

ON ANGER AND CONFLICT IN MARRIAGE

Most frequent cause of marital difficulties is not sex, money, in-laws, lack of shared moral values or faith (although these are valid up to a point). No, the most frequent cause of marital difficulties is the inability to process anger creatively.

In all relationships, but particularly in marriage, anger is an important emotion that is universally misunderstood.

Most people consider anger as something bad. Many Christians view it as sin, despite the fact that the Bible speaks of Christ as being angry.

As long as we take the attitude that anger is bad, we can't begin to use it creatively.

Anger is a DEFENSE SYSTEM of the ego. The real me is my inner self. As long as my life goes well for my inner self, and me, I'm pleased and happy. But when something happens that displeases me, I feel upset and frustrated.

All day long the inner me responds to outward events in my life and my emotions react positively or negatively.

Love and anger are two opposite emotions that develop in our reactions to other people, and the more closely we are involved with people, the stronger the emotions will be.

A marriage is perhaps the closest of all human relationships. So, in marriage, we are likely to develop both love and anger in the strongest forms. We marry because we want to love but we forget that the closeness of marriage will inevitably bring us anger as well.

Sooner, or later, the quest for intimacy leads to conflict. The very nature of the differences between us can become disagreements.

If only love controlled our behavior, we would be in danger of becoming so closely involved with one another that we might lose our individual personhood in what could become an "enmeshed marriage."

If all married couples could be taught to use anger creatively by being given skills and tools (one of those skills is being able to use and identify the 4 communication styles), it would bring great rewards in the relationship.

In dealing with anger creatively, a couple can be helped, if they commit themselves to three vital agreements:

1. It's OK for you to be angry with me; I know it will happen from time to time. What I ask is when you are angry, tell me as soon as possible but without attacking me.
2. When you tell me you're angry, I pledge to listen to you without attacking you. In that way, we can get the issue or situation out in the open.
3. When one of us is angry, I pledge to cooperate in clearing a time, as soon as possible, for use to examine the situation calmly in an attempt to clear it up.

ANGER, WHEN PROPERLY USED, IS NOT THE ENEMY OF LOVE, BUT ITS BEST FRIEND