

Me? Angry? Don't Get Me Started!

by Judith Parker Harris

Is your life working? Or, does it seem like a lot of work? The bottom line is that we spend at least one-third of our lives working, thinking about work, planning how we're going to get or change work, or worrying about work. Yet, there are eleven other life areas that need our attention. When the elusive eleven are ignored, stuffed or dramatically out of balance our lives don't work -- even work doesn't work. We feel like there's something bubbling just under the surface of our lives that if not hidden, might suddenly explode at the most awkward moment -- perhaps over a holiday party or family dinner.

If you've ever been afraid of what lies beneath the words you speak -- in other words, the words you stuff -- say hello to anger. If ignored, anger can make you sick, block you from success, and separate you from your dreams. If acknowledged, anger can point you in the direction of some very useful information. My warning to you is, USE IT OR BE USED BY IT.

"No," you say, "I'm not angry, and I don't need to change. I can handle anything."

O.K., but perhaps you wouldn't mind taking the **Are You Stuffing It? Quiz** below: The first seven questions correspond numerically to the Villains listed later in this article. Whenever you answer "yes" to one of these questions check out the identically numbered villain below. The last 3 questions determine how close to the boiling point you are.

- 1) Do you find yourself stuck in a chain of complaints -- never totally happy with anything in your life, as if you've been tricked or misled?
- 2) Do you feel like you're never quite enough -- pretty enough, rich enough, talented enough, smart enough, lucky enough...to get the job done?
- 3) Has some event or person killed your self-confidence or joy in life?
- 4) Do you find it necessary to hide behind excuses or role-playing instead of just being yourself?
- 5) Do you feel like something or someone is always more powerful than you, leaving you helpless, hopeless -- even victimized?
- 6) Has the ability to love been largely replaced by fear in your life?
- 7) Do you find yourself waiting for the right circumstances to move forward in your life, yet the circumstances are never quite right enough?

BOILING POINT QUESTIONS

8) Have you ever had to swallow a difference of opinion while pretending to be in complete agreement, only to feel it knot up in the pit of your stomach?

9) Have you ever had intense pain in your neck, shoulders, or some other body part just before or right after a disagreement with associates or friends?

10) Have you ever held frustration, anger, resentment and worry in all day only to open the door to your home and suddenly find yourself losing it with your significant other, children, or pets?

What are you stuffing that finds its way out for a landing in all the wrong faces and places? They are unprocessed emotions. Emotions that if left unchecked, unfelt and un-dealt with can make us irritable and even sick. There is a **2-step process to avoid these consequences:**

1) Discover where your thoughts and emotions come from and to whom they belong.

2) Change outdated, inherited or absorbed patterns of acting and reacting to life events that are no longer working.

Many of us are aware of what physical ailments our family trees have passed down to us, but few are cognizant of inherited emotional and thought patterns -- those knee-jerk reactions that seem to come out of left field -- that leave us asking: "Why did I say that?" "Why did I act that way?" "Why do I limit myself?" Could it be because we inherited or were taught certain thinking and emotional patterns by family, peers, bosses and media that simply don't fit into our lives anymore? We are a combination of everything we have ever thought and felt in our lives, and sometimes we get into ruts that cause us to act and react in ways we neither understand nor admire.

In life we are constantly making decisions -- many of them unconscious. We combine the information from the current situation with our **ATTITUDES, HABITS, AND OPINIONS**. While we often can't change much about the situation, we can change a lot about our attitudes, habits and opinions by changing the way we **ACT AND REACT**. One illuminating exercise is to identify thoughts and emotions that have grouped together to become your particular villain. See if you can find your villain from the seven listed below:

1) **The saboteur** is a chain complainer planting doubts and questions in your mind. Instead of being able to stay present in a conversation, you are pulled into a chain of whines, complaints, doubts and questions. *"It's not my fault, why is life so unfair?"*

When the saboteur is your villain it is necessary to explore your relationship with trust. How much do you trust? Who do you trust? Do you trust yourself?

2) **The Bandit** steals your ability to own or be responsible for your ideas and actions. You often give away your power to someone else, leaving yourself with no position. *"I'm never enough – pretty enough, talented enough, rich enough, quick enough, lucky enough..."* What do you feel has been stolen from you?

3) The mugger puts a ceiling over your head regarding accomplishment. Because you never seem to be able to break through, you cover up your identity behind layers of protection, subterfuge and role and game playing. *“If I act like that person, maybe I’ll break through. No one sees me for who I really am.”* Who has put the ceiling over your head limiting your growth and potential?

4) The killer murders your joy and self-confidence. You often find yourself speaking without passion – separated from your own heart power. *“Why should I even try?”*

What thinking needs to die, what people do you need to say good-bye to in order to get on with your life ?

5) The monster confronts you with forces beyond your control. Monsters leave you speechless, hopeless and helpless. *“Why try, something or someone is always bigger and more powerful than I am?”* Who or what represents the monster in your life?

6) The Lost Love villain makes you question your ability to ever love again. People with low self-confidence and esteem find it difficult to voice their dreams and stand up for themselves. *“I will never love again or care enough about something to be hurt that much again.”* Make a list of all of your lost loves and then destroy it. This list can include things you no longer love about yourself, your romantic interests, your career, your life, your dreams. You’ve got to make room for a new love list to take form and thrive.

