consider is whether or not the offender is contrite or has made any efforts to change his/her behavior or to make up for harm that he/she has done. It is easier to forgive someone who is sorry and trying to improve--or will seek professional help (don't try to become his/her therapist

yourself). Could he/she start to grow from hearing about your pain? Don't expect miracles and remember you are forgiving them for *your* well being, not his/hers.

e. Regardless of how the other person feels about his/her actions, the question is: Are you ready to absorb the pain without spewing hatred back (which stops the cycle)? Having a model, like Gandhi or Jesus, may help. Can you start to wish the other person well? Would it feel good to give up the anger and the seeking of revenge?

f. Weigh the benefits vs. the disadvantages of forgiving, e.g. how much better are you likely to feel if you get rid of part of this anger? Are there positive aspects of your history with the offending person that you would like to renew, if you could forgive him/her? It is so sad, for example, when loving parents are estranged from a son or daughter for years because he or she married the "wrong" race or religion. On the other hand, trying to approach and forgive someone is stressful. If it doesn't work out well, your anger may build and be more disruptive and prolonged. If your forgiving suggests (to you or significant others) that you condone totally unforgivable behavior or that you now feel unworthy of condemning this person, perhaps you should wait. But, if you can stop carrying a burden of resenting and blaming, if you can emotionally heal yourself by getting rid of this poison, it probably is worthwhile. It is not a decision to be made lightly. But, what a blessing to lay down the load.

This method of forgiving has only been empirically tested a few times, but it was effective with elderly females (Hebl & Enright, 1993) and with incest victims (see Robert Enright's study in *Psychology Today*, 1996, p. 12). Similar approaches are also described by Casarjian (1992) and Flanigan (1993).

Level V: Become aware and neutralize unconscious causes of aggression

Avoid put-down games. Transactional Analysis describes several common interactions that either degrade and hurt others or build one's ego at the expense of someone else. For example, a person might unconsciously place others in a position to fail (e.g. a parent criticizing the housecleaning of a child or a teacher assigning very hard problems to students) and thereby make themselves look super competent. Much of our gossip is an "Ain't it awful!" game in which we get support from each other by putting down others. Read more about games in chapter 9.

Disliking others is costly. Research confirms that hot headed, hostile people prone to cynical, antagonistic interactions (compared to less angry people) are, as you might expect, less open-minded, less

tolerant, less understanding, less socially responsible, and more likely to have chronic heart disease. There are many good reasons to get serious about reducing our anger and critical intolerance. Becoming aware of unconscious processes, like games, is not easy, however.

Look for unconscious payoffs. Conscious payoffs were discussed above, including using the threat of anger to manipulate others. At the semi-conscious or unconscious levels there are more hidden rewards, such as a boss blustering around implying some people may be fired to build his/her own ego. Other examples: fighting to avoid intimacy and dependency (see family conflicts section above), getting mad to justify breaking up, building a resentment of another group or race to justify discrimination, getting mad at parents about assigned chores to justify "forgetting" to do them, etc.



Vicious anger is usually just another way of laying on a guilt trip.



A common "game" used by us as children involves making a parent mad so that he/she feels guilty, then the parent will give us--as a "poor little victim"--what we want. So your anger may be part of some one else's scheme to manipulate you, i.e. another person is profiting from your loss of emotional control. Another example: There is considerable sick satisfaction in being able to drive someone else "up the wall." Kids do it but it isn't just a kids' game.

Watch for guilt, self-hatred, self-defeating and I-don't-deserve-it attitudes. Do you harshly blame yourself? Guilt can add to the stress that creates anger towards others or which sets overly demanding standards expected of ourselves or others. It is not uncommon for a formerly poor person to feel they do not deserve the advantages and material gains that come with success. Read Rubin's (1975), *Compassion and Self-hate*, cited above, Karen Horney's (1942), *Self-analysis*, Karl Menninger's (1956), *Man Against Himself*, or Martha Friedman's (1980), *Overcoming the Fear of Success*.

