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CHOICES IN ANGER: Emotions, Mind and Spirit

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Each of us literally chooses, by his way of attending to things, what sort of universe he shall appear to himself to inhabit.
William James

Introduction

Anger is a natural response to being endangered or hurt. Challenges that commonly elicit anger include:

- Being attacked verbally or physically
- Being threatened verbally or physically
- Intrusion upon or disrespect of our boundaries
 - Physical
 - Social
- Not receiving
 - Something in the outer world that was promised or expected (material or benefits)
 - Behaviors or attitudes that are expected (respectfulness, courtesies, attention)

In this editorial we focus on interactions of emotions and the mind, while not neglecting body (discussed in the last IJHC editorial), relationships and spirit.

The emotions

Acute anger is usually a visceral, emotional reaction. Our stress hormones kick in, we may flush as blood is diverted from our internal organs to our muscles. Adrenalin makes our heart beat faster and our breathing deeper and faster. We prepare to respond to the challenge.

Many of our anger responses will be based on unconscious habits of reacting to similar stimuli in the past. If we have been successful in reacting with aggression, we are likely to respond again with aggression. If we have had better luck with withdrawing from previous stimuli to anger, we are more prone to withdraw – either from the scene of the challenge or simply into ourselves, either withholding or actually burying our response in our unconscious mind. If we have observed or have been treated with aggression by others when they were angry (particularly our parents and other family members), we are more likely to respond with aggression ourselves.

The mind: issues of choice and control

Most of the issues around anger relate to aspects of not being in control, feeling out of control, or feeling a loss of control.

Acute anger

When we are in situations of actual physical danger, anger can be helpful because it activates the stress hormones that facilitate fight or flight. If a man with a gun enters the room I am in, I may react more quickly and forcefully with the help of these hormones, which increase my alertness and enhance my muscle strength. I may be able to duck or run away more quickly, which could save my life.

Chronic anger

Angry responses may be unhelpful, however, when fight or flight responses are not necessary or appropriate. If I am sitting behind the wheel of my car in rush hour traffic, late for my appointment and unable to see what is causing the traffic delay, my stress hormones may build up and I may have no way to discharge them immediately, and no way to focus my energies in ways that could resolve the outward causes of my frustration. When I finally speed up towards my destination, if a car cuts in front of me and endangers my life, I may be frightened and angry, again without any way of addressing the person who stirred these feelings. My cell phone doesn't connect with the office, the elevator is out of order when I arrive, already late for my meeting. I get pushed aside in the stairwell by a workman carrying a chair downstairs. The secretary who could smooth matters is away from her desk. My boss may bawl me out for being late, my IN box may be overflowing, and my wife may interrupt me urgently – just as I feel I am moving towards getting matters in hand - to ask what to do about a leak under the bathroom sink.

Unexpressed anger

Innumerable frustrations, large and small, can build up tensions and angers. Often, we stuff these away because we feel there is no way to express them. Getting angry with a supervisor could endanger our employment. We may sometimes release feelings in verbal aggression towards those who offend us, perhaps screaming at the car that cuts in front of us, growling at someone who interrupts us, or pushing back against someone who jostles us rudely. While these responses may provide some release for the raging temper, they may also aggravate conflicts into more angry interchanges, making matters worse rather than better. Angers may escalate rather than get discharged and reduced.

We often end up stuffing our angers away somewhere inside ourselves. Most of us carry around buckets full of such feelings. When something comes along to anger us, we may respond with an excess of anger. This explains a lot of road rage, office rage, marital discord, and social conflicts. When our buckets are full to overflowing, any little stimulus to anger can give us the opportunity to dump other, stored up angers from our buckets along with the immediately provoked ones.

Furthermore, holding in anger is not good for our health. Chronic stresses and tensions can lead to physical dysfunctions. The neurohormonal, cardiovascular, pulmonary and genitourinary systems are particularly prone to such disorders, but they can occur in any organ system in the body. In the editorial of September 2001 IJHC I explored long lists of body language that reflects this awareness, such as "I got my guts in an uproar," "I was really pissed off," "I took that insult to heart," and many more.

Anger expression management

Letting it out in acceptable manners is one way to deal with anger.

