

Part 37: Submerged Anger

Begin with silence and a prayer. Share something of how you relate to your anger.

Submerged anger

The most common reaction to anger, and that sanctioned by our society, is to repress it. Some of the reasons for this are that:

- Showing one's emotions is not acceptable behaviour.
- One loses control if one becomes angry.
- Becoming angry is beneath one's dignity.

Not 'showing' anger does not mean that there is no anger brewing and chewing beneath the surface. Depression has been described as 'anger turned in on oneself'. This suggests that any inability to respond as we should when anger rises up in us can lead to our becoming angry within ourselves and punishing ourselves for the weakness or lack of self-respect that we have shown ourselves.

Depression is a blockage in our emotional system caused when we have not acknowledged or respected negative signals and emotions from our inner person. This excessive emotional energy trapped within ourselves puts stress on our well-being which may emerge as physical and/or psychological ailments.

Frozen anger

When we feel angry at significant persons like parents or God, we develop the added load of guilt because we sense we have no right to feel this. We cannot own it or bring it out into the open and, like resentment, this unacknowledged anger eats at the heart of the relationship and slowly destroys it. All that may be good in the relationship is broken down.

To begin to grow mature with our anger we need to:

1. Own that it is there and try to hear what it is saying.
2. If possible we must remove any projections onto the other, eg. 'You make me angry,' or 'If you were more careful . . .' Rather, 'I become angry when I see . . .'
3. Establish our own position in the matter. 'This situation makes me feel . . . and these are the reasons . . .' We can only change ourselves, so the energy we have from the anger, we can direct into being more real, helpful or active in this sort of situation. We may have to lovingly confront or make allowances for apparent weakness, but we must not blame.
4. If there has been blame or judgement on our part, we need to forgive the other and let go any hold or bind we have on them. This is especially important if we are angry at God through any misperception we have of God's part in the matter.
5. Begin to be responsible for our part in the relationship and free the other to be who they are and take responsibility for themselves. Reflect on your own submerged anger. (20 minutes)

Journal and share in the group.

End the meeting in some appropriate way.

For this week, meditate on Matthew 7:1–5 and with God, explore those areas where you tend to be critical, judgemental or blaming and begin to unpack some of the material around it.



Sergio Milandri has a Masters in Personal Formation and has been a relationship mentor in South Africa for over 25 years. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Hout Bay, Cape Town, and run the Sans Pareil Retreat Centre from there.

For more material, visit www.relating.com or email sergio@relating.com