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ANGER – SOME PLUSES, MORE MINUSES

ANGER is often considered a negative emotion. One resorts to anger when frustrated, hurt, disappointed, or threatened. Sometimes it has benefits – it helps you overcome your fears and respond to danger or threats; anger also helps build confidence and a resolve to do better. Often, however, it leads to more disadvantages like numbing you emotionally and cognitively and leading to other problems. Research has shown that anger is also correlated with heart disease and researchers are also examining the impact of anger on the brain and body.

Apart from frustration, hurt and disappointment new research from the University at Buffalo School of Management has revealed that when employees in office perceive a lack of power at work, they tend to become paranoid and the paranoia can cause such people to vent their anger at colleagues or family members. The study has been published in the forthcoming issue of *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

Paranoid individuals often misread and misrepresent even benign interactions with colleagues; often they may feel threatened even without any interactions. This paranoia increases as people feel less power at work, which manifests in anger, say the researchers. According to the researchers, the feeling of low power reduces in individuals who felt supported by the authorities. “That’s why it’s especially important for leaders to create a supportive work environment, by allocating resources and offering promotions fairly, strengthening supervisor-subordinate relationships, disincentivizing self-serving behaviours, and removing job stressors,” say the researchers.

Generally, when presented with a claim, anxious individuals search for information to verify whether the claim is right or wrong (MacKuen *et al.*, 2010; Turner *et al.*, 2006; Valentino *et al.*, 2008). But angry individuals readily act on the given claim (Ilakkuvan *et al.*, 2017; Kim, 2016; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006) and are less likely to search for information; even if they do, they are in favor of information that bolsters their beliefs (MacKuen *et al.*, 2010; Suhay & Erisen, 2018; Tiedens & Linton, 2001; Valentino *et al.*, 2008).

These findings have been further reinforced by a recent survey among South Korean adults which revealed that anger contributed to the broader spread of misinformation on COVID-19 by leading angry individuals to consider false claims to be “scientifically credible” [*Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review*. <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-39>]. Angry individuals easily rationalize their act of sharing misinformation by deeming it trustworthy, say the researchers, but this could lead to consequences such as belief in false cures.

Anger is also detrimental to health. A research published in *Psychology and Aging* says that anger may be more harmful to an older person’s physical health than sadness. Anger could lead to increasing inflammation, which is associated with chronic illnesses such as heart disease, arthritis and cancer. Says Meaghan A. Barlow from Concordia University and lead author of the study, “Our study showed that anger can lead to the development of chronic illnesses, whereas sadness did not.”

This finding is echoed by another report published in the *Journal of Cardiac Failure* (DOI: 10.1016/j.cardfail.2020.07.008), which says that mental stress and anger may have clinical implications for patients with heart failure.

So, how does one keep anger away? Well, develop confidence in yourself and trust in others. Exercise and relax to keep away stress. And sleep well.

Researchers Hisler, Miller and Krizan suggest that a good night of sleep may keep your anger away [*Sleep*, 2020; 43 (Supplement_1): A105 DOI: 10.1093/sleep/zsaa056.274]. They analyzed daily diary entries from 202 college students, and found that individuals reported experiencing more anger on days following less sleep than usual for them. Well-slept individuals reported less anger.

Hasan Jawaid Khan

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For Editorial Queries: Ph.: 91-011-25848702; **Email:** sr@niscpr.res.in; **Fax:** 91-011-25847062

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