

Managing Anger in Islam

Part I: Forms of Anger

Anger is such a destructive energy that commonly ruins relationships and leads to animosity between people. To the point that a man asked prophet Muhammad (PBUH) many times to give him and advice and prophet Muhammad (PUBH) kept saying “do not get angry” (Bukhari).

Yes there are times when anger is needed and that are when the orders of Allah SWT are disobeyed grossly. When Allah SWT told Mussa (PUBH) that his people worshiped the calf, “Mussa went back angry and disappointed”.

Anger is a natural human feeling but it is what we do when we become angry as well as the reason we are angry is the issue. Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Shura (in translation) praising the believers:

“And when they get angry, they forgive”.

Forms of Anger

1. Outward Anger

This is the easiest one to spot as it is accompanied by raising ones voice (sometimes even yelling and screaming), use of negative and hurtful language, and may be even physical altercation.

One only has to remember the words of Allah SWT in Surah Luqman (in translation) to be turned off loud, screaming angry yelling:

“Lower your voice. Indeed the worst sounds are those of the donkeys”.

This type of anger is generally accompanied by loss of logic and ones’ ability to disseminate and analyze information correctly. It may even leads to saying things that are unacceptable in the strongest Islamic terms. Allah SWT says in Surah Al Baqarah (in translation):

“And when he is told to fear Allah, [his] ego takes him into sin”.

In a Hadith narrated by Bukhari that two men argued in front of the prophet (PBUH). One of the men’s face became red and prophet Muhamad (PBUH) said “I know a word that if “that man” said it, his anger will go away:

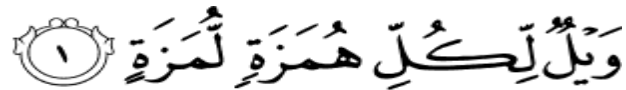
“أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ”

When the man was told of the prophet (PBUH) said, his response was: “I am not crazy”.

2. Passive-Aggressive Behavior

This is, in my opinion, is more destructive than outwardly anger as it lasts years and the cycle continues to feed itself.

Rather than confronting the unpleasant issue with the affected person, the passive-aggressive person finds way to retaliate and antagonize the other person whenever the chance presents itself. This manifests itself by saying hurtful words but in a joking manner, making off yet derogatory remarks in the presence of others and so on. This “zinging” of others is frowned upon Islamically. Allah SWT named a Surah “Humazah” to this type of person:



“Woe to every scorner and mocker”.

Identifying passive-aggressive behavior can be challenging. It may be a child not doing well in school being angry with her parent, a woman not doing the things she knows her husband like, a husband procrastinating in doing the house chores to upset his wife, and so on.

I am going to include two examples of passive-aggressive behavior: one that I read and one about me personally.

A story I read online of a cashier at a department store seeing a woman fumbling in her purse looking for the credit card only for the cashier to notice a TV remote control in her purse. The cashier asks the woman why she had the remote control with her and she replied:

“My husband refused to go shopping with me so I hid the remote control as that is the most “legal” evil thing I could do”.

In my own way of passive-aggressive behavior I tend to quit work or even personal relationships when I get angry (I am told this by my wife). Indeed, I had quit more than one job within a month because my boss may have something to my dislike. This bad behavior may have seeped into my personal life. This is not acceptable when dealing with Muslims as severing relationships with my fellow Muslims is not acceptable. All I need to do is remember the words of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as narrated by both Bukhari and Muslim:

“Do not hate each other, be jealous of one another, turn your backs on yourself, and do anger one another. Be brothers O Salves of Allah. It is not allowed for a Muslim to sever ties with his Muslim brother more than 3 [days]”.

3. Holding a Grudge

The worst part of anger is the one that lasts years sometimes indicating a most unforgiving nature of the person holding the grudge.

This person can easily identify this trait in him/her by noticing how they react when they see the person they are begrudging or even the mere mention of that person's name. A bad feeling and ill will completely takes over. Allah SWT describes this behavior (in translation):

"If something good happens to you, they hate it and when something bad befalls you, they are happy with it".

All one needs to do is to recite Surah Al-Noor where Allah SWT says to (in translation):

"Forgive and forget, do you not want Allah to forgive you".

The story about the man forgiving people each night is too famous to tell again here.

In a Hadith narrated by Muslim prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"The doors of heaven open up on Mondays and Thursdays. Allah will (or may) forgive those who do not associate partners with Him except a man who has an animosity toward another. Allah SWT will say [to the Angels]: wait on these two till they make up".