Guard against displaced aggression. This was discussed under "Frustration and Aggression" and "Prejudice" above. Displacement may occur person to person (boss to spouse), group to group (as in prejudice), or situation to general irritability (as when miserable job or a life filled with broken promises results in chronic grouchiness). Awareness of the displacement may reduce the anger or make solutions easier to see.

Avoid hostility-generating groups and sub-cultures. Group membership provides ready made hostility and/or aggressive attitudes towards other groups. There are more and less violent-prone subcultures and religions. The Old Testament "Jehovah" and Allah of Islam are angry gods, encouraging aggression against our enemies and the wicked. In contrast, Eastern philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism teach that everything is predestined, so frustration and anger are foolish. Christianity is middle-of-the-road regarding anger: God is loving but angry aggression may be used to right wrongs. And, many millions of lives have been gallantly sacrificed to supposedly settle religious differences.

As Tavris (1989) points out, in the secular part of the Christian world "the meek did indeed inherit the earth, (not to own it but) to plow, to plant, and to harvest for their masters." It took a horrendous war to abolish slavery, and we aren't over the racial prejudices 130 years later (see *Black Rage* by Grier & Cobbs, 1968, and D'Souza, 1995). There are class (rich-poor) and ethnic hostilities around the world.



Americans are the world's greatest killers! In 1980, handguns killed 8 people in Britain, 4 in Australia, 24 in Switzerland, 77 in Japan, and 11, 522 in the good old US of A.

In the U.S., one out of 20 black males is killed before he reaches age 25.



The attitudes of our friends and family are powerful determinants of our feelings towards others. If they are hateful, we are likely to be the same, unless we can escape. Of course, it is a contribution to the group and to yourself if you can reduce the animosity within your group. But this is a difficult task; finding new friends is probably easier.

Gain insight by reading, exploring your history, and using awareness techniques. Look for unconscious motives behind your anger. Were you neglected, over-controlled, mistreated, or hurt as a child? Is there "unfinished business" inside you that spills out into other relationships? Is it possible, if you see other people as being inconsiderate, unfair, and mean, that you are projecting your own negative feelings and hostile tendencies onto others? Explore your thoughts and feelings that lie below the surface. Reading about the sources of anger in others will help you find the origin of your own anger.

Maslin (1994) illustrates how anger can destroy a marriage. Her view is that the dynamics are often unconscious, e.g. two people may fight all the time because they both need excessive attention or need to be taken care of. Other couples may constantly battle about jealous feelings or excessive attention to others of the opposite sex, which may reflect underlying unconscious fears of loss or total commitment. What you are angry about is often not the real problem. Reading can help you find the secret causes.

Chapter 15 provides guided fantasies, dream analysis, focusing, Gestalt exercises and other methods for increasing self-understanding of our anger. An encounter group or self-help group can be especially helpful in uncovering who we like and dislike--and why. It also helps us cope if we understand who likes and dislikes us--and why.

It is possible to learn to relate and feel differently towards certain types of people. Even if one has felt superior and been prejudice, extensive reading about the abuse and awful conditions surrounding the American Indian, inter-city Blacks, migrant workers, people in Third World nations, etc. may arouse sympathy and a desire to help improve those conditions. Most people would say, however, that it usually takes time and meaningful interaction with individuals of the outgroup before one can truly claim to have overcome his/her prejudices (See chapter 9).

Suggested books for specific anger problems

There is an enormous amount of reading material covering many aspects and types of anger. I've already tried to guide you to the best sources for handling several kinds of aggression. But insight may come from a different kind of book. Sharing the experiences of others by reading case studies should be very helpful in starting to learn the complex interpersonal dynamics of anger and jealousy. Wile (1993) describes in an enlightening way the self-talk, especially the criticism and the defensiveness, that causes and exacerbates marital fights. I strongly recommend Lerner (1985), especially for women in intimate relationships. Also, a well-written summary of current research about anger in several situations, such as in families, friendships, sports, etc., is given by Tavris (1989). Professionals rate both Lerner and Tavris very highly (Stantrock, Minnett & Campbell, 1994).

