My Anger Workbook

By Michele Downey

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Dedicated to Jim Holes,
who taught me the importance of dealing with my anger.

Preface

Anger is a difficult emotion to deal with. Most people get anger, the emotion, and the behavior associated with it, mixed up. Anger is just a physiological response. It is a warning sign, like pain, which means "pay attention". It may mean doing something, but it definitely does not mean "ignore it". The healthy behaviors that you can learn when you are angry can be learned. They can range from learning to express it in a healthy way to an appropriate person to doing lots of exercise, for example. Unhealthy behaviors could range from property damage to verbal assault. The key is how to control the physiological emotion and direct the behavior so it is not destructive. If someone ignores the emotion, it can go underground and cause resentment. Physical illnesses such as depression can result and long term physical effects, very well documented in the medical literature can range from lower immune function, high blood pressure, heart disease, GI problems to cancer. Just as we learn unhealthy ways to deal with anger, we can unlearn and relearn healthier ways to express and deal with this emotion.

These little exercises have helped many of my clients with very serious issues. They have been able to express this on paper, work through the anger without hurting anyone, and eventually come to some kind of spiritual understanding and eventually forgiveness. But just like it is not possible to go from A to Z without doing the entire alphabet, it is not possible to suddenly forgive without going through the messy and uncomfortable process of being angry. To really heal, people need someone to share this with. Not someone who will enable the person to be a victim and go over the problem incessantly but someone who gets how this healing is done.

It was suggested that my clients start with myself, their therapist,

and someone close to them who was non-judgmental. Since many of my clients were in a group therapy setting, I encouraged them to read it at group level and listen for the feedback. Many were surprised at their reactions. It allowed many of them for the first time, to stop judging themselves, and to have some understanding and compassion for themselves first.

It was only later, could they begin to have the understanding and compassion for their fellow man. For those in recovery from Addictions and Mood Disorders, the resentments that they held was infinitely grave. It shut off the Sunlight of the Spirit and they were vulnerable to the very diseases for which they were attempting to recover. They had to master these resentments. This is one way that seemed to help.

Hate Letter Components

<u>Purpose:</u> This letter is never to be sent!!!

To practice getting out on paper whatever is in the mind and to try to start to get rid of the negative energy and angry feelings in a safe and healthy way. This starts to diffuse the anger, which may have been building up or perhaps resentments you have held for years. It is a first step in looking at the issues.

<u>Homework:</u> Fill in the blanks to the sentence completions below. Remember that you will not be hurting anyone with writing down what you would like to say in the moment. You will not be sending this letter but perhaps this can help you modify what you would like to say or do down the road. After writing this, share with a group or support person. Have the support person evaluate your letter to see if it sounds angry…or maybe guilt ridden or perhaps trying to explain or justify things…. This can help you see what your blocks may be to expressing or feeling your anger. If you don't think you can do this, pretend if you were angry, what would you like to say.

How dare you…

I hate your guts because…

You always/never think

You deserve …..punishment for…..

If I could do it myself I'd …..

Who do you think you are?…..

Do/did you really think…..

You're nothing but a ……..

You treated me……

I think….

You think….

Everyone thinks….

You should have

You shouldn't have…

You're not even…

Where on earth did you….

Why on earth did you…

Why of all the stupid things you could've done you…..

You're not even…

I may…but you…

You promised…..but you…..

You didn't even…..

You didn't even have the guts/courtesy/….

I hate and despise….

You are a despicable….

The thing that really gets to me is…..

If I were a judge, I'd order….

If you think…

I'll always…

I'll never….

You'll always….

You'll never….

The most irritating thing is…

It's not fair….

Post Homework Ideas:

Many people find that they are really angry and end up crying at the end. Some people use cuss words or language they would never use otherwise. There are no rules except to remember it is a safe outlet for temporary frustration. Solutions can come later.

Sometimes, tearing up the paper that this is written on is therapeutic. Perhaps you'd like to burn it or stomp on the paper, symbolically. Find an interesting ceremonial way to release all of this anger or hate. You could even get a letter opener and on top of a cushion, "stab" the letter in an effort to symbolically rid yourself of this anger and pain.

Angel Letter Components

PURPOSE: TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE WAY AT LOOKING AT A SITUATION OR CIRCUMSTANCE AND PROVIDE AN AVENUE FOR HEALING.

HOMEWORK: PRETEND THAT YOU ARE THE ANGELS WHO LOVE AND CARE AS WELL AS PROTECT YOU.

PRETEND THAT THEY WROTE THIS LETTER TO YOU. FILL IN THE BLANKS TO THE SENTENCE COMPLETIONS BELOW. SHARE WITH YOUR SUPPORT PERSON. SPECULATE ON WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU OR WHAT THEY SEE IT COULD MEAN.

