

ANGER

A Moral Emotion

Ethics Café
3 July 2023



SOPHIA TOWN
Community Psychological Services

Why Ethics Café ?

CONTEXT: SCPS is committed to contribute to a robust leaders' network through coordinating activities that focuses on leadership connectedness and development. The initiative is called *Sustaining our Community of Practice*.



Ethics Management Resource

- Ethics Café's (Quarterly)
- Workshops
- Consultations
- Global Ethics Day event
- Ethics risks assessments, strategy planning and implementation



Ethics Café today ...



Anger is an emotion often socially judged. We may tell each other not to feel so angry, to calm down, to adapt to and move on from injustices. A child acting out anger will likely get time-out and, as an adult, people may avoid you if you 'have anger-issues'. Of course, we cannot harm others because of anger, or as the result of any of our other emotions. Living ethically requires us to regulate our emotions and make responsible choices.

However, feeling angry often alerts us that something is wrong, that what is important to us as individuals and humankind is overlooked or violated. Being able to put anger where it belongs and working together at preventing further wrongs helps us. It may prevent anger from becoming a springboard for destructive reactions directed at ourselves and others.

In our Ethics Café today, we will try to better understand anger as a moral emotion, and the important role it plays in social transformation agendas that typically motivate the work we do in our organisations.

About the Ethics Café process



- Learn more about the topic.
- Practice skills necessary to navigate ‘ethics territory’:
 - Name and understand different viewpoints.
 - Explore reasoning from different viewpoints.
 - State reasons why viewpoints are believable/ right/ justifiable/preferable ... And why not ...
- Cautionary reminders:
 - Real experiences, life-changing at times, emotions evoked.
 - Generosity in arguing, be prepared to change your mind.

To start ...

Think back over this morning, yesterday, the past few days.

Recall something that made you angry.

How do you know that you were angry, instead of for example sad or happy?

Briefly write down the facts of the situation (what, when, where, who)

(WORKSHEET 1)

Discussion in your group

Appoint a time-keeper

Each person has a turn to share (5 minutes per person)

Group members: listen with an open mind, do not give advice, feel free to ask questions to clarify information

In relation to the event/incident you share, try to identify the following:

- Did you notice a reaction in your body, when you felt angry? If so, what did you become aware of?
- If you can remember what you were thinking at the time, slow down, and try to clarify what underlies your thoughts. For example, 'I felt disrespected'
- What did you want to do in the situation, and what did you actually do?

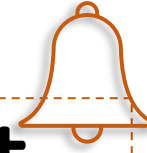
(WORKSHEET 2)

Ethics lens || What is anger?



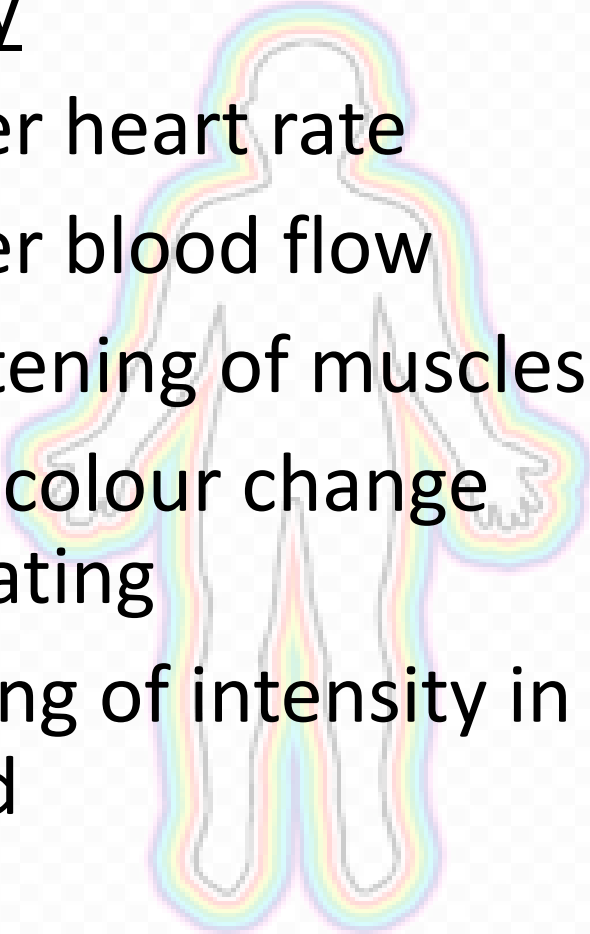
In my body In my mind	In the past In the present Anticipated in the future	Inward Outward Individual Collective
Beliefs: what is right/wrong, fair Assumptions Stereotypes Framework: earlier life experiences	Observable information/facts - what, when, where, who	Object Intention

Anger is ... a reaction & alert



Body

faster heart rate
faster blood flow
tightening of muscles
skin colour change
sweating
feeling of intensity in
head



Mind

like the application of a filter –
a judgement that something is
wrong¹



*How do you know that
something is wrong?*

John J. Drummond says₂:

“Wrongdoing violates our expectation of good treatment and thereby ‘slights’ us; it diminishes our relative status in the sense that it is a harm to our moral standing. Hence, when wronged, when our moral standing and our moral worth are diminished, ‘becoming angry with someone marks oneself as the person’s equal, as someone to be respected as a moral agent’ (Tessman, 2005, 120)”.

How do you know something is wrong?



