



# Forgiveness – The Continental Divide Between Freedom and Hell

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There is an intense relationship between anxiety and anger. Understanding this interaction is one of the most important concepts that will have a major impact in calming down your nervous system.

- They are, first of all, the same entity. Anxiety is the sensation generated by your autonomic nervous system's response to a threat. Stress hormones and inflammatory proteins are elevated and when a given situation doesn't resolve (chronic pain), more of these molecules are secreted in an effort to regain control. The result is anger, which is anxiety with a neurochemical chemical kick. It is a response to the environment and not primarily a psychological issue.
- Anxiety and Anger are universal, powerful and necessary for life. You are not going to get rid of them.
- Anxiety represents a feeling of vulnerability and helplessness. The intention is to be so unpleasant that it compels us to take action to decrease it. So, we are hard-wired to avoid this emotion at all costs. In nature, there are significant penalties for being vulnerable.
- Anger feels powerful and is often effective in regaining control. It is a rapid response that solves or masks anxiety. It also gives you the extra boost to resolve a threat.
- But what happens to your thinking when you are angry? The blood flow to the frontal lobes of your brain is diminished, the inflammatory proteins in your brain sensitize you to sensory input, and much of your reaction emanates from the more primitive centers of your brain. You are flooded with a barrage of angry, intense, and irrational thoughts. It is temporary insanity.
- Anger both masks the *feeling* of anxiety and also turbocharges the system, which created it.

## Reasons to forgive



There are numerous reasons to process and let go of your anger.

- The main one is that you simply cannot heal when you remain angry. The essence of healing is normalizing your body's neurochemical state to that of a safety profile, which is profoundly restorative. If your whole system is fired up and remains so, how can that happen? It can't and won't. You can improve somewhat without forgiveness, but the deep healing can't occur until you can calm down and truly let go.
- Another core concept of solving pain is stimulating neuroplastic changes in your brain. You physically can cause your brain to change its structure based on where you place your attention (suppression doesn't work). That means you have to move towards your vision of what you would like your life to be like instead of continually trying to fix your prior life. You cannot move forward until you let go of the past, especially your deepest wounds. Most people in chronic pain remain angry at the situations or people who have harmed them. The more legitimate your gripe, the harder it is to move on. But how does holding onto the past make your life more enjoyable.
- Anger is destructive, as it is supposed to be. It's your body's last ditch effort to escape threat. It is destructive in every direction, including self-destructive. It is the reason why many people completely neglect every aspect of their health. It is tantamount to slow suicide.
- Anger is abusive. It also destroys relationships. The key element of successful human interactions is awareness of your needs and others' needs. How else can you constructively interact with those close to you. Anger completely blocks awareness at every level.
- Anger destroys families. We evolved language and the human consciousness through language and social interactions. It is ability to cooperate that took hominids from the bottom to the top of the food chain. There is a deep need for human connection. Unfortunately, close family connections are also the strongest triggers. Why would you ever be unkind to someone you care for so much? Why is the incidence of domestic abuse so high? It is maybe the most disturbing paradox of our human existence.
- When you are angry, you are in the fight mode of the survival response of fight, flight, freeze, or faint. Your body's response is to mobilize every resource to survive. The blood supply to your gut, bladder, and the frontal lobes of your brain diminishes and is shunted to your heart, lungs, and skeletal muscles. You can't think clearly, although it might seem like you are. That is why it is so critical to, "take no action in a reaction."
- The problem is that this reaction that blocks awareness also blocks the creativity needed to constructively solve the problem. It really does represent temporary insanity.
- Forgiveness is the most powerful and definitive move that you can make to take charge of your life. It is actually a selfish and bold act. You are no longer allowing someone you dislike (despise) continue to be in your head and run your life. You don't have to like this person—ever. You are just breaking the link between the past and present.
- I often asked my patients that what is your day like when you are angry? Forget about your pain. It isn't a great day. So regardless whether you are in pain or not, anger will compromise your capacity to enjoy your day. You are in Hell and you may be so used to being there that you might not even know it. Take a deep breath and think about this scenario for a while.....

### **Why hold onto anger?**

It keeps you safe. It protects you from both emotional and physical pain. There are few, if any, rewards in nature for being vulnerable and humans are part of this reality. In essence, you are being asked to give up your anger so you can experience anxiety. Raw anxiety is an unpleasant feeling. It is this interaction that may be the root cause of why it is commonly thought that you cannot really be open for change until you "hit bottom." In other words, the anxiety is so out of control that it can no longer be contained by either functional or dysfunctional means.



So, it is not an unwillingness to give up anger that is the problem. It is inability to feel and tolerate feeling vulnerable. That is why a critical aspect of The DOC Journey is the sequencing that allows you to learn to tolerate feeling vulnerable. Each person is unique and has to engage with the process on his or her own terms.

One of the antidotes to anxiety/ anger is control. But another one is to give up the need for control. That is what the whole DOC process is about—awareness, calming down, stimulating neuroplasticity, letting go, moving towards a vision, and enjoying your life. You can't fix chronic pain, but you can crowd it out of your brain and life. What do you want? What do you really want? Don't try. Do it!!