Tedeschi & Felson (1994) theorize about the social interaction aspects of aggression, e.g. power plays, intimidation, gaining status, getting even, and so on. Other books for professionals explore female rage (Valentis & Devane, 1994), emotional abuse (Loring, 1994), emotional incest (Love, 1992), verbal abuse (Evans, 1993), male violence against women (Koss, et al., 1994), and treating survivors of abuse (Walker, 1993). Freeman (1990) focuses more on the childhood origins of anger. Goldberg (1994) believes that uncovering our anger can increase our capacity for love. Stearns and Stearns (1986) have written a history of anger, showing the impact of cultural attitudes; that is another facet of the problem.

Other generally useful self-help books focusing on anger are Potter-Efron (1994, 1995), McKay, Rogers & McKay (1989), Ellis (1985), Sonkin & Durphy (1989), Bach & Wyden (1976), Bilodeau (1993), and Weisinger (1985). Elgin (1994) helps people deal with a verbal abuser and Paymar (1993) helps abusive men. Friedman (1991) has summarized the connections among hostility, coping, and health. Similarly, Williams and Williams (1993) have shown the connection between the "Hostility Syndrome" and heart disease; they tell you how to reduce your anger (much like this chapter).

Research Press in Champaign, IL offers several videos dealing with anger control: *Learning to Manage Anger* for teens (\$200 or \$55 rental), *Dealing with Anger* for African American youth (\$495), *Anger Management for Parents* (\$200 or \$55 rental). New Harbinger Publications has two videos: *Time out from Anger* and *Coping with an Angry Partner*.

Realize that intense anger can be dangerous. If you are close to losing control of your anger, realize this is not normal and you need to get treatment right away. Hostility can preoccupy, distort, and disable your mind; it can interfere with all other activities and may goad you into doing foolish and mean things. See Walker's (1990) description of murder by battered women. An uncontrollably angry person (both aggressor and victim) is afflicted with a terrible ailment; he/she is to be pitied; he/she needs immediate professional help. (Likewise, if someone is very angry at you, protect yourself! See discussion below.)



Note: if you continue to have a serious temper and/or are frequently irritated, even after earnestly reading and trying some self-help methods, it is very important that you *consult a well trained therapist* and consider getting medication (antidepressants sometimes help).



A reasonable summary is provided by the Institute of Mental Health Initiatives (202-364-7111), which tries to persuade the media (e.g. soaps) and schools to teach anger-control techniques. They use the handy little acronym of R-E-T-H-I-N-K to stand for seven skills for quieting unnecessary ire: R-recognize your emotion. Is it anger or threat or shame...? E-empathize with the other person. Try to understand their viewpoint and feelings? Express your feeling with "I" messages. T-think about your thinking. Am I being unreasonable? Am I awfulizing or musturbating? Look at the situation rationally, will it harm me a year from now? H-hear the other person and check out your perception by empathizing. I-integrate respect for every human into your feelings. "I mad but I still love you." N-notice your physiological responses. Learn to quickly calm down before losing control. K-keep on the topic, don't dig up old grudges. Look for

compromises and solutions, including how to avoid situations that trigger your anger (the same thing often sets us off over and over). Very similar to Seneca in 60 AD.

Not all anger is bad. Lastly, after all these warnings, suggestions, and methods for controlling anger, I must underscore that although anger is unpleasant and potentially dangerous, it is often a beneficial and commendable emotion. Anger (not violence) is often justified. When that is so, if properly controlled, anger is a reasonable and effective reaction to an unfair or offensive situation. Anger is often necessary to change things! Specifically, anger motivates us to do something. Anger discloses unpleasant truths to others. Anger communicates that we are upset, that we can and will express ourselves, and that we are determined to correct a bad situation. Anger can over-ride our fears that keep us withdrawn and compliant. Anger, properly utilized, gives us a sense of pride when we exert some control *and* improve a bad situation. Non-violent anger used to right wrongs is no vice, it is a virtue. Naturally, there is a book (Fein, 1993) about harnessing this powerful emotion for good purposes.

