

Getting Angry
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If you ever really want to embarrass yourself tape record or video tape an argument with your spouse (be in agreement on this first). After watching the recording the question will loom. Why do we get angry?

The whole process of getting and staying angry can be very complex. However, simply put, we get afraid then we get angry. Bet you never thought about it that way. We get afraid first then angry.

The bottom line is that we get afraid that we are not being accepted.

Perhaps someone is disagreeing with us or we think things should go differently. Within a fraction of a second we translate that into "I am not being accepted," "I am not being liked."

So...by getting angry I hope to act with some kind of power, shown through my anger, that will force you to do something. I want you to accept me. That sounds stupid doesn't it? I get mad and you are supposed to like me more because I act like a fool. The point is...getting angry does not work.

My second point is that other people don't make me angry I make myself angry.

Think about it. The whole thing is about being acceptable. Then it is my interpretation whether I am being accepted, "liked" or not. It is my judgment of what other people are saying or doing that makes me feel emotions.

For example, if my wife comes home from work and is a bit grouchy, I could interpret that in two ways. (1) She had a bad day. (2) She doesn't like me. Depending on my choice I can choose to respond differently.

If she had a bad day I could pour her a nice glass of fresh box wine and we could sit and talk for a while. If she doesn't like me I could pour her a nice glass of expensive corked bottled wine and I could go out to the dog house. Get the point? My judgments make me feel not what other people say or do.

I am a realist and I do know that it is hard work to slow down my judgments so I can carefully judge and carefully monitor my feelings. It does take practice but if I can do it so can you.

Of course you can always ask right out. Did you have a bad day? Did I do something wrong? That could be difficult but it would be a very grown up thing to do. Perhaps that is why grownups generally don't fight as much as children.

I remember when my children fought. They would always complain about what the other said or did. The same story really, "things are not going my way so I must not be liked."

My response was usually, "go work it out." They often did and were happily playing moments later.

So what would I say to an adult? I would say "when you are angry shut up." Sane people won't listen to an angry person. Angry people are not likeable.

You want to be liked so shut up and work it out with yourself. THEN speak about it, quietly and thoughtfully like a person who is likeable. You will be surprised with the positive results.

For more information go to www.MarriageCounseling.org.

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