



Anger ~ Best Friend or Worst Enemy?
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Anger is an interesting emotion. For some anger can be a best friend. For others anger is an enemy that should be avoided at all costs. If you are living at either end of the spectrum, you are probably having challenges in your close relationships.

Let's look at the best friend scenario. Anger can be a response that brings safety. If a person feels hurt, an automatic reaction to that hurt can be anger. Responding in an angry manner to hurt will chase away the source of that hurt. Anger becomes one's best friend and it serves the purpose to chase away anyone who would dare get close enough to create pain. Living in an angry state like this keeps a great big wall of protection around a person's heart. Yes, it is a safe and protective coat that keeps any intruder from mustering up the courage to get close enough to be the recipient of an angry response.

There is only one problem with anger being a way to protect from further pain. Anger as a best friend brings about more pain. Inside an angry person wants to scream out the message: "Come closer, I need comfort." The message looks exactly opposite to the recipient of that angry message. It feels more like a cry of "come closer so I can beat you to death with my club."

If you identify yourself as a person who uses anger as their best friend to keep them safe, it is time to make some changes. Understand that the pain you are feeling is real. Begin to identify when you first started using anger as a way to keep you safe. What are some events in your past where anger drove away those who were not attending to you or comforting your desire to feel safe? Looking at your past in honest ways will bring you clues as to why you are reacting to feeling alone in a destructive manner.

Now let's look at the other end of the scale. You may have the mindset that anger is an enemy that must never rear its ugly head in a relationship. Avoiding anger means using a lot of energy to make sure everyone else's world is perfect. This requires a lot of effort on your part to go before those you love and make sure they never get upset *about anything*. A usual response to anger is to turn around and walk away. Another reaction to anger is to try to bring the anger level down as quickly as possible. This means agreeing or appeasing or passively complying *at all costs*.

If you are one to avoid conflict no matter what, you also should examine incidents in your past where anger caused you to feel vulnerable and unsafe. Perhaps you even received physical ramifications of someone's anger or arrows of angry words pierced your heart to the point of unbearable pain. Looking at the way conflict was resolved in

your family of origin is a way to understand why anger is so scary for you in your world today.

A good litmus test to see if you are responding to anger in an unhealthy way is to become aware of how you react in situations of conflict. What might be a normal conflict situation might appear to you as anger. While no one needs to endure the destruction of angry responses from those who should care for them, running away from anger is not the same as running away from conflict resolution. Avoiding anger by appeasing others is not a way to resolve problems. Resolving the conflict in a healthy manner is a way to resolve problems.

Just like anger shouldn't be your best friend, running away or people pleasing to keep anger out of your life also doesn't work. Neither of these responses to anger is healthy nor do they accomplish what both ends of the scale need: safety, comfort and a chance to be heard with the heart.

God's Word truly gives us permission to be angry. But in our anger, we should find new ways to respond so we don't hurt or abandon those we are in relationship with.