

ANGER MANAGEMENT – Do It for Yourself  
Submitters' Conference - August 2007  
By Beth.

A few years ago, maybe 4 or 5, Abdullah had asked me to speak at the conference and I had said that I would...so one day I was driving along in my car and trying to think of a topic I could speak about that would interest a room full of people. I just couldn't think of anything. So I thought "Beth, just think of something you know a lot about and then see if you can work that into a talk that would be interesting".

So I kept driving... and driving...and all of a sudden I had this sobering realization that I really didn't know a lot about anything! At least not anything that would interest a room full of people. The next thing that happened was pretty amazing to me...I had a true epiphany!

I heard these words in my head as if GOD were right next me: "Beth, if you're willing to admit that you don't know too much about anything, how is it you have an opinion on almost EVERYTHING!!" Yikes! I was totally speechless! So that began a whole new quest for having many fewer opinions, GOD willing! Now that quest is far from over...But that's another subject – maybe for another year.

THIS year, the point is that I actually thought of something that I **DO** know a lot about: "Anger Management" – my experience with 'anger management' especially when I was younger and less 'seasoned' – so to speak – was often with *anger* in capital letters and *management* in very small lower case. But, Mashallah, we live and learn and sometimes we learn enough to talk about it to a room full of people – Alhumdulallah.

I'm going to start by sharing an experience that happened to me about 8 or 10 or 12 years ago or something – mid nineties let's say.

*But before I go too far, I want to emphasize that this was MY perspective on the situation at that time. I am not a speaking for anyone else.*

There was a lot of contention and conflict going on in our mosque at that time. The issues were familiar ones:

- Which direction should we face when we pray
- Should we still pay attention to what Dr. Khalifa said on the tapes or should we leave that behind us
- Should we say "Allahawakbar" or "Allahkabir
- How should certain Arabic words be translated. etc

And it got very mean and ugly. I mean REALLY mean & ugly. Even the khutbas became opportunities for personal attacks. And the Quran studies – oh my goodness – they were like open season. It was just awful! And in the course of all of this, I became particularly

angry at a few individuals I felt were the most vicious and aggressive (and of course totally wrong).

I knew in my heart that this anger and (GOD forgive me) even hatred was wrong but I couldn't get a handle on it – I couldn't get it under control.

And my anger towards them began to permeate my thoughts. I would find myself thinking about it during Salat and during Quran studies and while I was reading the Quran. I began reading the Quran just to look for verses to disprove what they were saying – not to enlighten myself – but just to prove them wrong – which of course they were 😊.

Eventually I became so exhausted by all of this anger and turmoil that I was forced to face the fact that my soul was in serious trouble and I had to fix this situation somehow. I needed to – and I was longing to - return to just worshipping GOD and doing all the things that went along with that instead of drowning my soul in all of this anger and upset.

Mashallah, GOD gets us thru these times of testing...like He says in Sura 2:214 – Do you expect to enter Paradise without being tested like those before you? But He also says - as in Sura 40:60 'Implore Me and I will respond to you' and, Mashallah, He did respond.

The point I would like to share with you is this: we have all heard Abdullah and others make pleas (and rightfully so) for us to be kind and tolerant to one another

- for the sake of the conference
- or for the sake of the community as a whole
- for the sake of our individual communities and mosques, etc.

But I would like to propose that as important as all of that is – it's for yourself that you need to watch what is going on in your heart and your mind.

If you can argue or discuss this issue or that issue without anger – without arrogance – then fine. There are lots of issues that need to be discussed and you know how much we do love discussing them all 😊.

But if you find that you become angry because of this or that incident or someone or some group's response to your opinion - then perhaps you need to step back and talk things over with GOD. Maybe you need to let someone else do the "discussing". You may even be able to hide your anger from other people. But if you're feeling it, GOD's checking it out too!

Now I admit that not all anger is bad. And sometimes anger is not only allowable but appropriate. But those times are not common and they're not often. And there's a **fine line between righteous anger and sinful anger**.

And no one needs to explain to you or to me which is which – we know which is which in our own hearts when we feel it. We may try to justify our sinful anger to ourselves and say “it’s righteous anger because I’m correct and I need to stand up for what’s right and fight in the cause of GOD.”

But GOD doesn’t need our help if we’re wronging our own souls in the process. And have you ever noticed how easily we can slide from self-righteous anger into self-righteous arrogance? Of course, I’m sure that has never happened to you or me, but we’ve all seen it in others from time to time ☺.

GOD tells us in many places that anger is treacherous:

- [3:133-134] *You should eagerly race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous, who give to charity during the good times, as well as the bad times. They are suppressors of anger, and pardoners of the people. GOD loves the charitable.*
- [42:37] *They avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive.*
- When GOD told Moses to go to Pharaoh, Moses, knowing he had some issues with anger, asked GOD to help him control his anger [20:25-26] He said, “My Lord, cool my temper and make this matter easy for me.”
- [94:1-3] GOD points out that it’s a blessing from Him to be alleviated of our angry nature. “Did we not cool your temper? And we unloaded your load (of sins). One that burdened your back?”

The Bible:

Psalms 37:8 Cease from **anger** and forsake wrath; fret not yourself--it leads only to evildoing.

James 1:19-20 Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of GOD.

Proverbs 14:29 He who is slow to **anger** has great understanding, but he who is hasty of spirit exposes and exalts his folly.

Proverbs 15:1 A SOFT answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up **anger**.

Proverbs 22:24 Make no friendships with a man given to **anger**, and with a wrathful man do not associate,

Proverbs 29:22 A man of wrath stirs up strife, and a man given to **anger** commits and causes much transgression.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 Do not be quick in spirit to be angry or vexed, for **anger** and vexation lodge in the bosom of fools.

Let me just go a bit further and discuss the fact that anger can not only destroy our souls – it can and does destroy our bodies as well. We’ve all heard the expression “Anger Kills” – Anger and stress go hand in hand and it’s a scientific fact that prolonged stress breaks down our immune systems.

**Dr. Redford Williams**, Professor and Director of Behavioral Medicine Research Center at Duke University Medical Center says in one of his books: “*Numerous studies, over and over again, in this country, in Japan, Finland, England and other places have documented that a high level of chronic anger and aggressive behavior is associated with high risk, not only of coronary heart disease, but really of all causes of mortality. Therefore, one of the great battles of life should be the battle to put away anger. He also says ‘the nervous system and hormone responses of people that are often angry or hostile are a pathway to disease and death.’* Doesn’t sound very promising does it?

In summation, I would just like to suggest that no matter how right you may be (or not) on any given matter – in fact, you may be right as rain, but if it’s creating anger in your heart, whether you direct it at other people or keep it hidden inside yourself, it will whittle away at your soul. The arguments and disagreements you have with other people, when it generates anger and hostility, is not really about being right or wrong. It couldn’t matter less. It’s about pleasing and obeying GOD and watching out for our souls.

I would like to end with the last two lines from a well-known poem by Mother Theresa, “*In the final analysis, it’s all between you and GOD; It was never between you and them anyway.*”