

The Negative Effects of Reactive Anger on Your Cognitive Abilities

Introduction: The following are ten negative effects of unregulated anger on your cognitive abilities. After reading each one, verify the statement for yourself.

1. Learning: You cannot learn anything new in a state of unregulated anger.
2. Awareness of social context: You do not hear or see things accurately, nor do you fully perceive what you are doing. You misread social cues, if you notice them at all, and you simply believe that others are being hostile toward you, whether they are or not.
3. Memory: You can only remember what the person did that made you angry. In fact, you can recall almost every time the person made you angry. However, you cannot recall any—not even one—of the positive things that person has ever done for you, even if they are usually very kind and considerate. Moreover, you reduce the person, whom you cared about an instant before they angered you, to next to nothing. You consider them—based on your words and actions—as if they were “dirt to trample upon.”
4. Problem solving: It is simply impossible.
5. Future thinking and creativity: You cannot project forward in time nor can you create anything of value. However, you can conjure up innumerable ways to demean and degrade the other and invent unending reasons why you should remain angry.
6. Performance competence: You become highly competent at hurting people. Outside of hurting people, anything else you do in a state of unregulated anger, you can do far better when you are not in that state.
7. Loss of flexibility: You take more extreme positions than you otherwise would. This makes compromise impossible.
8. Tunnel Vision: Your range of thoughts is drastically narrowed and your ability to analyze a complex situation is totally impaired. You no longer see anyone as having dignity and worth. People are reduced to being objects as you pursue your objective to get even, get back or get revenge.
9. Blaming: Reactive anger toward someone is almost always connected to an attribution of blame. “I feel bad and it’s your fault.” “If you stop that behavior, my life will be so much better.” Yet, the more you blame, the angrier you get. In fact, by blaming another for your current condition, you actually give them even more power over you. You make them the master of your life and your well-being. And that angers you even more.
10. Aggression: When you are in a state of reactive anger—which include states of unregulated frustration or irritation—the goal of all your behavior, is to ward-off the other person with aggression.

The warding-off with aggression will be executed by you without exception

(1) At the lowest level of aggression, this warding off will be executed by inflicting injury on their feelings of worth either by freezing them out as if they did not exist, or by attacking their worth as a human being with cutting words or looks.

(2) At the next level of aggression, this warding-off will be executed through controlling or neutralizing the other person through fear. This fear can be created by warning them in general, or by threatening to take away something specific or by intimidating them with physical harm.

(3) At the highest level of aggression, this warding-off will be executed through inflicting bodily injury or maiming them permanently or murder. (Stosny)

Hopefully, this awareness convinces you that it is in your own best interest to learn how to regulate your anger and to manage it in such a way as to achieve your Life Vision without betraying your Core Values or demeaning your own absolute worth, undeniable dignity and inner beauty.