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Fields and their Clinical Implications

Part III:

Anger and How it Affects Human Interactions

Dora Kunz and Erik Peper

AN ABILITY TO BE energetically outgoing (altruistic) and compassionate is the well-spring of health. Even though love and anger are both "outgoing" energies, love tends to radiate a sense of quietness, peace, and tranquility by which the energetic connection between people is opened. Anger is more likely to close and shut out the other person because the recipient tends to respond in the same way and thus a barrier is formed. In each case this implies that there is some form of energy outflow from the person to the target, and this energy impulse may and can affect another person regardless of verbal or non-verbal cues.

By becoming aware of the effects of those outgoing energies, health professionals, who are in constant contact with hostility, may learn ways to prevent burnout, exhaustion, and frustration as well as experience peace, tranquility, and an enhanced therapeutic effectiveness.

To be able to control and understand these energetic exchanges is a challenge. The more emotionally involved one is, the more difficult it is to be objective. Strong emotional attachments tend to override the experience of the present, so that past images and future anticipations influence the interaction. For example, when people talk to each other, their communication becomes less effective if they try to conceal their feelings. Their openness is affected by their previous experiences of disappointment, non-support, or non-caring. Each person brings to the interchange conditioned expectancies, images, and emotions which may affect the future course of communication.

Dora Kunz is president of The Theosophical Society in America. She has worked for many years with the medical profession and in healing.

Dr. Erik Peper teaches at the Center of Interdisciplinary Science, San Francisco State University, directs the Biofeedback and Family Therapy Institute, and is past president of the Biofeedback Society of America.

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IN DEALING WITH ENERGIES in this way, we adopt a view which we shall call the "energetic perspective." It assumes that thoughts and emotions are not only contained within the individual, but are also radiated outward. Further, it holds that each individual is a localization in an energy field which permeates space and which interconnects with and affects others. Thus this makes it clear that we interact with one another because we are part of one whole, dynamic, and interdependent system.

Anger tends to be reflected and returned to the sender, so that a mutual antagonism is developed.

If one realizes that one interacts with and affects others all the time, what can one do to foster health and growth not only in oneself but also in others? Before offering possible strategies, we will describe first the mechanism by which negative effects such as anger, resentment, biases, and expectancies affect another person; then we will consider strategies to reduce the impact of anger and resentment.

HOW EMOTIONS SUCH AS LOVE AND ANGER AFFECT US

HOW DO LOVE, ANGER AND RESENTMENT affect our energy exchange? Often love is not freely given; it may be conditioned by the fact that one unknowingly expects love to be returned in a certain measure. This may bring about some unconscious latent hostility and stop the free flowing energy as one begins to focus on oneself. On the other hand, sending out love without centering on oneself may affect the receiver by opening him or her to

more spiritual influences. By encouraging a more altruistic, outgoing pattern, one will bring about an enhanced empathy and allow a free-flowing exchange between two people. Ironically, anger has the same strong outward-going flow as love, except that when it reaches a target it energizes the other person's hostility and inhibits the establishment of a relationship. Anger tends to be reflected and returned to the sender, so that a mutual antagonism is developed. The impact of anger is unconsciously perceived or felt by the sensitive recipient as if one has been violently hit by a disruptive, fragmented energy in the emotional field, which the recipient automatically rejects. Usually it is returned with hostility to the sender unless one can become quiet and allow the energy of anger to dissipate and attenuate. In this dynamic process, the recipient of anger often "shuts down" and thus communications become almost nil. In most cases a person will return anger with anger so that the spiral of anger, resentment, and antagonism builds. The result is an escalating runaway feedback system as is illustrated in figure 1.

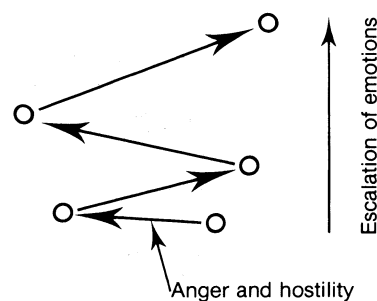


Figure 1

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF ANGER

Although the emotional charge associated with anger may be directed at the person with whom one is angry, it is also experienced by others in the immediate vicinity. Even without words

the energy patterns associated with anger radiate outward and affect others in the immediate environment, as is illustrated in figure 2.

