

Managing Anger

Discussion with Richard and Celia

Richard: *This is Messages of hope and I'm Richard Fox. Today, Celia and I are looking at the emotion of anger. Why do we get angry? And is anger a bad thing? How do we deal with this anger? And how is anger all tied up with our expectations of ourselves and others?*

Celia: Richard, I don't think you ever get angry.

Richard: I don't think my kids would agree with that.

Celia: But what gets you angry?

Richard: Just, I suppose when they don't listen.

Celia: Yeah.

Richard: Yeah, they ignore me or what ... And I might ask three, four, five, ten times for them to do something and I just lose the plot, especially after a hard day's work and it's been tiring, I just get angry.

Celia: Do you find that you get angry at home more?

Richard: I suppose it's a safe space where you can let your guard down, and your emotions just get the better of you sometimes. How about you with your family? Do they get under your skin?

Celia: Yeah. Look, I came home from work and I was tired, it'd been a long day and they're sitting around. I walked into the kitchen, and the breakfast dishes were just still on the sink. Everything was there. Nothing had been done and they were sitting there, and I just lost it. The first thing I did, it wasn't, "Hello. How are you? How was your day?" I just went at them and I shouted and seriously, I could see the look of shock on their faces as they glaze over as I'm just absolutely losing my banana at them. It made me feel awful afterwards. I wished I could've gone back out and started and done it all differently again and come in, but I just ... I don't do it at work. I don't shout at my colleagues, but I shout at my family. I know I should've been more of an adult. But it's this child in me that reacts.

Richard: When you act that way, how does it end up?

Celia: It's just awful. It doesn't actually fix the problem. They still haven't done the dishes or whatever, but I've just ended up feeling like I want to walk back out the door. I don't want to be in that place cos I've just created a really tense situation and no one's happy. There's no, "How are your days? Let's reconnect." It was just bang, straight in and I just probably didn't deal with it the way I should've.

Richard: Yeah, that's right. Anger in a way, it shows something about the situation. It's not a wrong thing or a necessary right. There's no wrong or right. Sometimes, it is just who we are. It comes out in ways that we don't often expect, but it's okay to be angry. Because something's not right there. Your kids should've done the dishes.

Celia: Yeah, something's certainly not

right. Richard: My kids should've listened to me.

Celia: Yeah.

Richard: You shouldn't gloss over that and we shouldn't avoid anger, but it is how do we deal with it? Especially the ones that we care about and that we love.

Celia: Richard, I find that there are certain times when I'm able to control my anger like at work, but when I'm at home, that self-control just flies out of the window. What makes us angry? What's behind our anger? What is it that triggers us, I guess?

Richard: To me, it's our expectations aren't necessarily met. I look at the story of the Australian cricket team. We held the Australian cricket team up on such a pedestal that they do everything so perfect and yet a simple ball tampering, they got hammered. The South African cricket captain, he's done it twice and they almost praise him for it, whereas we wanted to hang them.

Celia: Yeah. I think it's not only our families we get angry at. It's people we don't even know. Even though you feel like you know the cricket team, I understand that, Richard. But it's people that you don't know as well that you get angry with. I'm the kind of person that when I go into a shop and you've got the shopkeeper behind the counter and they're either on their phone or totally ignoring you ... That gets my back up. I do. I get quite cross because I think that's your job. You're actually there as a customer service and even just saying, "I'll be right with you," would be enough. But oh, I get so cross. You know what? I don't know that person. Why do I get cross?

Richard: Your expectations are that they'll look after you and

serve. Celia: That's true.

Richard: That's your expectations and what you expect in that situation. It's okay to be angry in those situations. It's just how do you actually deal with it?

Celia: Yeah, as long as I don't shout at them.

Richard: No, that's right. Road rage is something like that too where

someone attacks you, maybe even you haven't done something wrong or you just actually got in their way.

Celia: Or unconsciously.

Richard: Yeah, and they'd have a crack at you and then how does that make you feel? It makes you feel angry at them.

Celia: It's that response, isn't it? That real ... Someone's been aggressive or something and you respond back.

