

First Parish Church of Groton, Small Group Ministry
Spring 2012 Session No. 3: Anger

Facilitator _____

Date _____

Supplies Needed: Chalice, matches, writing paper or drawing paper, art supplies for drawing (markers, crayons, colored pencils), questions on the session to be handed out.

– **Chalice Lighting and Opening Words:** 5 mins.

(Coaches should choose one or two of these for chalice lighting.)

Two Wolves (A Cherokee legend)

An old Grandfather talked with his grandson, who came to him full of anger. A friend had done him an injustice.

– Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down - it does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times. It is as if there are two wolves inside me. One is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him, and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way.

But the other wolf... He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing. Sometimes, it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit.

The boy looked into his Grandfather's eyes and asked:

– Which one wins, Grandfather?

The Grandfather smiled and quietly said:

– The one I feed.

Anger is fuel. Anger is a voice, a shout, a plea, a demand. Anger is a map. Anger shows us what our boundaries are. Anger shows us where we want to go. It lets us see where we've been and lets us know when we haven't liked it. We are meant to use anger as fuel to take the actions we need to move where our anger points us. Anger is not the action itself. It is action's invitation.

“The Artist's Way,” Julia Cameron

When you express your anger and aggression by hitting a pillow, you are not calming or reducing your anger – you are rehearsing it. Rather than releasing your anger in a violent way, release it through mindfulness exercises.

Thich Nhat Hanh

– **Check In and Sharing:** 30 mins.

Each person takes a few minutes to check in. Invite them to share a spiritual moment they have experienced in the past week. Or they might answer the question *How is it with your spirit?*

– **Topic:** Total time: 55 mins.

A. Introductory Quotations: 5 mins.

Coaches choose several of these to read aloud.

– Just because anger or hate is present does not mean that the capacity to love and accept is not there; love is always with you.

“Taking the Tiger Within,” Thich Nhat Hanh

– Anger is usually a secondary feeling. Anger has a purpose. Underlying the anger there is another feeling, a vulnerable feeling, which acts like an engine fueling the anger and driving the behavior. There are many vulnerable feelings: abandonment, shame, embarrassment, weakness, unappreciation, confrontation, disappointment, disrespect, hopelessness, powerlessness, rejection, misinterpretation, and many more. No one likes to feel vulnerable. There are many ways to stop vulnerable feelings and some people shift into anger. When people feel angry they feel powerful, not vulnerable.

“New Ways to Think about Anger,” Bea Mackay

– Sometimes when I’m angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn’t give me the right to be cruel.

Author unknown

– Anger is great force. If you control it, it can be transmuted into a power which can move the whole world.

Sivananda

– Feelings like disappointment, embarrassment, irritation, resentment, anger, jealousy, and fear, instead of being bad news, are actually very clear moments that teach us where it is that we’re holding back. They teach us to perk up and lean in when we feel we’d rather collapse and back away. They’re like messengers that show us, with terrifying clarity, exactly when we’re stuck. This very moment is the perfect teacher, and, lucky for us, it’s with us wherever we are.

Pema Chodron.

- I staggered on through darkness,
There was a hazy sky, a few stars
Which I followed as best I could.
It was nine o'clock, I was trying to get home.
But somehow I was lost,
Though really keeping the road.
Then I reeled through a gate and into a yard,
And called at the top of my voice:
“Oh, Fiddler! Oh, Mr. Jones!”
(I thought it was his house and he would show me the way home.)
But who should step out but A.D.Blood,
In his night shirt, waving a stick of wood,
And roaring about the cursed saloons,
And the criminals they made?
“You drunken Oscar Hummel,” he said,
As I stood there weaving to and fro,
Taking the blows from the stick in his hand
Till I dropped down dead at his feet.

Poem “Oscar Hummel” from Edgar Lee Master’s *Spoon River Anthology*
His fictional characters, in the Spoon River graveyard tell their stories.

B. Questions:

See the list on the last page.

Participants are welcome to respond to one, all or any of the questions. And if none of these questions speaks to an individual’s experience, he or she is welcome to create their own question and respond to that.

C. Silence for Reflection and Writing or Drawing: 10 mins.

D. Sharing: 40 mins.

Coaches should start participation with whoever is ready to voice his or her thoughts first, second, next – rather than requiring everyone to respond in order of where they are seated around the circle. Each person must have an equal amount of time to share. If there is extra time after each person has shared and brief responses have been given, a more free-flowing discussion can follow.

– **Check out:** 10 mins.

Encourage people to check out with a final thought or reflection about the theme (or any other thoughts or reflections about the session) and how having shared and learned about this might impact their life in the week ahead. (Coaches can encourage participants to make a connection between the topic and actions, steps, new directions they might take in their daily lives by going first with the check out for the first couple of weeks and modeling this sort of check-out if they wish.)

– **Closing words and extinguishing the chalice:** 3-4 mins.

Coaches may choose to read aloud one or more of the following closing thoughts.

- Let us not look back in anger
or forward in fear,
but around in awareness.

James Thurber

- We humans have existed in our present form for about a hundred thousand years. I believe that if during that time the human mind had been primarily controlled by anger and hatred, our overall population would have decreased. But today, despite all our wars, we find that the human population is greater than ever. This clearly indicates to me that love and compassion predominate in the world. And this is why unpleasant events are “news”: compassionate activities are so much a part of daily life that they are taken for granted and, therefore, largely ignored.

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

- A Haiku about anger:

A word, provoking
angry words are now exchanged
smiles come, peace remains
author unknown

– **Closing Blessing 1 min.**

May the efforts we have made here today
To listen with caring and compassion
Sustain us in the days ahead
May these efforts bring peace into our lives
And into the lives of all those whom we touch.
May love surround us
May joy gladden us
May peace lie deep within
May our lives, and the lives of all those we love
Go well.

QUESTIONS: Anger

You are welcome to respond to one, all or any of the questions. And if none of these questions speaks to your experience, please create your own question and respond to that.

What did you learn about anger growing up? What were the important teachings about anger in your family? Did you receive messages about anger outside of your family and if so, what were they?

How does it feel to be on the receiving end of anger? What makes it possible/easier for you to hear or accept another's anger?

How do you experience anger? What happens in you? What happens around you?

Describe an experience when expressing your anger has been helpful. Describe an experience when expressing your anger has not been helpful. What do you notice from these two experiences?

What do you believe is your next step in terms of your relationship with anger? For example, do you need to experience it? Express it? Manage it? Learn more about it? Understand it?