

Relationships & Marriage - Unchecked Anger

Do you have a problem with disproportionate anger? Disproportionate feelings are emotional reactions that are too big for a given situation. Those of us who grew up in families where this was permitted continue to emotionally dump on others in adulthood if we don't choose more appropriate reactions. And, just like in our families of origin, we usually only show this behavior to those closest to us, such as those who live in our home or our closest friends. The kinds of words and behaviors we have during our emotional dumping can do damage to relationships that can be very difficult to heal. There is a necessary trust-rebuilding process, wherein you show yourself to be a safer person over time- one who does not let emotions vent unchecked. Only then will those closest to you be able to fully open themselves up to you emotionally and physically. Ridding oneself of such behaviors can be a long process. If you struggle with disproportionate anger, here are some ideas: The first step is of course to simply acknowledge your anger to God and someone you trust. We must state the truth in order to be set free. Next, understand that anger is a cover-up for fear and hurt. It is a surface emotion. It is what comes out after we have been scared and/or hurt enough (like the dog that becomes aggressive after it has been mistreated). By the time we are adults, we are often out of touch with the fear or hurt we experienced in childhood, and move directly to anger reactions in most situations. The idea is to get to the root of the bitterness. So, I encourage you to find some safe people with whom you can share your anger related to your past. Let these trusted friends help you identify the underlying hurt and/or fear and the related experiences from your childhood. This way, your feelings can be validated and you can finally choose to leave the past behind you. In this process, you'll be learning to validate others during conflict (hear and be heard) instead of stopping at your anger reaction. After you do this, you'll be able to make your home a safe place to express anger and model for your loved ones the acceptance of anger as a normal part of family life. May you show others the safety that comes with self-control, by creating an environment wherein it is ok to be angry and yet not injure others when expressing it.