

## **ANGER-REST IN PEACE**

**By Dave Wolffe**

**Anger is a feeling like so many others that occurs in all of us. It comes at different times and for different reasons. It isn't the emotion itself that effects us or others whose lives we touch, but it's how we handle it.**

**The idea of "LOSING IT" is certainly not a new phenomenon. What we are looking at in this article is not one huge outburst of anger, but the kind that can be compared to an infectious disease. It is a sort of condition that is spread, not through the blood or the air, but through the spirit, the word, and more importantly, the heart.**

**The situation described in this article centers around the treatment of a child of a divorced couple. The people involved in this situation are, Amy the ex-wife, Barry, the ex-husband, Carl and Denise, their children**

### **The Situation**

**Carl, who was a teenager at the time this state of affairs began, had been living with his dad, by mutual agreement of his parents, Amy and Barry. At this point in time, Amy was trying to begin a new part of her life, and asked her ex-husband if their son could live with him. Amy had also become involved in a new relationship at this time.**

**A few months later a woman came into Barry's life. It was at this point that difficulties arose between Barry and his son. Carl refused to pay any attention to his dad's girlfriend, Ellen, and totally ignored her. Barry tried to have his son show some courtesy toward Ellen, by at least saying "Hello"**

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to her. Barry didn't want anything else from Carl except for him to show respect toward his girlfriend.

Things were getting serious between Barry and Ellen, and after about a year and a half they decided that they were going to live together in her house. There was ample room for Carl. Arrangements for him to attend a local college would also have been no problem. The difficulty that Barry and his son faced was a need for Carl to have a change of attitude over the next three months when this move was to take place. If Carl was able to show Ellen the respect Barry asked him to, then he certainly was welcome to join his father and Ellen when the move took place. However, Carl's attitude remained the same. At this point Carl was given three choices; go away to a college, live with his mom and her new husband or find some other place to live. Ultimately he went to live with his mother.

Subsequently, child support became an issue for Amy and court hearings became part of Amy and Barry's lives. Prior to this, Barry and Amy had an amicable relationship, so he thought. Then things became nasty. The atmosphere between them became really hostile. When they had to attend court hearings scowls from Amy and her new husband, Frank, were frequent, along with many expletives. Descriptions of how bad a father Barry was and the need to see him punished by the court became the substance of Amy's objectives during these hearings. Amy's tone of voice, accusations and the anger she felt was apparent to all of those present during these court sessions. It was a feeling that Barry never expected to see expressed, and carried out with such venom, from this person who he had been married to for over twenty years.

Things got even worse around issues and incidents involving their son's college education. According to Amy, Barry had little concern for their son's well being, was purposely withholding money for his education, while trying to make a mockery out of the court system. The fact was that Barry sent a check for his part of the tuition, which apparently was never received, something he was never made aware of. What Barry was challenging was paying for room and board, which had to be paid in addition to the amount that he was paying for child support. This sum of money would more than cover this expense. At the initial child support hearing Barry really didn't understand this provision and didn't question it.

Since he was already paying more than the amount that would cover the room and board expense that he was contesting, he knew that the support payments that were taken from his pay check could be utilized while he was seeking a decision on this issue, and so Carl's expenses would still be covered. However, until this hearing, nothing was said about the tuition and according to Amy, Barry was the reason Carl had to leave college causing him to become a "basket case".

The level of anger was at its peak. Reason and thought were no longer involved in Amy's attitude as to the reasons for Barry's actions. Unfortunately, as is the case in many instances, the one who seemingly provokes these thoughts and feelings, doesn't have a chance to explain his actions. Attempts at communicating both verbally (by phone) and in writing had been unsuccessful. Barry periodically tried to make phone contact. When Amy heard his voice she told him she had nothing to say and hung up. Amy's second husband, Frank, called on occasion, following Barry's efforts to contact Amy and told him not to call their house because of the effect on Amy. Barry's attempts to try to talk and let her know of his concern for their son and daughter were met by silence and the sound of a phone being slammed down. The wall between them became more solid.

