

The ABC's of Overcoming Anger

1. **Acknowledge** that your inner temperature is rising. Prov. 4:23 commands, *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."* Anger is like the warning light on the dashboard of the car. It let's us know there is a problem that needs to be dealt with. Don't excuse it, ignore it, deny it, or vomit it. Acknowledge it.

2. **Backtrack to the pain.** Ask yourself, "What is the inner hurt that is behind this response of anger." If you snap at your wife when you first walk in the door, after work maybe the hurt has to do with your extra efforts not being appreciated by your boss. Are you always angry and critical with your wife? What is the real pain behind your anger?



This is a great way to deal with anger in your wife, or room mate, or kids, as well as your own anger. Always look for their source of pain. If your son is angry because he has to clean his room on Saturday, it is worth thinking about the cause of the pain. It may be that he is self-centered and doesn't like anyone imposing on his schedule, or that he is lazy. But, it may also be that his best friend is going away Saturday afternoon for the weekend and they made special plans to go to the skate park Saturday morning. Perhaps he should still clean his room first, but backtracking to the pain helps clarify the situation.

3. **Christ.** Take your pain to Christ. 2 Cor. 10 says, *"We take captive every thought to make it captive to Christ."* God never wastes pain—he always has a purpose for it. Rom. 8:28-29 tells us what that general purpose is—to make us more like Christ. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son."*

Taking our pain to Christ may mean that we primarily experience our Lord's comfort. It may mean that we have to learn the hard lesson of forgiving others as Christ forgave us. It may mean finding the courage in Christ to confront someone who hurt us. Taking the pain to Christ is not the same thing as burying it or being passive!! It may mean that we see that our anger came because something was preventing us from reaching our idol of success, or acceptance or control. There are as many ways to Biblically process your pain as there are painful situations. The key is to take the pain to the Lord instead of letting the pain take you into sin.

4. **Damage.** Repair the damage your anger has caused. Immediately after telling us that wounding with our anger is sin, Jesus tells us what to do when such a wound has occurred. Matt. 5:23 *"Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."*

Proud men who will not seek the forgiveness of their wives and children when they wound them will drive their family members away. A wall will build up brick by brick, each time he wounds but refuses to take responsibility for the pain he caused. But if he humbles himself and obeys this verse, he will find that our family members are quick to forgive. They do not need perfect husbands and fathers just fathers who love them enough to ask for forgiveness when they need to.

5. **Express your pain to your brother.** God designed us to need connection with other members in the body to process our pain. One of the reasons we get stuck overcoming a wound from the past, and can not seem to move on is that we have not processed it with another person. Paul describes the ideal in I Cor. 12:26, "*If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*" God tells us in Ecclesiastes 4:11 "*Two are better than one because...if two lie down together they can keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?*"

Mountain climbers and soldiers understand this principle. Though their body is exposed to the hostile elements of cold and wind on three sides, the side turned toward their brother is protected from these raw elements, receiving, instead, the life-giving warmth they need. Every man needs this kind of safe place—a band of brothers who love him, with whom he can process the painful experiences of life.