

CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES TO ANGER

Anger is one step in a series of 5 steps toward resolution of conflict. Anger, the affect (feeling), is different from one's responses to one's anger, or to responses to the event. We need to learn to accept our own and other's anger so that we don't get caught up in it. Then we can move on to the 5th step--responding constructively to the event/message.

Event or Message ⇒	Appraisal/ Meanings Made ⇒	Anger (Where, Intensity) ⇒	Responses to One's Own Anger ⇒	Responses to the Event
			<p style="text-align: center;">INADEQUATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance of Affect Via Defenses • Indirect Expression of Anger <p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIP DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attack One's partner • Lack of Responsiveness to Messages/Concerns/Views/ Feelings of One's Partner 	<p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIP- CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information gathering • exploration of feelings, longings, family imprints • communication of understanding of partner's perspective • responsibility taking • openness to change • proposals for change • pride in accomplishment and intimacy
			<p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIP CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct expression of anger • Self-Regulation of One's Affect • Request to One's Partner to Contain Feelings or Collaborate 	

RESPONSES TO ONE'S OWN ANGER

INADEQUATE RESPONSES	DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES	CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES
<p>AVOIDANCE OF AFFECT VIA DEFENSE MECHANISMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> repression of affect and thoughts that would evoke the affect-unawareness isolation of affect (not feeling) while being aware of one's negative thoughts suppression or self-control of affect and avoidance of communication of what one really thinks and feels repression, isolation or suppression, followed by somatization selective avoidance of "taboo topics" or of situations that will probably become conflictual later giving up of one person's needs, individuality, or self to preserve "harmony" 	<p>ATTACK ONE'S PARTNER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> yelling, cursing, name-calling, mimicking, using sarcasm blaming, accusing, undermining, spoiling, manipulating threatening, coercing, destroying property, harming one's self, harming one's partner trying to talk the partner out of his/her feelings, needs, values, perceptions; knowing what "is best" for the other person making uncomplimentary comparisons ("You are just like [some terrible other person]) trying to induce guilt in the other ("You hurt me," "You're cruel.") 	<p>DIRECT EXPRESSION OF ANGER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling anger in words only, briefly: "I'm so angry at you" (2-5 seconds for happy couples; unhappy couples couldn't stop) <p>SELF REGULATION OF ONE'S AFFECT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> trying to calm oneself or not feel overwhelmed by the feeling of anger reminding oneself to listen, to be constructive, to focus on improving the situation or resolving the problem--instead of fighting or making it worse <p>REQUEST TO ONE'S PARTNER FOR CONTAINMENT OR COLLABORATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> state one's good intentions to be respectful, sensitive, self-controlled, and then request that the partner try to do the same ("I'm controlling myself, I wish that you'd lower your voice.") state one's good intentions to be collaborative, constructive, open to change, etc. And then request that the partner do the same ("Could we work together on this?")

RESPONSES TO ONE'S OWN ANGER

INADEQUATE RESPONSES	DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES	CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES
<p>INDIRECT EXPRESSION OF ANGER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crying which interrupts the partner, expresses distress instead of anger, induces guilt • immediate somatization and communication of the symptoms to the partner • displacement to someone else or something else, but with the partner's knowledge 	<p>UNRESPONSIVENESS TO PARTNER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming silent, pouting,, walking away, being distant, giving the "silent treatment" • talking at the same time, trying to persuade the partner to "see everything my way" • assuming that one already knows what the partner means, feels, wants, and intends--and not listening for new information • dismissing what the partner says: it's not important or relevant • changing the subject • when confronted, deflecting the attention to one's own, different issues • exaggerating what the partner said to make it sound ridiculous • distorting or mishearing what the partner said as being more negative or critical than it is • jumping to conclusions, going beyond what the partner said 	

RESPONSES TO ONE'S OWN ANGER

INADEQUATE RESPONSES	DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES	CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES
	<p data-bbox="730 329 1234 358">UNRESPONSIVENESS TO PARTNER</p> <ul data-bbox="730 399 1276 797" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="730 399 1241 461">• too quickly feeling anger--cutting off discussion<li data-bbox="730 500 1262 594">• refusing to acknowledge partner's anger as a message that "we need to discuss this"<li data-bbox="730 633 1276 695">• quickly (and unnecessarily) going from anger to hostility<li data-bbox="730 734 1255 797">• feeling anxiety--but getting hostile instead of acknowledging the anxiety	

(This material was adapted from the work of Dennis Klos, Ph. D.)

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