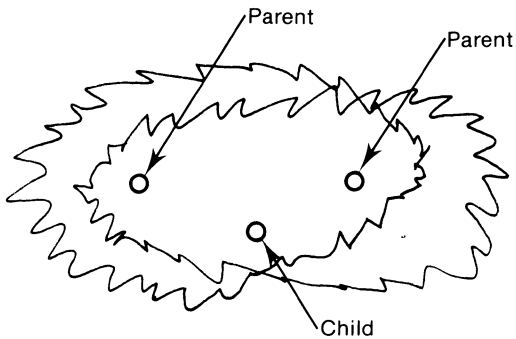


Figure 2

It is through this process that parents may unconsciously hurt their children. For example, if spouses are angry with each other, their children are often in the middle and are energetically assaulted by the emotional exchange between the adults. It is as if the parents release arrows at each other which might injure their children, who are caught in the cross fire. The child thus becomes a casualty. He may throw a temper tantrum, cry, withdraw, or appear to act irrationally because his feelings have become fragmented. Children are often quite sensitive and have less ability to reject negative energies.

It is not understood why some children and adults can more easily reject anger than others; however, some children appear to be born with a greater sensitivity than others. Those who are more sensitive are most easily fragmented by waves of anger. Since children cannot discriminate sufficiently to understand that often the anger is not aimed at them, they experience the assault personally and assume that they are at fault—a process which diminishes their self-confidence.

Most of our emotional interactions are usually of short duration and the effects are transient. But if we repeat this same interaction and at the same time are not aware of this emotional upset when it occurs, it can make one's shoulders tight or one's solar plexus constricted. When this emotional reaction becomes habitual, it may lead to gastrointestinal disturbances. Another result is a decrease in energy intake which may lead to chronic exhaustion and susceptibility to illness.

HOW NEGATIVE EXPECTANCY AFFECTS THE THERAPEUTIC ENCOUNTER

These concepts about energies can be applied in therapeutic situations. To enhance the therapeutic encounter, the therapist must not carry with him negative expectancies about his client nor bring with him the feelings, emotions, and biases associated with the previous session. Whenever one anticipates difficulty, one tends to tighten up and become exhausted, which is one of the contributing factors leading to burnout. In addition, there is a high probability that the client will unconsciously experience the projected negative feelings and reject the proposed therapeutic intervention. This unconscious reaction is most likely triggered by the negative energy outflow associated with the therapist's thoughts, images, and expectancies. A momentary thought such as "I hope this person isn't going to be angry," "I wish the session were over" or "I do not think she wants to get better" is unconscious negative imagery. Patients and clients react to this automatically. At times it seems as if they are literally telepathic and fulfill the projected expectancy. This projection, incidentally, is probably the mechanism by which experimental bias affects the research outcome.

Negative prejudging tends to initiate anxiety and/or automatic rejection by

the client, since it tends to resonate in the client's field with similar unconsciously held beliefs, thoughts, or images about himself. Instead of decreasing internal doubts, his internal negative self-images are activated so that his sense of self-esteem and self-confidence is lessened. A similar process occurs if one is too anxious for a successful outcome, such as therapists wish for their clients or parents for their children. In those cases, the clients or the children experience pressure to perform, which may slow down their learning of new skills. Moreover, it may enhance their anxiety or fear that they will be rejected if they do not achieve the therapist's or parent's goals.

**STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE
THE THERAPEUTIC ENCOUNTER**

To avoid the effect of negative projection, it helps to be quiet and still the mind and feelings for a moment before any difficult upcoming interview. During this momentary pause, conditioned biases are at a low point so that there are fewer negative anticipations. This non-judgmental attitude is essential in the therapeutic encounter.

