

Matt Perlstein has been asked to write a textbook about EQ for a Master's programs in India. I feel privileged that he has asked me to write the first chapter. This is how I am beginning.

MAKING PEACE WITH ANGER

Your Own and Others Too

Many people find that they are not capable of making peace with anger in any form, whether it is in someone else, or themselves. These people believe that anger is unacceptable *in any way that they recognize*.

Many people will not accept anger in themselves and, therefore, do not recognize it when they experience anger.

Anger can come in many disguises, such as silence! "What is the matter?" **NOTHING!** (That did not sound like nothing.) Anger can also come out as passive-aggressive behavior. Example: "Would you take out the garbage for me?" "Sure, Honey, I will be glad to." Then he leaves a string of garbage through the house. Then, when she gets angry, he says, "What is the matter Dear? You are the one who always gets angry, not me."

If you have ever used any of these forms of anger, you might consider looking at yourself and your anger. But you respond with, "But, I am not angry! I am just upset. Just because you change the name does not change the fact that you are angry. Upset is just a degree of anger. If you get upset enough times during the day – – you are angry!

Or, the anger may be in the form of sarcasm. "You like compliments? For a fat girl, you don't sweat much." Sarcasm, and teasing can both be indirect ways of expressing your anger. When you tickle someone until they cry is a form of your anger. Are you able to recognize anger in yourself?

Anger is like smoke when you first see it can look scary. If you ignore it the smoke seems to dissipate and go away. But, in today's science we know that it does not go away but hangs around as pollutants damaging all life.

There are three ways that unexpressed anger can damage our lives when it is ignored and repressed.

- ✓ **Physical.** These symptoms may have either a physical or psychological origin. Symptoms with a psychological origin can mimic symptoms with physical origin. Medical doctors call these symptoms with emotional origins, “conversion symptoms.” They can include but not limited to headaches, backaches stomach aches, diarrhea, blindness, ulcers, paralysis, or other nervous system (neurologic) symptoms. Conversion symptoms are simply unexpressed feelings that are converted to physical manifestations. To tell if your “problem” is organic, you must be evaluated by a medical doctor.
- ✓ **Emotional.** Conversion disorder symptoms may occur because of a psychological conflict. Symptoms usually begin after a prolonged stressful experience. Symptoms can include but not limited to anxiety, depression, stress, protracted grief, and some forms of schizophrenia. To tell if your “problem” is organic, you must be evaluated by a medical doctor.
- ✓ **Verbal.** There are two ways to verbally express your feelings.
 - 1) **Indirect Expression** of feelings (destructive). **Anger** expressed in this way is directed at the other person to hurt him/her emotionally, physically, or psychologically. This type of indirect expression of anger is usually delivered in a “You are” form. Examples: “You are a selfish-narcissist, sexist, racist, pig.” Note, there is nothing in the statement that is an expression of your feelings! There is a lot about your judgments! Judgments are not feelings. They are your thoughts, beliefs, and opinions.
“You are lazy and irresponsible.” Again, no expression of feelings here! The problem with the indirect way of expressing feelings through using putdowns, sarcasm, name-calling, judgments is that putdowns get putdowns back. Name-calling gets name-calling back. And so on, are you going to do is escalate the conflict until you get to flight or fight. Is that what you want to do?

2) **Direct Expression** of feelings. The major block to expressing feelings directly is that many people do not recognize the difference between feelings and judgments.

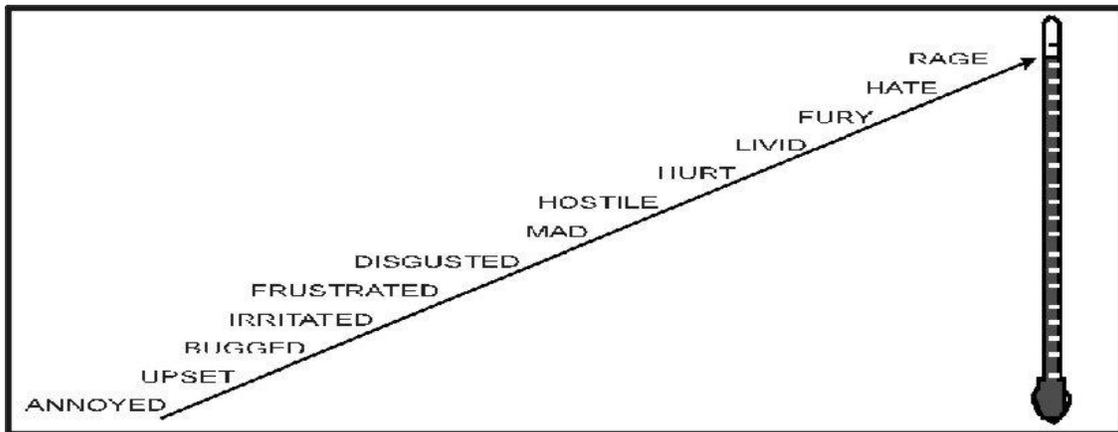
There are two problems when it comes to reconciling anger and peace.