Dealing with an Aggressive Person

There is no justification for violent aggression, such as spouse, child, or sibling abuse, criminal assault, rape, bullying, or any other physical harm or psychological insult to another person. You do not have to be a helpless "punching bag" or a timid Casper Milquetoast or a frightened scapegoat. You do not have to hide your feelings. What can you do? Express yourself assertively (chapter 13), if possible. Of course, if your life is in danger (and *it is* if someone is threatening or hitting you!), do whatever helps you reach safety. The problem is we don't know with any certainty how to protect ourselves from all grave dangers. For example, some abusive men have killed their wives for reporting their abuse to the police. Yet, research indicates the best approach to spouse abuse is to report it while protecting yourself; only 15% of abused wives who reported an assault to police were attacked again in the next six months, but among those who did not report the abuse 41% were assaulted again within six months (Lore & Schultz, 1993). All other things being equal, reporting aggression and abuse is the best thing to do.

If you are being treated unfairly, you can more effectively correct the situation by acting decisively and rationally--assertively (see chapter 13)--than by using angry counter-threats and aggression. Harburg, Blakelock, and Barchas (1979) called this controlled approach "reflection." Your blood pressure stays the lowest if you first take enough time for everyone to calm down and then "set down and reason together." Women use this approach more than men.

Coping with rape—a horrible crime

It is a hateful, cruel power move. It is terrifying because overwhelming force and threats are used to the extent that the victim frequently fears for her life. This fear of dying is not an unreasonable fear because many well publicized rapes have ended with murder. And some rapists make it clear that they are in a rage and determined to dominate and degrade the victim. When you are being threatened with a weapon, knocked or thrown to the floor, and your clothes are being ripped off... that is terror. It is one of the worst of human experiences. It is humiliating and embarrassing. It is painful to think about and tell someone about. So, perhaps, it is not surprising that rape is reported to the police only 5% of the time; 50% of the time the woman tells no one. (Other research says only 1/3 of rapes are reported.) It is rightly considered an atrocious crime.

In a rape or an aggressive sex act, varying degrees of force and pressure or manipulation are used to dominate and get sex. Not all unwanted sex experiences are carried out in a brutal manner; sometimes it is subtle seduction, but that is still controlling another person for selfish purposes. Added altogether, rape, date rape, and other forms of sexual abuse are fairly common. For example, one in four girls is abused by age 14; one in three by age 18, many by family members. One in 6 boys is abused by age 16. Among college women, about 5% experience a rape or an attempted rape every year; that brings the total to a 20-25% chance of an unpleasant sexual experience sometime during the four years of college. 84% of these victims were attacked by someone they knew (57% by a "date"). Russell (1982) reports that 35% of college males confess that there is "some likelihood that they would rape a woman if they could get away with it." Also, 28% of "working women" have been sexually assaulted, 60% by someone they knew. Russell also interviewed almost 1000 women and found that 14% had been raped by their own husbands or ex-husbands. Remember, think of rape as a violent act. Man has an astonishing history of raping women (Brownmiller, 1975), including raping the women of conquered countries. Almost 700,000 women were raped in 1990; 30% were between 11 and 17; another 30% were under 11! The attacker was known by about 75% of the victims.