Sports activities provide helpful physical outlets for pent up tensions. When I was under emotional stress in the Air Force during the Viet Nam war, I played racquetball or squash six or seven days a week, even in the heat of Texas summers that often reached over 100 degrees. I consciously pictured to myself that I was venting my angers at various individuals and situations that challenged my belief and ethical systems, making it impossible for me to offer medical or psychiatric care as I felt they ought to be practiced.

Giving my boss a piece of my mind, in no uncertain terms, at the top of my voice, can be a great release – in the safety and privacy of my car, with the windows rolled up, on my way home.

Letting it out directly towards the other person can be helpful, when this is done with respect. The risks of provoking anger in return can be considerably reduced by diplomatic phrasing. What has helped me is to picture a fence between myself and the person with whom I'm angry. If I stay on my side of the fence, stating *that* I am angry and *why* I am angry, I am less likely to provoke anger in response. In other words, I use "I" statements, stating what has angered me and explaining why.

I might say to my boss, "I am really frustrated and upset over being bawled out by you for being late. I understand that you're angry you couldn't get very far with the meeting until I got here, but I feel it's unfair of you to call me on the carpet in front of customers without giving me a chance to explain. I was held up in a traffic jam on the expressway, my cell phone didn't connect, and the elevator wasn't working when I arrived. I left home early, but not early enough to accommodate all of these delays. I'm particularly upset because this isn't the first time I've experienced responses like this from you."

I avoid reaching over the fence in any way, refraining from using blaming or attacking "YOU" statements. I don't say, "You have some nerve, blaming me for being late without bothering to ask what happened to make me late! I left home early and it wasn't my fault that there was a jam-up on the expressway and that my cell phone and the elevator weren't working. I'm really fed up because you always jump on me without asking what the problems were."

When I've stated my feelings, from my side of the fence, even if I've done so with considerable emotion and emphatic expressions, I'm inviting the other party to listen to my side. They are more likely to begin to see matters in a new light. In contrast, if I direct my comments *at* the person on the other side of the fence, the other party is likely to feel attacked and to respond defensively – often with further anger.

At other times, particularly under situations of bullying, firmness and even an angry response in return may be appropriate. Bullies enjoy being one-up over those they feel they can cower. Showing them that they can't get away with it will usually discourage them from continuing with their harassments. This still works better for me from my side of the fence.

On energetic levels, anger sets up negative vibrations, within and around those who are experiencing and expressing the anger. You may have had the experience of entering a room where people have been upset or angry, picking up negative vibrations without anyone having said an angry word in your presence.

Many bioenergy practitioners surround themselves with protective bioenergy shields. Such shields block negative energies and diminish or totally prevent the unpleasant and harmful effects of the negativity. (1More on this below.)

All of the above may sound rather idealistic. The more common response, by far, is to hit back if we are struck.

The easiest, and unfortunately the most common response, is to strike back if we feel we have been attacked, and/or to pass along the unpleasantness.

In *The Inspector General*, a film starring one of my favorite actors, Danny Kaye, a scene of anger unfolds in a police station. The Chief of Police is bawled out roundly by his wife, who storms out of his office, slamming the door. With smoke coming out of his ears, he blusters over to the Desk Sergeant and excoriates him for no obvious reason. The Sergeant reams out the Corporal of the guard, who is just passing by on his way out the door. Stomping down the steps of the police station, the Corporal brushes against a beggar who is passing by (Danny Kaye). He furiously shoves the beggar into the gutter, shouting at him for getting in his way. The beggar, having no idea why he is the object of this abuse, turns around and kicks at a passing dog.

Holding in anger is another common response. As children, we are usually told in school to not respond to aggression with our own aggression. The better alternative, we are told, is to tell the teacher or other person in authority.

Without learning to explore and deal with feelings, we are often left with these buckets full of resentments and anger sloshing around inside, waiting for an opportunity to be unloaded.

Cost/Benefit Analysis

Advantages in releasing anger: Venting anger may be beneficial in a variety of ways. Holding in anger is unhealthy, leading to accumulation of anger that can spill out with excessive responses when we are again provoked to anger. Anger held over long periods of time may contribute to ill health. Letting out anger, particularly in unprovocative ways, can provide a safe release that does not escalate into further anger.

