

The key to dealing with anger isn't so much whether you get angry or not, but in how long you allow the anger to remain with you and how you process your emotion. The pain of shame looks for someone to blame. It causes you to blame yourself for failing to reach your expectations, blame others for criticizing or rejecting you, and blame the other person for decisions you willingly made. Blame feeds anger.

EVENING THE SCORE

On the other hand, if you direct your anger toward your wrongdoer, you can't forgive and still be angry. Being angry with your offender is a form of retaliation—the opposite of forgiveness. People feel the need to even the score and can't rest until they do. This is what gets us into trouble, causing us to waste years and energy getting back at someone, even if it's just us wishing them harm in our minds.

If you've given up the right to get even with your offender, that's forgiveness; however, if your loss still hurts, that's a normal emotion that will exist as long as you feel the loss. As you come to accept the loss

and move on with your life, the anger and shame will slowly dissipate.

Until you turn the page, you will still harbor anger even though you have chosen not to get back at your offender. The feeling comes from not being able to control your loss. Being powerless makes you mad, but you can still forgive.

PAIN PRODUCES MOVEMENT

While people respond to the pain and shame of wrong choices in a variety of ways, there are three actions that are consistent with most DNA: we either move toward people, against them or away from them.

If confession truly is good for the soul, then here goes. Because of my hurting past, I move *toward* others with people pleasing and caretaking behavior so they will like me. I sharpen my perfectionist skills to make sure I never upset anyone, so the compliments continue my way. Every encounter is an opportunity to prove my worth.

Others move *against* people with anger. Their wounds keep them on high alert to the slightest invalidation, causing them to strike out in retaliation.

Unfortunately, their aggressive behavior may not be just an offensive tactic punishing people for hurting them; it could be a defensive tactic designed to keep them at arm's length.

**We train people with
our anger to walk on
eggshells around us so
they won't get too close
and expose our flaws.**

Likewise, there are those who choose to move *away* and shut down emotionally, withdrawing physically and taking great strides to cover up any pain or shame. Their objective is to disconnect from anyone they perceive to be a threat, creating the distance necessary to limit the exposure of their weakness.

Sadly, none of these reactions do anything to unscramble the pain and, in some instances, they even establish more pain. Let's be clear about one thing, though. I've learned that most people don't want to talk about their pain or shame. It hurts too much or is embarrassing to admit to. They would rather forget.

In the moment of pain, they are coping the best they can with the knowledge they have.

LET GO OF YOUR NONSENSE

Being the victim feels good. It's like being on the winning team of you against the world. Regrettably, the world doesn't care, so you need to get over yourself. Don't misinterpret what I am saying. You are special and your feelings matter; however, don't allow your feelings to override all else to the mistake of nothing else matters. Your feelings are just one part of this vast thing we call life, which is all interwoven and complex. And some days a little bit messy!

In every moment you have a choice. You can continue to feel bad about another person's actions—or start feeling good. You need to take responsibility for your own happiness and not put so much power into the hands of another person.

**Why would you let the
person who hurt you,
in the past, have so
much power, right
here and right now?**

No amount of contemplation, analysis or evaluation has ever fixed a relationship problem. Never! So why choose to engage so much thought and devote so much energy to a person you feel has wronged you?

PAIN CONTROL

What you've done, or what's been done to you, is not the power of pain. The power of pain is what you believe! You live what you believe. If you believe your house is haunted, your house is haunted. If you believe you are worthless, you won't treat yourself well emotionally, physically or spiritually because you are convinced you aren't worth it. Healing the hurts of your past involves eliminating the lies from your life. Pain has little to do with the bad things that

have happened to you or the bad things you have done. Pain has everything to do with the lies you believe about yourself. Lt. Dan believed he was only appreciated as a war hero and that his value was based on his performance. That, my friend, is the shame of it all.