Should you resist rape and if so, how? Some people suggest that you not fight back at all. Others have recommended fighting back, screaming, vomiting, and doing everything you can to resist the rape, because only about half of the women who strongly resist are raped while almost all who don't resist are raped. The problem is very complex, e.g. *if* a woman *forcefully* resists physically--hitting, kicking, using martial arts--and *if* the rapist has a weapon, she is more likely to be seriously injured. If she vigorously resists verbally--screaming and yelling--she is less likely to be raped but she is just as likely to be physically injured in other ways (Ullman & Knight, 1993). *Nonforceful* resistance--fleeing, pushing, pleading, begging, and reasoning--doesn't seem to reduce the frequency of rape or of other injuries. It appears that many *violent* rapists continue their attack even if the

victim resists vigorously physically and verbally (or doesn't resist). The latest advice is: with very physically violent rapists, resistance probably won't help (and increases the danger); yet, with a more verbal and less physical assailant, strong forceful resistance may help. But, we are talking about stranger rape. How can you quickly diagnose what type of rapist this is? Also, this advice may not be very good with acquaintance rape. In short, no one knows the best response with any certainty.

If you are raped, even if you are very upset, it is important to go to a hospital emergency room as soon as possible (see next paragraph for phone numbers and sites about where to go if you don't know). You need to be carefully checked, usually by rape examination specialists. Do not shower or clean up. Evidence needs to be collected. Pregnancy and STDs need to be considered. Injuries need to be treated. All sexual abuse should be officially reported, even if you escaped before being hurt. Rapists and abusers are repeaters. As a society, we must reinforce reporting sexual assaults and harassment. As long as offenders can get away with it, it will continue.

As a society, we must start early to face and correct the macho, hostile, insensitive, "sick," ignorant sexual-sadistic urges in men and boys. Several Web sites focus on preventing rapes, female and male rapes (oh, yes, it occurs): [Kate's Feminism Page](http://members.aardvark.net.au/~korman/kfp/) (<http://members.aardvark.net.au/~korman/kfp/>), [, AWARE: Arming Women Against Rape](http://www.aware.org) (<http://www.aware.org>), and [Men Can Stop Rape](http://www.mencanstoprape.org/) (<http://www.mencanstoprape.org/>) (if they learn to take sober responsibility for their sexual/hostile actions).

If you need help or are unsure about getting an exam or reporting the offense, call The Rape/Sexual Abuse Hotline at 1-800-551-0008 (serving only certain areas) or [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](http://www.rainn.org/) (<http://www.rainn.org/>) at 1-800-656-HOPE. This latter number automatically re-routes your call the nearest local rape crisis center or treatment/examination facilities. A very good lists of **actions-to-take** are given at [Healing from Sexual Assault](http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/booklets/rape/rape.html) (<http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/booklets/rape/rape.html>) and [4Women.gov](http://www.4woman.gov/faq/sexualassault.htm) (<http://www.4woman.gov/faq/sexualassault.htm>).

Rape is a very scary and dangerous situation. It is highly emotional--you may have many feelings and thoughts. It almost always has serious long-term psychological and psychosomatic ramifications for the victim. Yet, sadly, very few rape victims seek psychological help. Treatment for the victim is usually important, even if it is years later (Koss & Harvey, 1991; Bass & Davis, 1988, 1992). Other books can be especially helpful to rape victims: Warshaw (1988, 1994) writes mostly about date rape, and Ledra (1986) or Maltz (1992) address many aspects of various kinds of rape. Specific cognitive-behavioral programs have been written, e.g. for rape survivors (Foa, Hearst-Ikeda & Perry, 1995), to reduce the long-term emotional trauma. Psychological help for men who have been sexually abused in childhood is given by Lew (1990) and Sonkin (1992).

Web sites can lead you to many books and articles about specific rape and abuse issues: [Sexual Assault Information Page](#) (a huge site), [Sexual Assault Services](#) (<http://www.connsacs.org/library.html>) , and [International Child Abuse Network](#) (<http://www.yesican.org/>) . Several kinds of offenders were mentioned above (see emotional abuse and Norcross, et al., 2000) but I'll repeat only the [Professional Exploiter](#) (<http://www.advocatweb.org/hope/default.asp>) here. Date rape is also discussed in chapter 10.