Disadvantages of releasing anger: There are several dangers in expressing anger as a way of dealing with loss of control. In the heat of anger, it may be difficult to stay on my side of the fence. I may provoke more anger and may end up the worse off for it. When we deal with anger from strangers, there is no background of mutual experiences of problem-solving, and there may be no good will to overlook slights or seek common grounds or mutual understanding. Staying on my side of the fence may not have the desired effect of having my situation heard and understood. My best efforts may still be perceived as attacks, and may provoke further anger.

Venting anger at convenient targets provides immediate release for anger. However, like a stone cast into a pond that spreads circles of waves, sooner or later waves come bouncing back towards the point of anger that is splashed around.

The shadow and projections of blame

We also carry around buckets of unacceptable feelings that we experience but have been told are improper, bad, or against the teachings of our family, society or religion. Because we feel embarrassed, ashamed or guilty for having such feelings, we do our best to deny, ignore and bury them.

If we see behaviors in others that evoke these feelings, we may dump some of the self-critical load from our (mostly unconscious) guilt and shame buckets on those whom we catch in

unacceptable behaviors. Our unconscious mind then feels better, because we have punished others for that which is buried inside, unacceptable to ourselves.

Group angers

When groups of people are stimulated to anger there can be a collective response of venting feelings of all sorts.

It is easy to blame “others” for problems that are without immediate solution. This has been an accepted way of dealing with frustrations for thousands of years. In Biblical times, on the annual day of atonement, a goat was ritually sent into the desert to die in expiation of the sins of the community during the previous year – giving us the term, *scapegoat*.

While such ceremonies facilitate ritualized community catharsis, particularly when combined with prayers for forgiveness for our own sins of commission and omission, they also suggest that blame can and should be placed on others as a way of dealing with our own misdeeds. And too often blame is cast without the accompaniment of self-examination.

It has ever been easier to project blame onto others than to look into our own contributions to problems. This is by far the more common response in the collective experience of social groups, where bad things may occur and we have no clear explanation for why we happen to be the targets of others’ venting of negativity or why we have the bad luck to be victims of blind, random misfortune. Where we lack control over circumstances, blaming and attacking others also provides the temporary illusion that there is something we can do about our situation.

There is, in effect, a group frustrations and anger bucket. Individuals contribute to this bucket, and find validation – in the similar behaviors of others – for their projections of frustrations and angers into it. When this bucket gets full to overflowing, collective angers may be vented on convenient scapegoats.

Clearly, there are other choices we can make when faced by misfortune, though this may require considerable spiritual fortitude, as witnessed in the writings of Victor Fankl, Laurens van der Post and others who have transcended indescribable pain and suffering. Harold Kushner presents a discussion of handling misfortunes in less drastic circumstances.

This tendency to project and spill anger has been exploited liberally by politicians over many centuries. It serves politicians well as a distraction from local problems, as well as providing a sense that the source of problems has been identified and is being dealt with.

Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war
in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor,
for patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword.
It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind...

And when the drums of war have reached a fever pitch and the blood
boils with hate and the mind has closed, the leader will have no
need in seizing the rights of the citizenry. Rather, the citizenry,
infused with fear and blinded with patriotism, will offer up all of
their rights unto the leader, and gladly so.

How do I know?
For this is what I have done.
And I am Caesar.

Attributed to William Shakespeare

President Bush is a master at doing this. He has completely distracted the American public from examining and discussing and dealing with the national debt he has created, the gross mismanagement of corporations (with whom he and Vice President Chaney have had questionable dealings), not to mention the questions surrounding the election that brought him into office and the questions about advance notice that the US government had of impending terrorist activities prior to 9-11. It is clear from his orchestration of public opinion that going to war is his intention, and that he will create a justification for this if actual reasons cannot be readily found. His reasoning has repeatedly shifted, starting with an Iraq-Al Qaeda link and weapons of mass destruction (for which evidence has not been found) to urgent need for action on non-compliance with UN resolutions. The pretense of a need to deal with non-compliance with international agreements is particularly ludicrous, when the US has been violating and refusing to participate in treaties on nuclear arms, on the biological weapons convention and on limitations of greenhouse gasses, and when the US engages in a policy of detention without charges or trials of US citizens suspected of terrorist connections, and refuses to be party to proposals for limiting torture and punishing war criminals.

