

ANGER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract: *As information has become more accessible for the ordinary human, psychology began being a hot topic amongst people. Emotions and their importance are being taught to children from a young age. Anger is a powerful emotion that invokes displeasure and it is a result of thoughts perceived as threatening to our well-being. The absence of war in modern society has adapted technology on a mainstream level; therefore our exposure to the real world has changed whilst shifting our priorities. Statistics prove this, the media promotes it.*

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Introduction

Thanks to the development of technology, research on emotions has significantly increased in the last decades. Neurophysiological changes bring biological states within the nervous system which are called emotions. Emotions are associated with thoughts and behavioral responses to the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates. The diversity of our world is caused by its backgrounds. The environment we are amidst, shapes our personalities, hence the differences in ways of life, of thinking, behavior, traditions, culture etc. Thankfully, we can choose not to be the victim of it by being its architects. The surrounding world is shaping our identities as human beings to a certain extent. Thus, as our awareness increases, we can make incremental changes within it to facilitate our personal development.

Anger was seemingly indulged in with little censure or shame in Western epic times. As a result, it has been concluded [1] that the display of negative emotions was shamelessly displayed in public and did not elicit much social concern towards moderation and prohibition. Early cultures believed that affronts to masculine honor had to be met with counter-aggression to avoid shame, hence the rich history of conflicts and wars in Europe and Asia. As a result of the XVIII's century European Enlightenment movement which emphasized literacy, education and tolerance, a greater appreciation for the role of emotions was born while the disapprobation for unconstrained anger was also starting to become widespread.

Over the years, as information has become very accessible and the world is at its most peaceful it has ever been, leaving us able to focus on the quality of life of the individual in the workplace, psychology related topics have become an important topic in modern day society. The discussion of emotional management, especially anger, is now prevalent in the upbringing of children, both at kindergarten and at home. From a young age, children become acquainted with the benefits of being able to handle their emotions, thus becoming more conscious early in life, definitely, not without limitations. Technology and games can help children dramatically improve their logic via play, but left unsupervised it can go towards the detriment of their mental health.

Anger Management

Anger is an emotion characterized by a strong feeling of displeasure and loss of control, incited by a situation deemed as wrong by an individual, such as: physical violence, swearing, hate speech etc. Many stimuli could be the cause of anger, and each individual experiences and deals

with this emotion differently as a result of their genes and upbringing. According to a study, from the University of Bonn, the isolation of the DARPP-32 gene, which is linked to the release of dopamine, is the cause of some people's rage burst at the utmost trifling of things [2]. It was also found that this kind of people lack grey matter in the brain's amygdala, therefore unable to keep their emotions balanced. Evidently, dealing with unstable people is unsatisfactory and inefficient but within a social hierarchy, anger helps assert dominant behaviour, which is needed and sought after by leaders. In the journal Behavioral Brain Research, it was mentioned that genetics account for half of our tendency for fury.

During the experience of this emotion, the body goes through physiological changes, if left unmanaged; they can lead to a series of possible health issues. Such changes have been observed by an investigation led by scientists from the university of Valencia, who analyzed changes that take place in the brain's cardiovascular, hormonal and asymmetric activation response. They had concluded that the left hemisphere becomes more stimulated, cortisol release decreases, while the heart rate, arterial tension and testosterone production increases. As a result, unmanaged anger can lead to different kinds of health issues such as increased risk of heart attack and stroke, high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, insomnia, skin problems and the most common of all – headache [3].

If you admit that you have anger issues, you're halfway done getting rid of them. Many people suffer from anger issues but are unable to realize that, thus they lack the appreciation for the seriousness of the situation and they don't do anything about it. Good news is that there are more people that succeeded at eliminating anger issues than those who failed, meaning that if you are already thinking about changing, there is a very good chance that you will change for the better. The only obstacle now is time. Behavioral changes require a lot of time, especially when they're deeply rooted within habits. Anger is like a negative feedback loop where the emotion sparks more of itself. To tackle such issues, an individual must present a lot of self-control and a fair amount of willpower, which in a stressful situation is really hard to obtain and get the ball rolling. Unfortunately for some, frequent display of negative emotions has been regarded as something normal since early in their lives and thus such cases are rarely if ever solved. Most of us find emotional management tips outside of stressful situations hence most people gradually and subconsciously throughout their lives start asking themselves key questions to solve their issues, an anger assessment kind of thing, a true display of awareness. Such questions to help are: "Does my anger have a good reason and/or a good intention behind it?", "Do I understand the situation correctly?", "Should this anger me?", "How can I solve this situation?" Understanding one's own thought process and emotions requires a lot of self-awareness which ultimately leads to improving emotional intelligence. If you often put the blame on other people, take criticism to heart and cannot laugh at yourself, chances are that you have a lot to work on yourself.