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate... Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Recommended reading

Many writers have suggested ways of coping with difficult, aggressive people (Solomon, 1990; Felder, 1987; Elgin, 1985; Carter, 1990). Driscoll (1994) trains you to develop a mental shield to deflect the other person's anger. NiCarthy, Gottlieb & Coffman (1993) deal specifically with how women can deal with emotional abuse at work. Bramson (1981) says you will encounter three kinds of angry people at work: the Sherman tank, the exploder, and the sniper. The "Sherman tank" is ready to arrogantly crush any opposition; he/she is always right and knows what everyone should do. The "exploder" has temper tantrums; he/she launches a raging attack on whoever frustrates him/her. Bramson recommends handling the "tank" and the "exploder" as follows: (1) let him/her have a little time to run down. (2) Assertively intervene by looking him/her in the eye and saying, "John/Mary, come here and sit down, I want you to clearly understand a different view or approach." You have a right to be heard; so do others. However, never attack a "tank" or his/her ideas directly, you're likely to get crushed. (3) State your opinions briefly, forcefully, and clearly. (4) Try to be friendly and open to compromise.

With a "sniper," who shoots you down with comments or gestures behind your back while smiling to your face, (1) don't let him/her get away with the back stabbing. (2) Confront and ask him/her to state his/her views openly but don't accept the sniper's views right away or let him/her take over. Instead, get other viewpoints and have the entire group get involved in solving the problem. (3) Prevent future sniping by having regular problem-solving meetings and call on the sniper often.

If you are concerned with continuing the relationship after the disagreement is settled, it means more time and caution may have to be taken. Listen to him/her, perhaps privately. Try to see his/her side.

Don't try to explain or defend yourself until he/she is finished. Admit your mistakes. Accept his/her anger--let him/her vent it. Be prepared to compromise. Perhaps forgive him/her.

Some people seem compelled, emotionally driven to be angry. You probably can not change such a person (although you should give it your best try for a while). In an organization where trouble makers can't be fired, the best you can do with some perpetual "haters" is to isolate them and, thus, try to minimize their destructive influence.

Reducing the other person's anger and aggression

First of all, recognize you aren't a therapist. It isn't your job to cure someone of hatred. But, you may be a parent dealing with an aggressive child or teenager (Eastman & Rozen, 1994; Farmer, 1989). And you, of course, want to do whatever you can to bring about peace and cooperation in your group. There are some things to keep in mind

Since persons who feel they have been wronged are more likely to be belligerent and violent, you should be sure they have been dealt with fairly. In addition, it would be wise to help them meet as many of their needs as possible without reinforcing their aggressiveness or discriminating in their favor. Likewise, avoid interactions with them that encourage intense emotions or threats of violence. Certainly do not interact with your angry "enemies" when they are drinking or carrying weapons. Say or do nothing that would incite more anger or, on the other hand, cause you to appear to be scared, weak, and a "pushover."

If you are in a position to do so (e.g. a parent), you might extinguish the other person's aggressive responses. For instance, don't meet their demands but agree to discuss the issues calmly. Ignore the teenager's foul-mouth but invite a rational discussion. Or, you might try punishing the anger but this is tricky because your punishment models aggression (thus, taking away their privileges or your services to them would be a better punishment). In most cases, strong retaliation against an aggressive person is the worst thing you can do (Kimble, Fitz, & Onorad, 1977). Nastiness begets nastiness. Hostility escalates. Baron (1977) says punishment might work under certain conditions: (a) if you can punish almost every time, (b) punish immediately, (c) punish in socially acceptable ways, and (d) do not punish harshly or become overly angry. Threats of punishment may also work. Remember punishment is only effective while the punisher is observing--watch out for subtle rebellion.

If you can divert the angry person's attention to some meaningful task or to cartoons or TV or a calm discussion of the situation, the anger should subside. Also, offer him/her any information that would explain the situation that upsets him/her (Zillmann, 1979). Point out similarities or common interests between him/her and the person they are mad at (you). Let him/her see or hear about calm, rational ways of resolving differences. Almost anything that gets him/her thinking

about something else will help. Baron (1977) distracted irate male motorists (blocked by a stalled car) with a female pedestrian on crutches, in a clown outfit, or dressed scantily. All three drastically reduced the cussing, gestures, and horn blowing.