Blaming others

Scapegoating comes into common practice through processes that have been repeated throughout recorded history – in family, classroom, interracial and international settings. The targets of anger are always dehumanized. These “others” are painted by the blaming group as being subversive, menacing, threatening, dangerous, unwilling to compromise, infidels, wanting to destroy the ideals and values of its society, etc. etc. The “others” are unreasonable, unwilling to accept requests or demands, and seeking their own advantage at the expense of the blaming group. If there is an attack on the scapegoats, even in the proportions of genocide, the “others” are even blamed for the attack.

Living in Palestine turning Israel from 1944 to 1948, and again from 1973 to 1979, I witnessed the scapegoating of Arabs by Israelis and of Israelis by Arabs. My father worked most of his life as an administrator for Arab education – first under the British and then under the Israeli government.

I heard through my father of the fears the Arabs had that the Jews were out to steal all of their lands, to take over their homeland, to desecrate their religious and cultural holy places, and to destroy whatever they valued in their culture. The Jews had, in fact, settled throughout much of the land of Palestine. Jewish extremists on some occasions committed atrocities against Arabs, as in the 1947 massacre in the village of Deir Yassin. Subsequently, when Palestinians fled from their lands into Jordan and Egypt, they were not allowed to return after Israel declared its independence. Arab lands were settled by Jews and Arab cemeteries were razed.

The Jews cited Arabic radio broadcasts in which the Arabs were promised that the Jews would be driven into the sea, and Palestinians would then be given their choice of Jewish properties. They pointed out that Arab fundamentalists demand an eye for an eye, and hold that death in a holy war is welcomed as a gateway to heaven. Several riots were listed – in which Jews in Hebron and other cities had been killed by Arab mobs.

In 1948, many Jews, like my father, had Arab friends and acquaintances and felt that the Arab people were not to blame for the hatreds that were being promoted by Arab leaders. These friendships have dwindled close to extinction, with only isolated efforts to shift the tides of growing bitterness.

Over time, with the accumulation of deaths from 50 years of wars, of Arab terrorist and of Israeli anti-terrorist atrocities, it has been harder and harder to counter the paranoia, angers, battlefield bereavements, propaganda, and manipulations of leaders who have used the festering fears and hatreds to distract their constituents from domestic problems.

Addressing scapegoating

Anyone who speaks up against the blaming or the attacks on the despised and hated “others” is tarred by the warmongering leaders, and by the speaker’s friends and acquaintances, as being disloyal, subversive, or as encouraging or even aiding the enemy. Changing the course of blaming and aggression becomes difficult to the point of being daunting or even dangerous.

We would do well to heed the words of President Theodore Roosevelt:

Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the President or any other public official save exactly to the degree in which he himself stands by the country.

It is patriotic to support him insofar as he efficiently serves the country. It is unpatriotic not to oppose him to the exact extent that by inefficiency or otherwise he fails in his duty to stand by the country.

In either event, it is unpatriotic not to tell the truth -- whether about the President or anyone else – save in the rare cases where this would make known to the enemy information of military value which would otherwise be unknown to him.

Sadly, few have the courage to speak out against scapegoating leaders. Far more often than not, people and nations are led into wars that are ever so justified in their minds and hearts, with dissenters firmly dismissed.

When enough of stored up frustrations and angers from the collective and individual buckets have been spilled, often with the blood of young soldiers on both sides, sometimes with the lives of innocent civilians sacrificed as well, or perhaps when excesses of scapegoating brutalities become known to the public, the aggression abates and more reasoned, compassionate actions come to the fore. Sometimes it is only with exhaustion of all resources, with counterattacks by outside forces, or through diplomatic interventions of third parties that the aggressive outburst is terminated.

Then there may be a re-examination of events – in the light of altered circumstances. So it was in the Viet Nam War. So it will be with President Bush’s crusade against Iraq.

It all started when he hit me back!

Responsibility and blame

It’s all too easy to suggest, “It all started when he hit me back!” rather than to examine what we might have done, how our actions might have been perceived or experienced as a negative blow – that precipitated what we then experienced as an attack on ourselves.