Once Carl turned twenty-one years old, and the support payments were no longer an issue, Barry sent a letter to both his son and his ex-wife. In it, the idea of trying to resolve their differences so that their children could have the benefit of both parents, as well as perhaps the opportunity to have a relationship with additional family members, a stepparent, a stepbrother and stepsister, was addressed. Barry hoped that the timing of this attempt to contact them would make a difference. However, this effort at peacemaking was met by another phone call from Frank who told Barry he was not to contact Amy in any way. The "Cold War" continues. This condition between Amy and Barry has been going on for over fifteen years.

What causes this kind of reaction? It *can be* misinterpreted behavior, overlooked actions, a look that one person gives another, or comments that are made. The intention of words spoken or actions taken can be misunderstood.

The response to this anger activator becomes intensely ugly and deep rooted. It becomes emotional venom that spreads throughout the body and soul. As time passes, this feeling gets more entrenched. The effect of this spreading disease greatly hampers a person's ability to more fully enjoy life and relationships. It is not only harmful to those who experience this ever consuming feeling directly, but to all people involved in their lives (family, friends, colleagues, etc.). These people willingly or not, become part of this "Anger Cycle" and become infected with this disease as well.

What I am describing can occur within a variety of relationships. It can come from a person they have been in business with, a family member, or any person with whom they have shared some kind of close relationship. This type of anger and reaction to it, usually occurs after a period of time has gone by since the anger producing action or incident has taken place. The source of the anger may have centered around a

variety of issues; those related to child support and care (as is the case in the illustration presented in this article), treatment of a family member (a parent, child, or aunt), or a situation involving money or possessions, in a family or business relationship.

Sides are drawn when the anger felt, as in the situation explored above, by one individual, Amy, is spread to others. There are many ways this disease can be to effect others. One possibility is that one person, Carl in this state of affairs, is a child who shares the same feeling as his mom toward his dad. Another way someone is drawn into this cycle is if he or she is a part of the immediate family or close group, as Denise is in this scenario. She is someone who either shares the same feeling towards her dad as her mother and brother or feels that she should. Other possibilities might be that Denise either feels a stronger allegiance to her mom than to her dad, or fears that her mom, might suffer severe physical or emotional consequences, if she doesn't take her mom's side. A final possibility for involving other people in this "War" is through some change in a person's life. This adjustment may occur through a marriage, as it was for Amy, a change in living arrangements or job situation, perhaps losing it, having a promotion or retirement. Amy's involvement with others in this "War"

**added more fuel to her intensifying emotional inferno. It served as a means of reinforcing the wall that has been erected to prevent any resolution from taking place with Barry. Amy, along with the others who joined with her in this war against Barry, wasted much energy, which could have been otherwise put to good use in enjoying relationships with others and improving other parts of their lives.**

**During the course of an ongoing situation, one person, in our scenario, Barry, tried to negotiate a truce, even though he wasn't "Waging any battles" of his own. He attempted to offer Amy a way to discuss what happened that aroused her anger and to let her know the reasons for his actions, that weren't meant to be malicious. Barry also wanted to let Amy know that another reason he wanted to try to bring peace between them was for Carl and Denise's benefit. Barry felt that having both parents part of their children's lives would help them get through some of the challenges they would face as they traveled through adulthood. Dealing with two warring parents was not something he felt should be one of these obstacles. So much for his good intentions. At this point, Amy didn't want to know about anything her ex-husband had to say and so, her one-sided war continued.**

The WHAT, WHY and HOW of the spread of this kind of anger presented in the situation is still going on between Amy and Barry. The circumstances are not unique. Whether you are the person who is experiencing this kind of anger, as Amy, or the individual who is caught in the middle of this war, as is the case of Carl and Denise, this state of affairs hopefully has given you additional insight into your own circumstances. It also provides an opportunity for you to decide if what may be happening in your own life with your own "War" is worth it. Perhaps at some point you will make the decision to end your own conflict. If you are an observer of a similar relationship, you can view this one with an objective eye and raise your own questions and form your own opinions, and can offer those you are witnessing in conflict, some of the ideas presented in this article.

