Five Questions To Ask About Anger

Five essential questions to ask yourself about anger. The aim is to begin to think about anger in a different way, and to get families to draw on their own resources to move forward.

1. Why should I?

You may want to think about anger if it is getting in your way. Anger can be a great emotion. It tells us when things are unfair and unjust. It gives us the energy to change or stop things. Anger itself is not the problem. The problem is the things that anger makes us do. We can be left feeling overwhelmed and ashamed.

2. How do I feel?

You feel angry, but what else? If anger was in a band, it would be the noisy lead singer. Others in the band might include sadness, guilt, fear and shame. These members are quieter, but equally as important. Naming and paying attention to them is a start.

3. What makes me feel angry?

Imagine being a detective and anger is your prime suspect. What would you need to know to understand it better? Think about when, where, at what time and with whom anger is most likely to appear? Understanding what makes us angry is an important step.

4. When have I dealt with anger well?

We hear advice all the time about what we should do when we are angry. But we all need to find what works for ourselves. Think about a time when you were proud of how you handled anger. What did you do and what made the difference? Beginning to identify these times helps.

5. What choices could I make?

If you didn't have a problem with anger, where would you be? Imagine anger as a boxing promoter, organising fights whilst it sits and watches ringside. You could choose to beat anger, rather than fighting everyone else in your life. It's not about being a different person; it's about choosing to be more in control.

Five Strategies For Coping With Anger

1. Think of Someone You Admire

This could be a sportsman, actor, religious figure, or relative. Think about how they control anger. If you know the person, ask them. Find out about people you do not know from books or interviews. Try to put their ideas into practice. Imagine them stood next to you when you are feeling angry. What would they advise you? In the series, Beyonce was a celebrity that inspired Charelle to control her anger.

2. Think of Someone Beside You

When feeling frightened or vulnerable, it can help to imagine there is someone beside you for support. In the series, it was helpful for Jenny to picture herself as she is now and also as she was when she was much younger. Jenny could then visualise 'Big Jenny' walking with 'Little Jenny' and holding her hand. We can all use this image to help us through difficult situations. All of us have times when we feel frightened and need reassurance. How could your 'grown-up' self reassure your more vulnerable side?

3. Think of a Theme Tune

If someone is winding you up and you cannot get away, imagine a tune playing in your mind. This can provide a welcome distraction. What would the theme tune to your life be? It may be a song that describes you well, makes you laugh, or inspires you. In the series, Barney and I talked about using a number of songs from Dr Dre's 2001 CD as helpful theme tunes for him.

4. Think of a Place

We all have times that make us feel happy when we remember them. When you are getting angry, think of a good memory and imagine that you are there. In the series, Barney used the memory of being on a Caribbean cruise. Holidays are good times to use, as we are often calmer. Imagine yourself on your favourite beach, listening to the waves.

5. Visualise Anger

You can visualise anger in many ways; as a monster, pixie, dragon or alien. If you visualise anger as a dragon, imagine yourself as a knight who can defeat anger with your shield and sword. When you feel yourself starting to get angry, imagine putting on a full suit of armour to protect yourself. As a knight nothing can hurt you, and you can remain in control.