In school we are not encouraged to analyze why we were attacked, and only rarely are we taught methods and processes of introspection or self-examination, so we end up stuffing angers away inside.

Where anger is stimulated, our first reactions are often blaming ones. When someone does something as simple as to step on my toe, I may respond in pain and anger – not attending to circumstances that may have explained or mitigated the blame in the actions that led to my pain. If I happen to be carrying buckets full of anger from other threats, attacks, or disrespectful intrusions on my autonomy, I may be all the more ready to take this opportunity to vent some of the stored up anger.

If my pain is not too severe, or my stored up angers not at levels that tempt me to dump them, I may pause long enough before responding – to take into consideration possible mitigating circumstances.

I am bemused by the synchronicity of the arrival of the following anonymous internet “passalong”, precisely at the time I was writing about this. I have slightly modified this to better illustrate my points.

Prayer of understanding, acceptance, forgiveness

Heavenly Father, Help us remember that the jerk who cut us off in traffic last night is a single mother who worked nine hours that day and was rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children.

Help us to remember that the pierced, tattooed, disinterested young cashier who can't get your order right when you most need someone competent to help you is a worried student, balancing his apprehension over final exams with his fear of not getting his student loans for next semester and worrying about whether he can pay both his rent and his tuition bill this month.

Remind us, Lord, that the scary looking bum, begging for money in the same spot every day (who really ought to get a job!) is a slave to addictions that we can only imagine in our worst nightmares because he was put on pain medication after being blindsided by a truck.

Help us to remember that the old couple walking annoyingly slowly through the store aisles and blocking our shopping progress are savoring this moment, knowing that, based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will probably be the last year that they go shopping together.

Heavenly Father, remind us each day that, of all the gifts you give us, the greatest gift is love. It is not enough to share that love with those we hold dear. Open our hearts not just to those who are close to us but to all humanity.

Let us be slow to judge and quick to forgive.

Bless us with patience, empathy and love.

AMEN!

Most of us are able to see and appreciate circumstances that explain behaviors which stimulate us to respond with anger. When we empathize with those who have offended us, we can often understand, accept and forgive their behaviors. Our initial angry feelings dissipate.

At other times, we feel that circumstances did not adequately explain, mitigate or excuse behaviors that made us feel bad, and we may continue to nurture our resentments.

Anger at self

We may have meta-emotions in response to anger (or other emotions) – *reactions to our reactions*, such as, “Damn! I promised myself I wouldn’t shout at my kid when he spilled his food, and I just did it again!” or “How could I have been so stupid as to blast that silly old woman who just had to stick her nose into my business at the office meeting when I asked for an explanation of my benefits?” If you hone this skill, you can even develop meta-meta-emotions, such as, “Here I go again, picking at myself again! I’m so terrible at catching myself when I do these things!”

Now, anger can be constructive or it can be destructive – depending on how you respond and what you take away from it. If someone bawls you out, you can take it as an attack on your personhood and stuff a rancid load of “I’m no good” or “He’s a real so-and-so!” into your bucket. Alternatively, you could examine your behaviors that elicited the anger and change your behaviors so that you don’t elicit such reactions; or perhaps you might ask yourself, “What’s the matter with Henry today, anyway?” – as in the passalong list above.

Along with meta-emotions, we have meta-decisions about handling our emotions. You might resolve, “I’m sure going to stay away from Henry in the future when he’s angry!” or “I’m no match for Henry. I’d better keep my lip buttoned at the office.” or “You just wait, Henry, till I catch you making your next mistake!” or “I’ve had it! I’m quitting this job.” It is really easy to tie ourselves into knots with such internal angers, which then raise our bucket’s contents to simmering or boiling temperatures.

Or, we might choose a healing approach to our angers: “I wonder what I might have done to stir Henry’s anger?” or “I need to catch Henry when we’re both in a better mood and sort out our differences and how we can discuss them without dumping on each other in the future.”

We always have choices. Anger challenges can be invitations to empty old junk we’re carrying around in our buckets. This gives us the immediate feeling of unloading a burden... but the relief is usually only temporary. Anger usually begets anger in return (often paid with interest), so we end up in the long run with even more anger stuffed in our buckets.