The Institute of Mental Health Initiatives (202-364-7111) provide a brief list of ways to calm an angry person: reduce the noise level, keep calm yourself, acknowledge that the irate person has been wronged (if true) or, at least, acknowledge their feelings without any judgment, ask them to explain their situation (so you can tactfully correct errors), listen to their complaints without counter-attacking, explain your feelings with non-blaming "I" statements, show that you care but set limits on violence ("I'd like to work it out with you but I'll have to call the police if you can't control yourself").

The angry child or teen

Several books describe the development and treatment of the aggressive, acting out child (Parens, 1987, 1993; Crowell, Evans, O'Donnell, 1987; Feindler & Ecton, 1986; Bartocci, 1985). Eastman (1993) helps parents deal with a child's "sulks and storms." Paul (1995) helps us understand that a child's anger is a normal way of saying "I need something." Several games, books, and programs for controlling a child's anger are available from Childsworld/Childsplay, The Center for Applied Psychology, Inc., P.O. Box 61586, King of Prussia, PA 19406. Fighting among siblings is natural, so how can you tell when it becomes excessive? See Ames, 1982. Research Press in Champaign, IL have books and videos for controlling aggression in the class room. Vivian Tamburello at the John Hopkins Counseling Center in Baltimore have a self-control program for adults and children. Aggressive children *can* be taught to tolerate frustration and to handle the situations without getting belligerent (Gittelman, 1965). Role-playing and lots of practice were effective.

Bullies, boys and girls, have and cause serious problems. It is more common than you might think. Perhaps as many as 20% or 30% of children have some experience--doing or getting--with bullying during any one school term. *Psychology Today* has a good article about bullying (Marano, 1995). Boy bullies use physical threats mostly ("let me have your bike or I'll kill you"). Girl bullies use social threats ("I won't be your friend if you don't..." or "I'll tell them you are a slut if you..."). How are bullies produced? By ineffective parenting: parents repeatedly make requests ("Stop bothering your brother") and then threats, but nothing is done when the child is defiant. Thus, defiance is taught. Finally, at least for boys, the parent blows up and hits the disrespectful child, teaching that brute force and meanness gets you your way. The bully, if untreated, will eventually alienate everyone, except other bullies and outcasts. Then, they are likely to progress to antisocial behavior, unemployment, drugs, poor mental health, crime, spouse abuse, child abuse, etc. The victim, usually an already sensitive, scared, tearful, physically weak, socially passive, easily intimidated person, is at risk of also being rejected by peers,

remaining passive, frightened, insecure, unable to cope, and eventually becoming self-critical, lonely, and depressed. This is not behavior to be neglected. It isn't just "boys being boys." Bullying requires community attention. Sweden outlawed bullying in 1994 as part of a society's effort to make hostile aggression unacceptable.

If You Are a Victim of Violence or Bullying

Handling a rapist, a mugger, a spouse abuser, a bully, an abusive boss, etc. is a complicated, risky matter. But the first rule is: if someone is seriously threatening you, protect yourself immediately. Take no chances. Especially, if you have already been hurt by this person, protect yourself from further attack, because repeated attacks are common. You must recognize that there are dangerous risks when dealing with any irate teenager or adult. Anger kills. If an angry person is highly emotional and threatening or violently yelling at you, leave him/her alone, it is unsafe to be near him/her.

It is smart to know how to protect yourself (Rafkin, 1993), but in situations where violence is threatened or possible, it is better to let someone else handle the aggressor. Examples: If another person threatens you physically, call friends or the police for help. If you are mistreated at school or work, there are official ways to effectively complain. Don't hesitate to report a bullying, threatening person to authorities or to the police (assuming you can protect yourself after the authorities leave). Please report all aggressors; they are likely to go on hurting others if the community doesn't do something. If we let a bully get away with it, we are insuring that others will be emotionally abused.