7) The Sorceress traps you in a fantasy world of “What ifs” “If onlys” and “Happily every after” *ifs*. It’s hard to get to the point if you’re constantly waiting for the perfect if, and, or but to happen before you get there. *“If _____ happens then I’ll be successful. If I just get a break, then I’ll be a hit.”* Stop waiting for the magic bullet. You’ve got to make your own magic. No one else is going to do it for you.

Name your villain. Put a face to unexpressed thoughts and emotions that are building up into unresolved anger. Then you can begin to negotiate with your villain or villains. *“I’m taking over my thoughts. There’s not room in my life for the both of us.”* Once you have identified your own villain voices -- say them out loud infused with the emotion they make you feel. Then try to identify where that voice came from or who taught you to think that way. Could it be a relative, an agent, a producer, a director, a friend, a peer??? Once you know it’s someone else’s thinking, you can let it go. Release others’ false and faulty perceptions of who you are and replace them with your own sense of purpose, peace and pleasure that brings you joy.

Sooner or later if our emotional lives are mis-treated, ignored and misunderstood, they get even by making us physically ill, or absent-minded, or careless, or by getting us into arguments.

The miracle of human life is that we can change. We actually develop our neural wiring in direct response to our life’s experiences. If you decide it’s in your interest to be a better actor, producer, writer, parent, child, humanitarian, lover, or friend you can be one by changing your own neural wiring -- the way you think and feel about making your life work.

Now, I'm going to give you a tool that will allow you to use anger rather than to be used by it. It's called PERSONAL NEGATIVE SHADOW. Here is how it works.

1) Make a list of all the people for whom you hold unresolved anger; a boss who humiliated you, a lover who scorned you, a peer who belittled you, a friend who betrayed you. Make sure that all the perpetrators of anger in your life are on the list. You may have a long anger list.

2) Write a letter to each person on the list expressing all the anger you never felt in letters you never intend to send. These letters are for you. I want you to feel the anger, write about it, shout it out, then let it go. Read the letters out loud. Get into the anger. Then release it.

3) Now take each letter and a magic marker and highlight every reference to that person either by name or pronoun.

4) Ready for a big surprise? Take that highlighted letter and read it out loud. Only every time you get to the highlighted name or reference, substitute your name, I or me for their name.

While not every sentence may apply, I think you'll be surprised at how many do. Often, when intense, negative emotions are triggered, it's because someone or something has awakened something that lies dormant within our own personalities. When we realize what our trigger points are, we take away the other person's power to make us react in any other way than the one we prefer. It is also humbling to know that there is something within us all that resembles even those we most disdain. With that recognition we can begin to let go of a personality type that gets us all into a lot of crisis situations – the disdainful, critical JUDGE!

It has been said that human beings are like icebergs when it comes to our emotional lives. Only about 10% of what we feel breaks the surface and is shared with others. Everything else lurks way down deep inside of us – hidden, frozen, and impenetrable. In our high stress world, anxiety is often the emotion we wear on the outside. Anxiety, however, is the early warning system to fear. There is information in anxiety, but you must calm down to hear it. When you feel anxious, take 30 seconds to breathe and say, "Hm-m-m-m, I'm feeling anxious." After you've calmed down and your thoughts are in order again, take whatever action is necessary.

Fear is the pathway to the dark side of our personalities. Fear leads to anger, which leads to hate, which leads to violence...and so on.

Far better to chip away at that iceberg. Expose your villains, thaw them out, learn from your anger, release it and then you will be able to discern your own truth and live from your heart energy.

Below, are a few more tools to help you change thinking and emotional patterns:

LAUGHTER: When you've been in a tense situation, find a way to laugh it off as soon as possible. Your laugh may start out as an angry growl, but force a smile onto your face and into your growl until it comes out as a hearty, HARDY-HAR-HAR. Then breathe deeply in satisfaction.

CONNECTION: Move away from isolationism and into connection with your co-workers. You will be less likely to want to explode at someone and more likely to identify, empathize or want to understand. To put it briefly, IDENTIFY, DON'T OBJECTIFY. It's not us versus them -- it's just US.

EQUILIBRIUM: It's time to expand your definition of equilibrium to include the tiny daily adjustments and the bigger swings in life that we constantly make to keep our heads above water, to keep all the balls in the air, to stay on an even keel. Rare if ever is the time when our lives are perfectly in balance. We can handle it, however, if we trust ourselves to come back to our center as we have defined it – to our own sense of equilibrium.

PRIORITIZE: What is worth getting upset about? What is worth an expenditure of your valuable energy? Some co-worker who bothers you -- or your children, your spouse, your lack of leisure time, your health?

LISTEN: Often you will receive important information from conversations, and even from your own body. Many times physical symptoms are messengers that unprocessed emotions are hanging out in your body and wreaking havoc. (see chart)

You? Angry? Probably so. And the sooner you listen to what the anger is telling you and prioritize the actions you need to take, the sooner you will find your equilibrium and connect to the laughter that can heal most anything.

Where Emotions Are Stored In Our Bodies

ORGAN	POSITIVE EMOTION	NEGATIVE EMOTION
Spleen/Worry	Sympathy, Empathy, Energy	Regret, Over-concern
Heart /Shock, hurt, joy	Self-confidence, Compassion, Love	Despair, Doubt, Nervous
Kidney/Fear	Trust, Respect, Will-Power, Self-Healing	Inferiority Panic, Paranoia

Gallbladder	Peaceful, In control	Violent, Out of control
Liver/Anger	Motivated, Self-Assertive	Self-blame, Guilt, Impotence, Frigidity
Lung/Grief	Openness, Letting go, Grieving	Greed, Pride, Jealousy, Envy, Selfish

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