

THE SAND PAPER



It's Summer time and the living is easy. Right? Though summer offers longer days, bright sunlight and a special environmental beauty; the heat of the summer and vacations for families who aren't always in such close proximity, can lead to rising tempers as the temperature rises.

This quarter's Sand Paper focuses on the emotion many of us love to dread: Anger. Offered for your consideration here is an article giving insights into gender differences regarding the ways we are taught to express this emotion, an article on Taming Anger and another on Anger as the Fuel to Procrastination.

This edition of The Sand Paper also introduces a new feature we hope will be both entertaining and informative called "Ask Sandy". Like "Dear Abby" and other advice columns, "Ask Sandy" allows our readers to write in with questions they have always wanted to ask a professional counselor involving relationship problems at work or at home or just about anything that is bothering you. Got a question, send it in. You may end up on these pages in the fall edition.

The Sand Creek Group is very pleased to announce the addition of Lisa Dau to our clinical staff. Lisa is a licensed psychologist with a masters degree and certification as an employee assistance professional. With many years of experience, Lisa is a talented trainer as well as a wise counselor and consultant. Find out more about Lisa on the back page of this newsletter.

Stay cool in every way this summer. Enjoy the fun and freedom that only summer can bring!

Anger and the Gender Divide

With all of the many dimensions of gender and what is similar and what is different between the genders, anger falls into the category of similar AND different. Some aspects of anger that are similar with men and women are that anger is a universal emotion and it functions as an alarm to let us know that something is not OK. Also, similarly, men and women have defensive reactions, attitudes and behaviors related to anger that can certainly look the same, such as raising one's voice.

Interestingly though, a variety of researchers have also identified significant differences in how men and women show anger. One distinction is gender socialization where males are encouraged from an early age to be more overt with their anger, which can include verbal or physical altercations, while females have received encouragement to keep their anger more hidden. This covert anger with women results in more passive aggressive behavior such as withdrawing or gossip. With this distinction, June Tangrey, professor of psychology at George Mason University, says the issue is not that men or women have more or less anger than the other; it is that they manage it differently.

In a survey of 1300 individuals, Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD Chair of the psychology department at St. John's University in New York found that while the difference in men's and women's total anger scores were not significant, there are differences in how they experience anger. Men scored higher with aggression and impulsivity while women were found to be angry longer, more resentful and less likely to overtly express their anger. He also found that anger seems to decrease with age differences in the expression of anger between the genders diminishes over age 50.

Researchers seem to agree that both men and women are better served physically and mentally when there is an effort to calm the anger and discuss the angry feelings directly. One of the universal challenges with anger is that it has a strong emotional charge and without managing it, anger can have a destructive path whether it is overt or covert. For both genders, individuals need to know how to recognize when they are angry, with a goal of identifying it sooner rather than later. Once a person knows their own signs of anger, and what is triggering the anger, it becomes easier for the person to develop a plan to interrupt the anger and try to make the shift to problem solving.

Another tool that is useful for both genders is to look at how they may "feed" their anger. Two behaviors that feed anger are rumination and prolonged venting. Both behaviors exacerbate the anger and can ultimately contribute to health issues and distorted perceptions about situations.

It can be a life long challenge for most individuals, regardless of gender, to become comfortable with their own feelings of anger as well as healthy ways to manage the anger. However, with some mindfulness about what you are feeling, and the implementation of effective anger management techniques, the negative impact of anger can be minimized.



Taming Anger

Lisa Dau, MA, CEAP, LP

All of us experience the immediate and sometimes strong emotion of anger, as well as the impact it has on thoughts, behavior and communication. Anger serves a normal, healthy and useful function as it signals us that something is wrong.

But when we choose to express anger inappropriately, such as through blame, intimidation or aggressiveness, it can be destructive, not only to us, but to those subjected to it. Or, if we don't express any anger at all, the anger doesn't necessarily go away; it can emerge through resentment, sarcasm or hostility. An element of anger is that it's not so much about having the feeling; it's more about *how* it is expressed.

Some Strategies...

Anger activates the body's stress response. To help counter this, **take a time out, take several deep breaths or go for a ten minute walk.** This will help you be more calm and reasonable to effectively address what is generating your anger. By not calming yourself, you may end up expressing only the intensity of the anger (E.g. Through yelling, swearing, blaming, arguing, etc.), and not really talking effectively about the issue.

Practice appropriate labeling and expression of feelings. Even though anger is a feeling, it can also be a cover for other feelings such as fear, embarrassment, vulnerability, anxiety and so forth. One of the most effective ways to appropriately express anger, and other feelings, is to state, "I feel _____ because _____."

For example, instead of saying,

"You made a mistake and it better not happen again."

say,

"Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret."

• Ambrose Bierce

"With this error being made, I feel embarrassed because it makes our office look bad. What can we do to prevent this from happening in the future?"

By labeling and expressing feelings in this manner, you have identified the issue and have begun to effectively diffuse the anger. You can then move toward resolving the issue.

Avoid using "why" questions and using the word "you". When angry, this feeling can easily get channeled into asking "why" questions or verbally poking at someone by using, or over-emphasizing, the word "you". By doing one or both of these, the conversation gets moved away from the real issue and the person on the receiving end feels attacked and will invariably defend or protect themselves.

For example, say,

"I'm confused by what happened. Please help me understand how things got to this point."

Instead of,

"Why did you do that?"

Or say,

"I'm not feeling heard on this issue."

Instead of,

"You're not listening to me."

