Coping with Anger over the Terrorist Attacks  
Diana Del Campo; Robert Del Campo

Anger is an expected and normal part of one’s personality. The way we express anger and the degree to which it affects our lives is the challenge we all face, particularly after the September terrorist attacks. After the attacks, most people felt a combination of emotions: sadness, grief, disbelief, hurt, frustration, and anger. How could someone do something so hideous to human beings?

Anger is a natural response because we feel helpless to try to change or solve the situation. So, what can we do with that anger? If it is allowed to bubble up inside with no way out, we could explode when we least expect it. Thus, it is important to figure out ways to positively deal with the anger we experience.

Anger management is not easy because we are so used to expressing anger in destructive ways. Some of those destructive ways are yelling at others, usually people we love; clamping up and not saying anything, which causes depression; or overreacting to every situation, which is physically destructive to our bodies. In the case of terrorism, not only are we angry over the attacks but also may allow this anger to spill over to our everyday lives. We may be taking our anger out on those around us by being irritable, yelling, or overreacting to harmless situations.

To manage anger more effectively, try the following process:

1. Realize that it is OK to feel angry. However, understand that you have control over how you express anger. You can learn new ways to express anger.

2. Recognize what triggers or makes you feel angry so you can understand why you’re feeling angry.

3. Delay an immediate response by counting to 10 or saying to yourself, Stop and think!

4. Ask yourself whether your response is hurt, frustration or fear, which will give you a better understanding of your anger response.

5. Allow yourself to react to the anger. Some people talk to someone else about what makes them angry, while others do physical activity like running or punching a pillow. Additional responses are to analyze the situation, meditate, listen to comforting music, cry, or use humor and laugh.

6. After you’ve released some of the angry feelings, think about what you want to do with the anger. In the case of terrorism, you could provide some type of comfort or assistance to those who are protecting our country, such as military personnel and their families. You could write your feelings in stories or poems like many veterans from the Vietnam War did. You can choose to be inclusive, not exclusive, in your life by letting different types of people into your world; let
them learn about you and your family. You can reach out, connect, and comfort others who are feeling overwhelmed by the threat of terrorism. Depending on your personality and interests, there are many different ways you can choose to positively deal with the anger you feel over the terrorist attacks of September 11.