#### Reader Feedback

1. Amy had a chance to live a new life, with her new husband, Frank. Their privacy and chance to further develop their relationship without having anyone else living with them was interrupted when Carl was "forced" to live with them.
2. Another thought was that Barry wasn't "supposed to" start a new life with a new relationship and marriage.

It was agreed by readers that either or both of these conditions caused Amy's anger to develop and grow more deep-seated.

3. Barry should have made more attempts to get in touch with Carl and Denise throughout this time.
4. Carl's feeling of rejection, first by his mother and then by his father was something that should be addressed as part of any contact Barry may have with his son.
5. Frank should have stayed out of the situation completely.

As you read this article you have no doubt formed your own ideas about this kind of anger, its effect on those who experience it, as well as those who have become part of this "War". Someone going through this experience has three choices.

The first is to continue as they are, involving others, focusing a part of themselves on maintaining their position against the "anger provoker" and keeping others at a distance from this person as well. Whether they realize it or not, continuing this way, means taking away something from other relationships and other important parts of life. It's keeping a part of a person's heart from being channeled into fully experiencing love and concern for others. Some people may deny that this is happening to them. Whether it is being recognized or not, it is something that definitely happens. It is certainly one effect to consider in making the

decision to continue with this "War" or not.

Another possibility to consider is to let the other person know why you are feeling this intense anger. -Then- Listen *to why he or she did what was done or said what was said*. It is at this point that an honest evaluation of the other person's words or actions can be made. This is the stage where the decision of whether the "Anger provoker" intended to hurt someone close or cause the anger that was evoked. Following this course takes a lot of effort. Maybe, it's something that a person doesn't want to try because they truly believe the offender is the kind of person who really meant to cause harm. This is another choice to be made.

A third way to handle this kind of situation is to go by others' evaluation of the anger provoker. They may say that this individual isn't worth anything, and belongs in hell or perhaps used more descriptive words. These are often people who themselves are often angry and want company in their world of darkness. This is for you to judge.

Perhaps this pattern of behavior has become a "habit" which will be something really hard to break. It has become a part of life. To change it would take too much effort. This is another thought to consider.

Another choice involves the decision that a person just does not want to give the offender another chance. If this is the case, so be it.

Whatever reason is used, to follow this direction or not, is a matter of choice . If the decision to take the road not yet traveled is made, what are the possible consequences of this choice? A person may find out that what was said or done wasn't meant the way they thought. It was something that had no negative intention or purpose. As a result of this disclosure of information a new attitude toward the other person may begin to develop, and as a result the wall, which had been built, may slowly be taken down. With it's destruction, a fresh path to the others who were involved in this "War" can be paved, along with the opportunity of having better relationships provided for all who had previously been on both "sides" of this "Battle".

For those who have made the decision to get more information, there is the opportunity to let go of the rage within them. With the possibility of releasing this internal energy, comes a new found freedom. No longer is it a part of them, keeping their heart partially closed. No longer is the energy used to maintain these feelings needed. It is released to utilize in developing better relationships and in pursuing the life we are all intended

to enjoy. The internal brake that was placed on them is no longer holding them back. Forgiveness results from this release of anger. Once again, it is an individual's decision to let the anger go, with or without reconciliation with the offending person.

Misunderstanding, Lack of Communication, Prolonged Anger, Broken and Missed Relationships, are harmful to our emotional and physical health. If there is the possibility of an antidote for this disease, providing a healthier life for all those who have become "infected" by its germs, wouldn't it be a great idea to do what we have the power to do to remedy them? It's up to each one of us to do our part to help cure this "illness" and prevent it from infecting us again. This power is ours to use, so let's use it! When we exercise it, then, and only then, can this kind of anger truly rest in peace

**THE END,**  
**OR**  
**FOR SOME**  
**THE BEGINNING**

Readers Comments: Your comments on this article are Welcome.