Once having identified and effectively expressed what is making you angry, you now have **choices as to how you're going to address the situation and your anger**. You can:

Attempt to fix, resolve or change what is making you angry. For example. If you feel talked down to by a coworker, one option would be to talk to this coworker about your concerns. Or, if you feel you're not getting support from your supervisor, talk to him/her about what would be helpful for you in that regard.

If you can't directly fix, change or resolve what is making you angry, then look for ways to **effectively cope with the situation and your feelings about it**.

For example, you're not really able to change the traffic jam during your commute, but you can look for ways to cope. See if you can alter your work schedule, listen to relaxing music in the car, listen to books on tape or relax for a few minutes after getting home so the anger isn't taken out on your family.

Another strategy, is that if there is something that's making you angry and you don't have any control over it, **accept** the reality and work on **letting go** of the anger. Keep in mind that letting go takes some time and is predicated on consciously telling yourself to let it go versus focusing on and dwelling on the anger.

If you have concerns about your own anger, or someone else's anger, your *Employee Assistance Program, through The Sand Creek Group, is available to help. Professional, no cost confidential counseling is available for you and your immediate family members at 651-430-3383 or 1-888-243-5744.*

**People who fly into a rage always
make a bad landing.**
~Will Rogers

Ten Minute Tip: What's Really Behind My Procrastination?

Many of us experience procrastination at some point either at work or at home. Procrastination is the choice we sometimes make when we:

- Don't like the task
- Are bored by a task
- Fear failure or are perfectionistic
- Have other priorities

However, sometimes anger can be at the base of procrastination. We may opt to use procrastination as a method to retaliate, to make someone look bad or to send a message about our feelings. By using procrastination in this manner, relationships can be hurt and our own reputation can be damaged. An additional problem with anger fueled procrastination is that the real issue causing the anger does not get addressed or resolved. For example, if you don't like a coworker and as a result decide to procrastinate on work they have asked for your help on, you may enjoy a momentary sense of satisfaction but the real relationship issue has still not been addressed and your choice of procrastination has probably now made things worse.

Instead of indirectly venting anger through procrastination, it is important to first be able to understand what is generating the anger. Then take steps to look at more effective or healthier options for addressing the situation and our feelings.



Reading Options Related to Anger:

Working Anger Ronald T. Potter-Efron

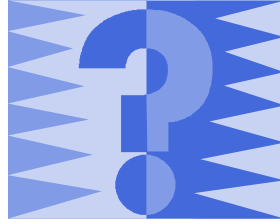
The Anger Workbook: A 13-Step Interactive Plan To help You... Dr. Les Carter and Dr. Frank Minirth

The Anger Workbook for Women: How to Keep Your Anger from Undermining Your Self-Esteem, Your Emotional Balance and Your Relationships Laura Petrcek and Sandra P. Thomas

Beyond Anger: A Guide For Men Thomas Harbin

Research referenced:

Di Giuseppe, R., and Tafrate, R.C. (in press) The anger disorder ScalManual. TorontoMulti-Health Systems.



Puzzled at Work

Dear Sandy,

I have a co-worker who I used to be close to and now she has stopped talking to me. I'm not sure what I did but any attempt I have made to go to lunch or talk about her week-end has been met with disinterest or silence. We do talk about work that needs to be done, but that's all. I'm hurt and don't know what I can do. Help!

Puzzled at Work

Dear Puzzled,

It is hard when someone is communicating via silence or disinterest, and you are left without information regarding the cause. The part that you have control over is your behavior toward your co-worker. One decision for you is whether or not you want to talk directly with her. If so, you could let her know that you have noticed this change, you don't know what happened, it is hurtful for you, and you would like to have a better relationship again. A different choice that you have is to not address the behavior directly but focus only on how you want to interact with her. You can still be respectful and professional while living with her silence. That is easier to do if you can stop personalizing her behavior. If you need help in talking with her directly, you can approach your supervisor or your EAP for ideas. Most importantly, try to stay focused on what your choices are rather than her behavior.

Sandy

Send Sandy your inquiries at info@sandcreekeap.com. We may not be able to publish all inquiries, but all will be responded to via email. Thank you.



A New Staff Addition at Sand Creek

We are happy to announce the arrival of a new EAP staff counselor. Lisa Dau, MA, CEAP, LP joins us after nine years with the University of Minnesota EAP. Prior to her time at the University, Lisa worked for three years with an agency that provided external EAP services to companies in the Twin Cities. Lisa comes to Sand Creek with a wealth of experience in providing counseling, supervisory consultation, trainings and organizational development services.

Lisa is also very active in local, national and international EAP and psychological and professional organizations. These affiliations have afforded her opportunities to present at conferences throughout the U.S. as well as Canada and China. Lisa was awarded a Meritorious Service award for her work with the International Association of Employee Assistance Professionals in Education.

In her personal life, Lisa is just as active and enjoys travel which usually involves her favorite activities of skiing, kayaking and scuba diving.

Sand Creek Group Employee Assistance Program
The Sand Creek Group's Employee Assistance is available
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We offer professional counseling help to all
contract covered employees and their dependents coping
with a wide variety of life challenges including:

- **Relationship problems**
- **Alcohol and drug abuse**
- **Stress and anxiety**
- **Work related concerns**
- **Money problems and debt**
- **Grief and loss**
- **Overcoming habits and other problems in living**

Your employee assistance program is professional, confidential
and available at no cost to you.

Help is as close as your phone. Give us a call at
651.430.3383 or 800.632.7643