Richard: Yeah. How do you deal with that? Do I go and run my car into them? Do you actually take it out on that waitress?

Celia: Do you, Richard?

Richard: Sometimes, you're tempted to do it, but violence isn't going to answer it.

Celia: Yeah, and sometimes I am actually quite short with them, and I will let them know that I'm not impressed in a quiet nonaggressive way.

Richard: But anger needs to be dealt with. If you just leave it go, you'll end up bitter and twisted and it will just fester on you and it will eat you alive. You have to deal with your anger. You have to work with something there. Anger is helping you deal with something between that relationship between you and the waitress, me and the road rage person.

Celia: It's not about the emotion itself. It's about controlling your response to that emotion.

Richard: It is. It's actually working that through so it's not festering and getting angry, but how do you work it through and deal with that in a way that's actually going to build up that relationship and not destroy it?

Celia: How do I stop having that knee-jerk reaction with my family when I'm in that moment? How do I not get angry?

Richard: You're allowed to get angry 'cause anger is not the opposite of

love. Celia: Richard, what helps you deal with your anger?

Richard: Identifying the moments of when you are tired and you are vulnerable to being angry. When I come home from work and I walk in the front door and you get bombarded with questions or things that go on, it's so easy to lose the plot. When I come home now, I'll spend 10, 15 minutes, half an hour, just time to myself so I can calm down and rest, and so then I can be with them, answer questions and deal with things so I don't have those trigger points.

Celia: Maybe I should just not go into the kitchen first up. Maybe I should sort of like do a lap around the house outside or go in the garden.

Richard: Or maybe yell in the car on the way home as well sometimes.

Celia: Yeah, but maybe avoiding those trigger points, the things that I know if it's going to be there, that'll make me upset so maybe that's what I need to avoid.

Richard: Yes. Some of that comes with experience. There's times when you have been angry in those moments and you have regretted that and so, it's growing in knowing who you are in those moments.

Celia: Yeah. Cos I'm a very reactive person and so, if I have these pre-thought out strategies of where I know where my trigger points are, maybe that would be something that I can use and say maybe I'll go to the fridge and get myself a drink and go and just be with the kids and then deal with the issue.

Richard: Yeah. I think also it matters that you can't deal with it on your own, especially when you're out of control, you can't deal with it on your own. You need someone else to cool it out for you.

Celia: What do you do? What do you do when you are at that moment, Richard? You've heard that I yell, but what do you do? What is going to help?

Richard: I yell out to God. I let him have it. Even if it's in my head.

Celia: Really?

Richard: I say, "God, what is going on here" or "deal with this situation for me." I call out. I let him have it. He's big enough. He's big enough to handle it and cop it so ...

Celia: I perhaps talk to him in my head or things, but I've actually never shouted out loud to him.

Richard: It helps. It helps me. It helps me diffuse the situation. It takes the pressure off. It actually helps give me back some perspective about what's going on here. If I can hand it to him and say, "God, deal with so and so," and it may be my kids, it may be the road-rager person, may be the Australian cricket team. If I say, "Here, you deal with that," it actually takes the pressure off. I know that God is God. He's big enough to handle it and now the issue is in with his hands, it gives me some clarity and some perspective of okay, how can I work through this situation? It helps me see them as another person. It actually shows up even my vulnerabilities and weak points and so I can say, "God, help me deal with my anger."

Celia: Maybe when I'm in that moment and wanting to shout back, I shout to God in my head or maybe I need to walk away, I don't know.

Richard: Yeah. You're allowed to be angry. Even God gets angry, but it's how do we deal with that and focus that, and if we can focus that

at him, he can then help us deal with that and the anger and actually then build up the relationship.

Celia: Maybe it's about asking God to give me the ability to walk away when I want to just react. If I know that I have those triggers, I don't just leave it to that moment that I've maybe had that conversation with God or prayed to God beforehand.

Richard: You're in the car on the highway on the way home and talking to him and asking him for help.

Celia: Yes, and I say, "Look, before I walk in this door, God, just give me your patience, give me your words." It's about letting God help you deal with it.

Richard: That's right.

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