If the person is very mad (but not dangerous) and seems determined to dislike you, avoid him/her as soon as you recognize his/her fixation on hating. He/she needs to cool off. You might approach him/her later, never alone but with supportive friends, parents, or school officials. But, you can not "make" anyone like you, so don't try.

How to handle a bully: (1) avoid them! (2) Be assertive, "Leave me alone or I will tell the teacher... police... my parents... the supervisor" (AND DO IT!). (3) Have a friend accompany you. (4) Build a bunch of friends and recruit support. Get several people--other victims, school officials, your parents, the bully's parents, counselors, police, etc.--to come together and jointly confront the bully demanding that he/she stop forever. (5) Take self-defense or social skills, such as assertiveness, courses. (6) Role-play over and over handling the situation. (7) Become active in sports, build your body and strength--get self-confidence. But, DO NOT FIGHT (violence is a bad idea even

for a good cause, and the bully is almost always stronger and meaner). There are some good books for children (or to read with children) who are upset by bullying or teasing (Carter & Noll, 1998; Namka, 1996; Verdick, 1997; Cohen-Posey, 1995). It is very distressing to the young person to be picked on. They often need help coping with mean peers.

Be aware that victims of violence are often pressured by society and their own psychological fears and needs to use poor "survival strategies." These might involve several reactions: (a) denial of the abuse ("It didn't happen"), (b) minimization ("It doesn't matter, I'm OK"), and (c) self-blame ("I started it all"). As abuse is repeated, we become more helpless and more willing to accept the blame. Guard against such thinking. Walker (1990) describes the situations of battered women who used these poor strategies but finally kill their abuser (often in kill-or-be-killed situations). Get help to get out of those situations (see discussion of abuse in this chapter and in chapter 9). Most communities have emergency phone numbers for child abuse, sexual abuse, women's crisis center, and, of course, the police. If you have trouble finding help with domestic violence, call the National Organization for Victim's Assistance (NOVA) at 1-800-TRY-NOVA or 1-800-879-6682. To find Women's Shelters in your area call the National Domestic Violence Hot Line at 1-800-799-SAFE.

Social-Educational Solutions to Violence



A major part of the violence problem in this country is that we, as a people, do not believe human aggression can be controlled. Aggression is seen as man's nature. Lore and Schultz (1993) and Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel (1995), however, make the point that *violence can be controlled*. These researchers review the causes of violence, such as guns and gangs. There is clear evidence that aggressive animals, including humans, are able to inhibit their violence when it is beneficial for them to stop it. It is a choice; it is optional! On the other hand, it isn't proven that stiff laws inhibit murder and assault. Delayed, uncertain punishment through the criminal justice system hasn't worked yet. For one thing, violence is usually carefully hidden so the law breaker won't be caught by the law much of the time. Moreover, the rate of violence is influenced by many much more subtle social factors--violence on TV, crime reports, empathy for the disadvantaged, glorification of police work, and even going to war (our murder rate goes up after a war, especially if we win). We must pay attention to our social environment. For instance, action TV shows and films with a lot of violence are immensely profitable to the film maker because dramatic shows of this nature can be sold around the world. Every culture understands a chase, a fight, and a little sex without a translator. We can stop the bloodshed.

Violence in America will probably not be solved until social-economic conditions become more fair and parent-school efforts focus more on childrens' mental health, self-control, and morality. Deutsch (1993) advocates that schools utilize cooperative learning, conflict resolution training, controversy-centered teaching techniques, and actual mediation of real conflicts by students. He called this "educating for a peaceful world." Our focus in this book is on self-help, not education, but each of us can insist that our schools and all parents do a better job of producing better children.

Bibliography

References cited in this chapter are listed in the [Bibliography](#) (see link on the book title page). Please note that references are on pages according to the first letter of the senior author's last name (see alphabetical links at the bottom of the main Bibliography page).