

How Meditation Can Calm Your Anger

Do you get so angry that you feel like a fire-breathing dragon?

Find out how you can come back to reality with relaxing meditations that will cool you down and put out the flames.

Few people want to admit they get bitchy, shout or lose their tempers—they much prefer to see themselves as being wonderfully tolerant and serene. But anger is something everyone experiences at different times, whether toward your parent, partner, friend or even yourself.

Many times, anger is justified and limited to the matter at hand, but it can also be very destructive and go beyond the immediate situation, like a single match that can burn an entire forest.

Trying to eradicate anger is like trying to box with your shadow: It doesn't work. Getting rid of it implies either expressing it, and possibly causing emotional damage; denying and avoiding it, which is a way of lying to yourself and can cause depression or bitterness; or repressing it, which just suppresses it until it erupts at a later time, when it can cause even more harm.

"Ducks don't do anger," says **psychotherapist Deepesh Faucheux** in our recent book, *Be The Change*. "Ducks fight over a piece of bread and then they just swim away. But people keep processing everything that happens to them. That processing of the story—what so and so did to me, she wronged me, why doesn't he respect me—keeps the energy identified as anger and resentment, instead of seeing it as simply energy."

There are often layers of conflicting feelings hidden beneath anger and trying to make themselves heard, such as hurt, insecurity, sadness or fear. The power of rage is such that it can overshadow these other emotions, causing you to lose touch with yourself and struggle to articulate what you are really feeling.

Because you've lost your connectedness with others, anger may really be a cry for attention or for contact; it may be expressing feelings of rejection, grief, loneliness or a longing to love and be loved. Often it is really saying "I love you" or "I need you"; yet you are hurling abuse at others instead.

As **Rabbi Zalman Schachter** says, "We get to see that underneath anger, there is fear, pain, and sorrow, and we cannot deal with anger unless we also deal with what sustains the anger. We forget how we are hardwired. The reptilian system within us makes sure we are secure and safe. If we do not feel secure, then the dinosaur will rear its head and roar.

So under anger is always the question of how safe does the reptilian feel." If you repress or pretend anger is not there, then all these other feelings become repressed and denied as well. Only by recognizing what is the real emotion behind the expression can there be more honest communication.

According to **Ed and Deb Shapiro**, meditation is very important here because it invites you not only to witness anger, but also to get to know and make friends with yourself.

It gives you a midpoint between expressing anger and repressing it, a place where you can voice your feelings with awareness and acceptance. It also gives you the ability to **see your feelings and not be swept away by them**, even to see anger before it affects you.

Meditation is not a cure-all—it is not going to make all your difficulties go away or suddenly transform your weaknesses into strengths, but it does enable you to accept whom you are.

Cooling Anger Meditation

Before you start this practice and the heat of anger is still with you, breathe into your anger:

Breathe in deeply, and with each out-breath, release and blow out your feelings.

Then, to calm and resolve your feelings, do the following:

Sit comfortably, take a deep breath and let it go.

Focus your attention on your breathing and, more specifically, on where you are breathing.

During heated exchanges, we usually breathe very shallow and rapid breaths, high in the upper part of the chest.

By calming your breathing, you will also calm your nerves, blood pressure and emotions.

Now bring your breathing down into your mid-chest area, which means breathing more deeply and slowly.

Do this for a few minutes, then move your breathing even further down, so you are taking even deeper and longer breaths into your belly.

Stay here for a few minutes, as your whole being cools down.

When you are fully at ease, allow yourself to breathe naturally, without having to go higher into your upper chest.