ANGEL LETTER:

- THE REASON YOU ARE MOST PRECIOUS TO US IS BECAUSE....
- WE HAVE BEEN PROUD....
- MOST ESPECIALLY.....
- RECENTLY WHEN YOU.....
- WE HAVE GREAT HOPE BECAUSE....
- YOU ARE OUR SPECIAL FAVORITE BECAUSE....
- WE LOVE YOU.
- WE HAVE INTERCEDED ON MANY OCCASIONS BECAUSE....
- THE TIME TO PAY ATTENTION IS....
- YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN.....
- THE REASON WHY TRIALS HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT LATELY HAS BEEN....
- WE KNOW....
- YOUR GUARDIAN ANGELS NAME IS.....
- WE KNOW THAT ONE OF YOUR SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS ON EARTH IS....

- **WE FEEL YOU HAVE BEEN SPECIALLY CHOSEN TO.....**
- **WE WANT TO TELL YOU....ABOUT .....**
- **OUR SPECIAL WAY OF COMMUNICATING WITH YOU HAS BEEN.....**
- **WE CONTINUE TO BE HAPPY ABOUT....**
- **CALL ON US FOR STRENGTH AND PROTECTION WHEN.....**
- **YOU CAN KNOW WE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU BECAUSE.....**
- **THE REASON YOU LOST CONTACT WITH YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL IS BECAUSE..**

- **WE URGE YOU TO...**
- **IF ONLY YOU KNEW....**
- **BE ASSURED THAT....**
- **BE COMFORTED THAT...**
- **LISTEN TO US BY....**
- **IF ONLY YOU KNEW....**
- **IT IS OUR GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE YOU....**
- **YOU CAN START OVER BY...**
- **NEVER BE FEARFUL BECAUSE...**
- **YOU WILL HAVE SERENITY BY....**
- **OUR MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO YOU NOW IS...**
- **BE AWARE THAT....**
- **WE HAVE POWER BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS....**
- **WE WILL ALWAYS...**

- **WE ARE CURRENTLY...**
- **BELIEVE IN...**
- **HOPE IN...**
- **TAKE COMFORT IN...**
-
- **POST HOMEWORK:**
- **You MAY WANT TO KEEP A SPECIAL JOURNAL OR NOTEBOOK FROM YOUR "ANGELS" OR GUARDIANS/SPIRIT GUIDES AND CONTINUE DATING YOUR ENTRIES.**
- **You MAY BE SURPRISED TO FIND WHAT KINDS OF THINGS YOU LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF AS YOU EXPLORE THESE ANSWERS. (IF YOU WANT TO ADAPT THIS EXERCISE, YOU COULD DO SO BY USING ANY RELIGIOUS OR COMFORTING FIGURE SUCH AS JESUS, YOUR FAVORITE GRAMMA, A SPECIAL HERO OR SOMEONE YOU REALLY ADMIRE).**

Angel Letter Sample

<u>Purpose:</u> To assist in providing another alternative way at looking at a situation or circumstance and provide an avenue for healing using a different perspective.

This letter was written by a woman with Major Clinical Depression. She decided that she was going to receive a letter from God.

Jeannie's God Letter:

Dear Jeannie:
The reason that you have the disease of Clinical Depression is to slow you down enough so I can reach you and you can spend some time learning what a wonderful and worthwhile person you are. You thought Joe was most of your problem, and now you know that he wasn't. There are so many people who love you and want to help you out. You have to let them in. I think you are starting to get the idea that you are not better than the rest of my children and you aren't less than either. You are a part of My Creation. You need to connect with other people to feel human yourself. However, now that you have slowed down, we need to work on your maturity level. You still get upset and /or resentful if things don't go your way. Did you think you always would? By giving humans free will I don't get my way all the time either.
We'll talk more later.

Love
God

This letter was written by a woman who was in a financial struggle and felt very alone.

Dear Little Sarita:
We are your guardians. We have always been by your side although you probably don't realize this. The reason you are most precious to us is that you have a very special work in life that God has for you and we know what that will look like. We have been proud of how hard you have struggled to connect with your spiritual center. We have great hope for your quick and speedy recovery from your recent illness because you are now standing in the light of positive thinking and affirmations of healing. We have

interceded on many occasions because we know how good your heart is and how devoted you are to god's children. The reason why trials have been difficult lately has been that you are very strong willed and oftentimes stubborn. You have an unusual amount of fear that you cannot get along financially alone. We continue to be happy with your choices of getting help from the Accountant who will help you with your financial planning. We urge you to continue to be diligent in keeping up with your paperwork even though we know you find it to be so boring and tedious. If only you knew what wonderful things lie in store for you as you continue your journey of financial independence. Be comforted and assured that we never leave you and it is our good pleasure to give you the desires of your heart. You deserve to be happy, joyous and free. You will have serenity if you continue to face your fears and pray and meditate whenever you get up and go to sleep. We are currently working on projects, which you have no idea about which will benefit you when you want to travel and meet new people who are rich in ideas and monetary wealth. We want you to listen to us by letting us write to you periodically and always trying to remember how precious you are. Take comfort in the fact that you are never ever alone and you never have to walk through any of your fears alone. We are sending some new friends to you who are going to see what a hard worker you are and who will assist you in finding comfort…We are most closest to you in the middle of the night when your mind is at rest and not so involved with your thoughts. Don't forget to take more breaks and mini vacations with your mind when you work. Listen to music. It will help with your attitude and lighten your load. We are very proud of you and will continue to support you.

Love,
Rafael and Michael