Yet how does one let go—how does one allow the mind and emotions to become neutral? It is probably easier, instead of actively trying to make the mind blank, to be quiet and visualize a unifying scene which symbolizes an inner sense of wholeness, such as a tree or a mountain. This momentary shift of attention in which one identifies with a quality of wholeness and unity is called "centering." In the process of shifting one's awareness toward this more unifying experience, one may develop an awareness of the chattering of one's mind and of a pattern in which one continuously ruminates. The therapist or parent may now consciously shift from a negative to a positive feeling about the

client or child, as this would bring about an enhanced empathy and allow a free-flowing exchange of energy between the two people. We postulate that regardless of who one is, within each one of us there is a human potential, or "Buddha Nature." If we keep this in mind, each exchange of positive energies can stimulate this potential, to a small extent, in the person confronting us.

These skills are easier to practice in a therapeutic setting, since one tends to be less personally involved with the client than with friends or close family members. Yet, even if they are friends or close family members, one can adopt a similar attitude, in which for a moment one visualizes them as whole and not as fragmented by emotional disturbances or disease patterns.

**STRATEGIES TO REDUCE
THE IMPACT AND EXPRESSION OF ANGER**

Continued resentment and anger may often lead to some sort of illness. Therefore, it is important not to automatically identify with a person who is angry, but to be conscious of one's own rising anger in response to his. Even if one's own anger is already rising, one can for a moment shift one's attention and visualize someone with whom one has a loving relationship, and let that love flow out even briefly; then one can face his own anger as well as the other person's hostility. This shift of attention allows us to become more aware of the causes of anger and of our ability to diminish our own hostile responses. In short, it gives one a better perspective of the pattern of the interaction. It is possible that this process may, after a while, allow a more positive outflowing of soothing, calm thoughts to be sent towards the person with whom one is angry. Although this appears, at first, an impossible task, an attempt to implement this strategy will develop one's awareness and slowly shift the automatically hostile

response to a more neutral, soothing response.

Even though one may be aware that one is reacting with anger, hostility, and resentment, so often one chooses not to change, since not reacting negatively to another's negative emotion is frequently interpreted in our culture to mean that one has become weak or has given in to the other person. Nevertheless, by deliberately choosing the positive response, one develops an active method of changing one's automatic behavior.

The following strategy is often helpful in reducing the feeling of resentment:

1. Sit quietly and allow yourself to relax. Take a few slow breaths and each time you exhale feel yourself gently sinking into the chair. With each exhalation feel the force of gravity pulling on you allowing you to relax more and more.
2. Think of someone you love or imagine a very quiet place in nature such as a waterfall, a large tree or a mountain. Experience the tranquility and peace. When you imagine the scene from nature, see, hear, feel, taste, and smell it in your imagination.
3. Imagine the person or event which you resent about twenty feet in front of you. Hold this image without effort while you continue to breathe easily and relax your whole body. If you tighten up in response to the image, let go of the image.
4. Now, again imagine either a person whom you love or a peaceful place in nature. Let these feelings of love and peacefulness fill you and wash out any traces of resentment.
5. Once again, repeat the visualization of the person or event for which you felt resentment and follow this with imagining either a person whom you love or a peaceful place in nature. Repeat this once or twice.

6. Hold the feeling of caring, love, or peacefulness and allow this to flow outward to the person or event for which you feel resentment.

Practicing these interventions takes time. However, by becoming aware of the effects of the strong emotional feelings, one may be able to intervene, reduce tensions, and optimize human relationships.

From a field perspective one can summarize these interventions as follows:

For the vital field: Learn to become relaxed.

For the emotional field: Learn to calm and center yourself before reacting to anger. Do this instead of reacting with hostility or defensiveness (shutting down) to another person's anger.

For the mental field: Focus on your intent to be willing to change your perspective—do you want to be angry? Even though you feel that the anger is "justified" from a "realistic" or conventional point of view, are you willing to give it up?

For the intuitional field: Become centered, project and perceive a sense of wholeness in the other person and in yourself. □

Notes:

1. We thank Michelle Moran for her incisive comments and critique during the preparation of this manuscript.
2. For a more detailed description of fields see: Kunz, D., and Peper, E. "Fields and Their Clinical Implications," Part I and II. Previously printed in *The American Theosophist*, 1982-83. This is now available as a separate pamphlet from The Theosophical Research Institute. Send \$1 for postage and handling to T.R.I., P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, Illinois, 60189-0270