

The freedom to experience spontaneous emotion is part of the kaleidoscope of life. These feelings are not only happy, beautiful or good but can reflect the entire range of the human experience, including envy, jealousy, rage, disgust, greed, despair and grief (Miller, 1994). When it comes to divorce, rage, anger and grief seem to appear at the top of the list. According to Susan Gadoua, in her article from *Psychology Today* (May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011), titled, “Contemplating Divorce”, she states that feeling hatred and anger is very normal in the process of divorce. Gadoua further reports that anger surfaces for a host of many reasons including: betrayal of trust between spouses, failure of making a marriage last, feeling rejected by the other spouse, and feeling that one’s life has been “ruined” by the finalization of the divorce. Another interesting note about anger and divorce is that the intensification of anger can actually be fueled by design to help in the emotional separation of the couple.

As folks who are not strangers to the legal proceedings of divorce, so too are not unfamiliar with the emotional upheaval that comes about during the messy unfolding of the dissolution of divorce. Opportunities to feel angry at one’s soon-to-be-ex can crop up when a spouse handles something in a sly or surreptitious manner creating emotionally charged negativity. Even after the divorce is finalized, ongoing hatred towards the other spouse is unfortunately not uncommon. This can be a sobering time for each spouse to unveil each others’ insensitivities and other undesirable personality traits that were always present during the marriage, but unrecognized until now.

Anger is an emotional sign that indicates how attached a spouse once was, and now there is much work to be done to disconnect emotionally, spiritually, physically, and psychologically. This uncoupling process is a daunting one, and can provoke unprecedented feelings of anger that a spouse may not

know what to do with. Here are some insights of how family law attorneys can assist their clients in not only diminishing the level of anger, but also promote a more efficient and streamlined attorney-client relationship.

Like any other emotion, anger has a cause and has an effect. Nichols (1995) writes in his book, "The Lost Art of Listening", one reason one or both parties in a divorce experience anger is that "when neither person to an exchange is willing to break the cycle of reactivity, both of them are likely to end up feeling angry and misunderstood". The ability to listen rests on how successfully we resist the impulse to react emotionally to the position of the other. The more actions we feel compelled to take to reduce or avoid our anger, the less flexible we are in our relationships. Getting control of anger is an important goal to work on before, during and after divorce. In a runaway logic of reactive quarreling, both parties feel compelled to get in the last word. When feelings are not heard, resentment and anger ensues.

**Here are some suggestions of what someone can do when dealing with anger management issues:**

\*encourage the practice of genuine respect and empathy for the vulnerability of others (Simon, 1996)

\*remaining angry can make him/her a negative person which may interfere with current personal and professional relationships (Huffington Post, Kramer, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

\*anger begets stress and is a precursor to disease such as high blood pressure, depression, headaches, eating disorders, digestion problems, diabetes, insomnia, heart attacks, heart disease and even skin problems (National Institute of Health, Davidson, 2010)

\*let go of anger by taking responsibility for one's own feelings, count one's blessings, practicing the art of self-love, and creating a new space for love, health and happiness to grow

\*coming to the realization that he/she is angry by reviewing triggers and frequency of anger outbursts

\*keep a daily journal in which he/she documents persons, situations and other triggers of anger (Jongsma, 2006)

\*implement calming techniques in his/her daily life when facing anger trigger situations

\*identify positive consequences of managing anger (i.e. respect for self/others; cooperation, and improved health)

\*read books on anger management such as: "Overcoming Situational and General Anger" by Deffenbacher and McKay; "Of Course You're Angry" By Rosselini and "Forgive and Forget" by Smedes

\*implement a "thought-stopping" technique such as keeping an index card in one's pocket with an inspirational quote as a reminder to help break the pattern of angry thoughts

\*seek supportive therapy to help deal with the situational anger

\*anger is normal, and is better utilized when channeled constructively

I'd like to end this article with a quote about anger.  
"The angry people are those people who are most afraid"- Dr. Robert Anthony