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UNDERSTANDING SOME PATTERNS OF ANGER

I've already had a column on anger as it is defined and how it can be confused with guilt. However, since there is so much anger in the world today, I've chosen to add to that article in order to facilitate a better understanding of this feeling with special emphasis on the patterns that it might take in people's lives.

Anger is simply a feeling that we experience when someone says or does something that we wish they hadn't said or done. Although I say "simply" the pattern of anger can become very complicated and ... in some respects ...very dangerous for some people. The first pattern I will describe is the "volatile outburst". Usually, this manner of dealing with anger stems from early experiences in our families learned from parents who themselves may have resorted to similar methods of dealing with anger. It could also be the result of being told that anger is wrong or "sinful" to experience thus resulting in our withholding it. And then, like a volcanic eruption, because the pressure needed to be released, we learned to "blow up".

Another pattern of anger is people becoming very upset upon making a mistake and berating themselves to the point of becoming negative, accusatory and determining that they are worthless. This pattern is based in perfectionism wherein people do not believe that they are allowed to make any mistakes. Perfectionism is also usually a learned attitudinal and behavioral pattern that can stem from early childhood learning. It could also be based in a misinterpretation that children make upon being corrected by parents coming to believe that mistakes are forbidden. Remember that the basic control that children have at their disposal is being able to manipulate others so if they are criticized and unable to succeed, they may resort to extreme thinking patterns which feed into this pattern.

Another harmful pattern is the anger that is viewed like a plague by some who believe that they are disallowed to express. In this pattern, people tend to deny or avoid dealing with their angry feelings to the point that they are very easy targets for others who may want to take advantage of that fact. The result is that oftentimes those people become victims in abusive and potentially dangerous relationships. Although avoiding and denying some things can be a necessary, positive defensive approach to dealing with

certain problems in life, when we use those defenses to an extreme, problems will usually follow. One of my favorite sayings is “*moderation in all things including moderation*”.

A vital key to dealing with anger is to 1) recognize that we are angry; 2) determining that we are going to handle it in a certain manner and 3) expressing anger in an appropriate manner that will result in a resolution of whatever the problem might be. In effect, the smart way is to put less emphasis on confrontation and more emphasis on resolution so that it can become a win-win instead of a win-lose situation.

And so, perhaps something could be learned from these patterns by asking ourselves and answering the following questions:

- How did one or both of my parents deal with their anger and what was the result of their doing so?
- What do I remember about how I dealt with anger as a child and how did it feel when I did so?
- How well or poorly does my dealing with my anger now, as an adult, serve me in my life in personal (intimate) relationships, in my workplace and with friends?
- What do I notice about others’ dealing with anger in ways that seem more positive and with outcomes that tend to place them in control of their lives instead of trying to control others?

Hopefully, answering some of these questions will help in determining how you can begin to deal with anger in ways that will provide you with a positive and effective outcome.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980’s he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a “mind game”, he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.