In difficult situations, one must get a hold of them and not stick to bad habits to help with coping. Instead, mentally assigning a healthy habit with anger can go a long way in personal development. Some ways to control anger are: counting down, taking a breather, taking a walk, muscle relaxing, stretching, mantra repeating, listening to music, stopping talking, taking a timeout, writing in a journal, response rehearsal, picturing a stop sign, changing routine, talking to a friend, laughing, practicing gratitude, practicing empathy, practicing a hobby. Practicing at least some of these regularly should ensure that anger does not escalate to the point of burst and later regret. Out of those, the most effective solution long term is exercise. The more we get into shape, the more we can tolerate breaking a sweat and thus enjoy it and depend on it. Physical activity reduces the body's stress hormones, stimulates endorphin production and improves metabolism. Once we start physically looking better, our self-image will improve as well, thus giving us a feeling of enhanced control over ourselves and self-confidence. Less problems to worry about and better hormonal balance means less stress and less anger. Eventually, we will meet people that struggle with this as well, once that happens and we decide to help them, we can be assured that our morale would be amazing.

Anger around the world

Emotions have been studied vastly and many polls have been conducted to help researchers determine the current emotional state of the world. With the help of the results, we can determine which of them are most predominant in contrast to the others and where. This can offer mental health organizations some guidance in their action plans to spread awareness.

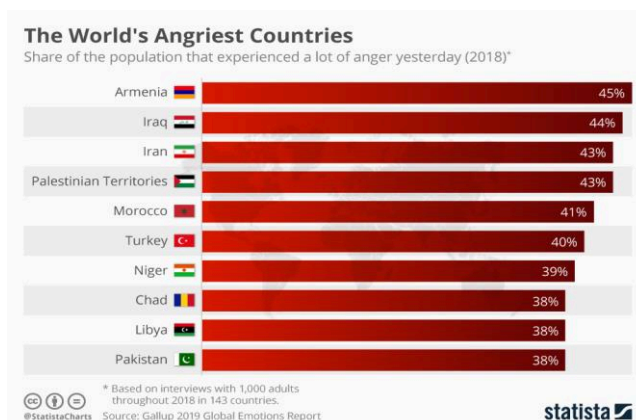


Figure 1. The World's Angriest Countries according to Gallup 2019 Global Emotions Report

According to Gallup 2019 Global Emotions Report [4], countries which are experiencing war, a polarizing political climate and a lack of basic public services are the ones which indicate the highest rate of anger. Evidently, as the basic needs aren't provided, people have very good reasons to be angry: shortage of food, clear water and lack of medical care. The preponderance of countries that made it to the top of this report are mainly located in the Middle East and Africa, where such situations are not uncommon. Nevertheless, a country does not need to reach such a state for anger issues to be felt. Once basic needs are met, people's anger will be driven by other, more minor things, it is an endless cycle. According to Gallup 2019 Global Emotions Report, countries which are experiencing war, a polarizing political climate and a lack of basic public services are the ones which indicate the highest rate of anger. Evidently, as the basic needs aren't provided, people have very good reasons to be angry: shortage of food, clear water and lack of medical care. The preponderance of countries that made it to the top of this report are mainly located in the Middle East and Africa, where such situations are not uncommon. Nevertheless, a country does not need to reach such a state for anger issues to be felt. Once basic needs are met, people's anger will be driven by other, more minor things, it is an endless cycle.

Mental Health Organization's Boiling Point report from 2008 has found that out of the people that participated in the poll, 32% say that they have a close friend or family member who has trouble controlling their anger and 58% of them wouldn't know where to seek anger related help if they needed it. Most common situations/activities which people find stressful are work related (office & PC rage) and road rage [5].

Anger in Media

The internet has helped our world connect like never before. Regardless of the facts that information is easily accessible in most parts of the world and that almost no wars are being fought, the current generations are shifting their anger in different directions. Many people might think that social networks couldn't cause anger because it raises awareness about serious topics, and it helps people understand what the real world is, but the internet is the kind of place where you can easily get away with lies while showing only the best moments of your life, which ultimately leads to people thinking they're living a life worse than most people's, leaving them stressed.

On top of lying, anger is one of many infectious agents used in headlines to make people click on them. Why would people click on something that makes them angry, though? Once an emotion is triggered, curiosity sparks. Other examples of infectious agents include: anxiety, fear, joy, surprise, shock etc. Researchers Marc Trussler and Stuart Soroka, held an experiment run at

McGill University in Canada. In its interpretation, they put on their evidence: “We pay attention to bad news, because on the whole, we think the world is rosier than it actually is. When it comes to our own lives, most of us believe we’re better than average, and that, like the clichés, we expect things to be all right in the end. This pleasant view of the world makes bad news all the more surprising and salient. It is only against a light background that the dark spots are highlighted” [6]. People have evolved to react quickly to potential threats; therefore, we have a negativity bias by reacting quicker to negativity.

Conclusions

Anger is ubiquitous, it is an emotion, it is a human state we have to accept and be aware of. We have to learn how to recognize anger attacks in order to manage them. Teaching children how to manage and be aware of their emotions is one of the most important tasks as the health of our planet is in the future generations’ hands. Our society’s shift towards mainstream use of technology and the absence of war has led people to shift their anger in different, less important matters. Self-awareness is the key towards progress. Anger management involves learning how to recognize, cope with, and express your anger in healthy and productive ways. It is a skill that everyone can learn and there’s always room for improvement.

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