First, You cannot make peace with anger unless you can recognize anger and accept it in yourself and in others too.

Second, you cannot make peace with anger if you are afraid of anger in yourself and in others too.

Let us start by recognizing anger in yourself. Notice in the chart below annoyed, upset, bugged, irritated, and frustrated are all degrees of anger.

Can you see in yourself that anger comes in degrees? How it starts with just a little bit of anger (annoyed, upset, irritated). And, then builds, and builds until you can reach fury, hate, and rage.



Anger is just another feeling, not good or bad.

Birds fly, fish swim, and people feel, it is what we do. People feel the full range of feelings. It is possible to repress your feelings to the point that you are no longer aware of specific feelings. When you do this, then that feeling will be manifest in some other form, such as physical, emotional, and acting out.

To reclaim feelings that are repressed, such as anger, you will need to confront your false beliefs around anger. Here are some of the irrational and **false beliefs** that many people hold:

- Emotional Pain Is Terminal, "I can never stand to be hurt that way again." If you have ever hurt so much emotionally that you hurt physically, then you know that this is a false statement, because you experienced that pain and are still alive. That pain proved only one thing, what a gutsy, healthy person you are! If you went through it once you can, if you have to, go through it again.
- Anger is both physically and emotionally hurtful to yourself and others. Not true! No one has ever gone to jail for being angry. It is how you express your anger that can put you in jail. It is not what you say; it is how you say it. In EQ, you can learn how to be yelling, screaming angry in ways that strengthen your relationships with yourself and with others.
- "He who raises his voice first, loses." The concept of "losing face" is another misguided and false concept. Raising your voice does not mean you are out of control. Passionate people raise their voices all the time. Probably, a better concept would be "He who loses control first, loses." You can be out of control without raising your voice. You can raise your voice and be in complete control. Italy is an excellent example of where you can hear extraordinarily strong language, and no one is angry.

Are you willing to recognize and accept your anger? Are you able to recognize and accept anger in other people? If you are, then you are well on your way to making peace with anger. The only people who never feel any degree of anger are dead! Or, they are lying to themselves.

There are no good feelings or bad feelings. It is what you do with your feelings that can bring peace or conflict to your life. **Mahatma Gandhi** was a truly angry man. He hated the British being in India. **Nelson Mandela** used his anger to destroy apartheid in South Africa. **Martin Luther King** used his anger to lead the fight against segregation in America.

The goal in EQ is not to get rid of anger. It is to use your anger and hate in nonviolent ways, to change the world towards peace.

Feelings are not good or bad! They just are.

EQ Skills

Verbal Aikido is a variation of the **martial art of Aikido** that uses words to accomplish the goal of disarming your "opponent." Both are performed by blending with the motion of the attacker and redirecting the force of the attack rather than opposing it head-on.

The goal of **Verbal Aikido** is to strengthen relationships, help resolve conflicts, and bring others emotionally closer. To do this, you will need to be clear about where you are coming from and where the other person is coming from. Learning this aspect of EQ requires that you be aware of what you feel when you feel it and that you be willing to accept all your feelings and learn to express them in constructive ways.

To be able to do this requires a clear understanding of the **To Me rule**. There are two parts to this rule. The first part helps *you not to take anything that is said or done personally*.

The **To Me rule** says: What someone says about me, says **NOTHING** about me, it only tells me about you.

Do you like creamy smooth and delicious things? Assuming your answer is yes. Okay, now stay with me. This is my cup of buttermilk. This buttermilk is creamy smooth and delicious! Since you said you like creamy smooth and delicious things, let me get you a cup of buttermilk. But you respond with, "Buttermilk is yucky and tastes bad." When I tell you that buttermilk is creamy smooth and delicious, what have I said about buttermilk?

NOTHING. What have I said about myself? That I like buttermilk. I said nothing about buttermilk, but I told you about myself.

Some more examples: If someone says to you, "You have three heads and fifteen legs." What did they say about you? **NOTHING!** What have they said about themselves? That probably, they have a mental problem.

"You are so ugly that you would scare a mud fence." Now, what are they saying about you? **NOTHING**. What did they say about themselves? Perhaps, that for some reason, they are incredibly angry at you.

"You are the most beautiful person I have ever seen." Now, what are they saying about you? **Still NOTHING!** In EQ, we learn that two people sitting side-by-side can see things very differently. So, anything that they say is just their viewpoint.

Apply: Think of a specific time when someone has hurt your feeling, especially badly by what they said or did. What did they say about you? If you **cannot** say **NOTHING**, then you need to reread the To Me rule.

Here is the other side of the To Me rule. Whatever you say about someone else, says **NOTHING** about that person, but it says everything about you. If you were to say, "The PM is a sexist, racist, homophobic." What did you say about the PM? **NOTHING**. A word to the wise, whenever you are using putdowns, name-calling or sarcasm, what you are telling those that are listening, is that you are a judgmental, angry, and perhaps, a scary person to be around.

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