Perception about and **experience** of injustice / unfairness, that someone has done something to harm, violate, insult something that you value, or someone that matters to you.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION



TRANSLATED INTO POINTS OF REFERENCE

Beliefs: what is right/wrong, fair
Assumptions
Stereotypes
Earlier life experiences

For example:
Human Rights
Duty
Consequences
Care ethic
Ubuntu
Character ethics

Anger relates to a 'happening'

Has a time reference: **past, present, anticipated in the future**

Can be described by using **what, when, where, who** questions

Happens in “**arenas** of our intimate **personal lives**, the **political public sphere** around us, and ... “the **middle realm**”⁴.

Anger motivates action

Inward & Outward



Object:

person(s), group(s), system(s),
ideologies, self



Intention:

payback, hurt/pain, holding to
account, change



ANGER

A Moral Emotion

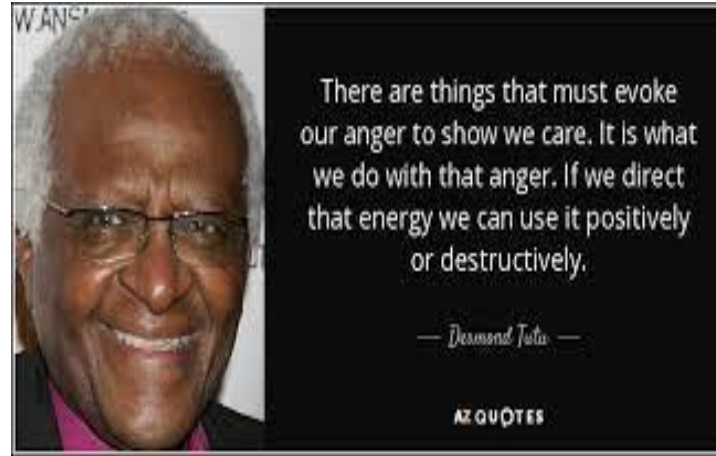
- its role in social transformation agendas

Group discussions: using WORKSHEETS 3, each with a quote indicated on the next slide. Each group deliberates views to agree with, and disagree, with the statement allocated to each group.



Steve Biko

As angry as we have the right to be, let us remember that we are in the struggle to kill the idea that one kind of man is superior to another kind of man.



There are things that must evoke our anger to show we care. It is what we do with that anger. If we direct that energy we can use it positively or destructively.

— Desmond Tutu —

AZ QUOTES

“If anger not only has an approach tendency, but can also increase self-belief, optimism, and risk-taking, then we can see how important anger played and continues to play in fuelling the confidence and audacity of those who dare to challenge oppressive systems” – Myisha Cherry (2021)



When anger rises, think of the consequences.

Confucius

BrainyQuote



“

Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it.

SENECA

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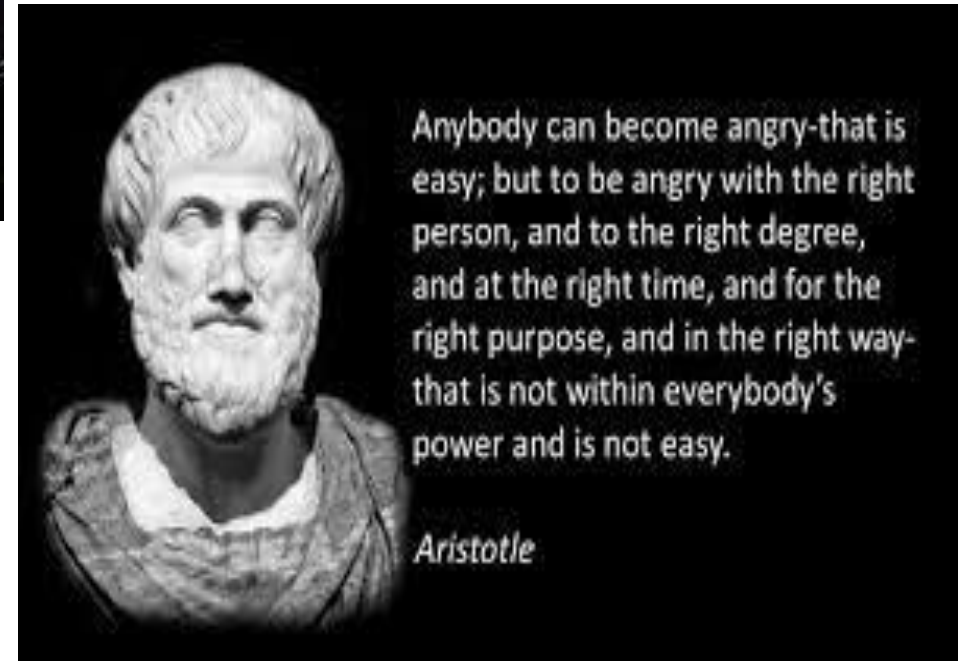


“

Often, we feel helpless in lots of situations in our lives. The way anger gets a grip on us is it seems to be a way to extricate ourselves from helplessness.

MARTHA NUSSBAUM

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Anybody can become angry-that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way-that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.

Aristotle

An approach: responding to anger



Self-understanding: anger-triggers

○ Fine tune *ethics awareness*: anger as moral emotion, context related ethics challenges & risks

Moral courage: take action where it matters

Deliberate & decide on *right action*

Be willing to *learn and grow* in engaging with anger

Closing



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