

Handling Anger

One of the major issues we have to deal with in counselling at Home and Family is that of how to handle anger. Some people express their anger as aggressive behaviour, other people are taught not to express their anger at all. It is, however, almost impossible not to feel anger at some time and we believe that it is healthy and even helpful for an individual or people in a relationship to express anger appropriately and with respect for the other person's feelings. Below are guidelines we use to teach people appropriate ways to express their anger.

- Choose the time and place to express your feelings ? not in front of others but as soon as possible.
- Keep it brief. Say exactly what you want to say initially. Once the other person has received the message, don't labour the point. That runs the risk of rubbing it in or of escalating the exchange.
- Use assertive repetition only to emphasise your point if the person does not appear to 'hear' you ? don't rub it in.
- Use specific, objective language. Avoid words like always, should and never. Describe, don't label, the behaviour you are angry about. Not "you're always rude and inconsiderate" but "you've just interrupted me twice".
- Incorporate "I" statements and feelings talk into the following three-part message framework:
 - I feel?..(your feelings)
 - When/because?..(behaviour you observe)
 - Next time I would prefer?..(behaviour you want)

Indicate in your message that you feel a certain way because of a specific behaviour on the part of the other person. You may also wish to communicate to the other person how you would like him/her to behave in the future. For example: "I feel really annoyed because you didn't ask my opinion before you made that decision. Next time I would like you to consult me before making a decision that affects us both."