

May
Week 7
Managing Parent/Guardian Anger Frustration

Anger is part of our wiring and is an essential emotion. But it's destructive when it hijacks us. We all know the feeling of being consumed by anger, of finding it hard to let go. How is it possible to switch from reactivity to a more constructive response? When we go into anger mode, we are in a fight or flight response and our thinking, conscious brain is shut down.

When something happens to you - say you get criticized, you're slandered behind your back, you're betrayed by a friend or family member - what happens? Do you instantly lock into blame, defensiveness and resentment? Do you lash out or do you keep it all inside and get the endless angry loop in your head, repeating the incident over and over and over on the screen in your mind? It is very difficult to get that out of our system once it starts. When we start rehashing the negative stories in our mind, our ego holds on to them and makes it very difficult to let go.

So how can meditation help? Meditation makes you more aware of your thinking **patterns** so you can develop bringing space between the sparking incident and your reaction. If you feel anger coming on, what do you do? The first step is to **pause**. No matter what. **Pause**. If you're activated, there is no way you can create a new neural pathway, a new pattern of response, unless you pause. When your anger is turned outward, you pause and make a U-turn to examine what is going on inside. This way you can try to figure out what the unmet need was that triggered the anger in the first place. When anger rises up, the idea is to honor it, feel it, and be aware of it without letting it burn us up. That's the kind of skill we can achieve through emotional regulation and meditation.

Are you always going to be able to do this? No. Sometimes you won't be able to pause but you can forgive it and try and understand it.

Start small! Being irritated by something. Your kids fighting. The store being out of eggs. A package that didn't get delivered. Getting stuck in traffic.

Meditation

1. Connecting to our breath. A few calming breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.
2. Grounding through our body.
3. The idea is to bring your awareness to your body. How does the anger make you feel? Check in on your breath. Is it shallow, are you breathing faster? Do you feel a constriction, pain, tightness anywhere in your body. Do you feel heat, does the anger have a shape, a color? Accept the feeling of anger, don't try to make it go away. Don't think about the incident, don't judge it, try not to get wrapped up in the story, just notice how it makes you **FEEL**. Connect to your breath, always come back to your breath.
4. Create space between you and the feelings of anger - the goal is to be able to observe the changes in your mind and body when you get triggered so you can control your response without getting overtaken by the feelings of anger. Easier said than done but that's why they call it a practice!

5. As the anger dissipates, take a few more focused breaths and send yourself some love, gratitude and compassion for taking the time to develop some real important skills.

Which brings me to the loving kindness meditation practice.

1. Connecting to our breath. A few calming breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.
2. Grounding through your body.
3. Breathing in relaxation, breathing out tension.
4. Bring to image someone who loves you or who you love unconditionally. It could be someone here now or from the past. It can be a pet; you are evoking the feeling of love. Rest in the warmth and radiance of the love you feel.
5. Now bring that feeling of love to yourself. Accept the feeling of love just as you are. This can be very difficult to do. It's okay. Bring these words into mind:
 - May I be peaceful
 - May I be healthy in body and mind
 - May I open to life just as it is
 - May I open to giving and receiving love
6. Be aware of the stories you're telling yourself and bring your mind back to the words:
 - May I be peaceful
 - May I be healthy in body and mind
 - May I open to life just as it is
 - May I open to giving and receiving love
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Be thankful for taking the time to sit in love and kindness for yourself.

Thank you.

Eventually you can extend your practice to someone who you feel neutral to - the mail carrier, a neighbor you don't know their name, the drive through person at dunking donuts.

And then you can bring someone who you have a conflict with and bring that same loving kindness to them. This is a practice! It can be uncomfortable at first and feel awkward but with practice can bring more love and compassion into your relationships and your life.