Anger challenges can be invitations to examine our feelings, our relationships, our meta-reactions, and how we would like all of these to be.

Practicing alternatives to anger responses, towards yourself and others – at times when you are not angry – can prepare you to respond in constructive ways when you are getting heated. (See “Conjugations,” below.)

What has helped me enormously is practicing “reframing” – which I learned best from Jamshed Morenas, one of my most creative family therapy supervisors, when I was struggling in front of a one-way mirror, learning to deal with families in conflict. I remember very clearly my first introduction to reframing. I was hopelessly mired, unable to shift a mother, father, and three teenage children out of their patterns of constantly criticizing each other, defending themselves, and arguing incessantly. Jamshed called me out of the session for a discussion. I felt totally helpless to stop them from fighting each other long enough to even explore alternatives to being constantly angry and embattled.

Jamshed pointed out that the children were just being children and the parents were being parents. Working to stop them was an unproductive therapeutic frame of mind. This would only induct me into their system of arguing. A more constructive intervention might be to re-frame their arguments as expressions of caring for each other. I returned to the therapy room with this observation. It had a stunningly positive effect. This family of porcupines quickly acknowledged that they did really care for each other, and were able to see that they had the choice of showing that they cared through their quills or through their soft bellies – which they hesitated to even acknowledge they had because of the anticipation of being pierced by the quills of someone else in the family.

Looking deeper

If you take a spiritual perspective, assuming that every experience in life is a potential healing lesson, an invitation from your higher self to learn and to grow, then challenges in your life may have a different “feel” to them. This is a major reframing!

If someone does something that disappoints or hurts you (if you can catch yourself before anger rises, or also after anger has abated), you might ask yourself, “What healing lessons am I being invited to learn?”

Focusing on the “other,” you may come up with answers such as “compassion,” “empathy,” “understanding,” “healing” or “gratitude” (for being in more fortunate circumstances yourself).

Focusing on yourself, you might explore such questions as,

“What in me might be similar to that which I am annoyed with in this person/ interaction/ situation?” That is, “what old hurt could there be in *my* bucket that has been stirred by this encounter?”

If you notice that you find yourself angry repeatedly in similar sorts of encounters, you might begin to ask, “What might there be in me that invites these angry interactions?” It could be that your unconscious mind is bringing you to behave in ways that elicit provocations to anger.

When I was 8-15 years old, I was often left in charge of David, my younger brother (along with other household duties) because my single-parent mother had to work to support the family. There were periods when I resented the burden of baby-sitting, but couldn’t allow myself to complain because everyone in our little family had to pull their share to enable us to get by. I would do things to invite David to misbehave and would then vent my anger on him. By doing this, I developed situations where I could vent some of the resentments I was carrying over having to be the man of the house in the absence of my father. I was totally unaware of doing this until my mother repeatedly pointed it out to me.

Lessons of this sort may also come “out of the blue,” without any apparent ways in which we could possibly have invited them through our behaviors.

In my 35 years of practicing psychotherapy, I have often found my clients teaching me almost as much as I am teaching them. The issues they are struggling with are precisely the issues I am - or need to be – examining in myself. And if I don’t get the lesson the first time, a second or third client appears within a very short period, with a similar problem. Clients often offer general reminders, such as to be more compassionate and considerate of others’ feelings, but their lessons can be uncannily on target for more specific issues in my life.

Here is just one, from uncountable examples I could muster: I was festering and fuming at work, furious with my new clinical administrator, who was forcing us to document clinical

interventions in increasingly greater detail. This appeared to me to be totally unnecessary and an enormous waste of time that could be far better spent in direct clinical interventions. Within a few days of receiving the printed directives that detailed the new, tedious charting procedures, a child came for psychiatric evaluation. He had a serious PTSD following an automobile accident. His mother was obviously upset and harried. I thought her distress was due to her own PTSD and her son's problems, but discovered that she was upset just as much by job-related frustrations. She is a nurse and her employer had just instituted much stricter charting procedures on her hospital unit. As I counseled her on how to deal with her job-related issues through relaxation and imagery techniques, I could not but smile inside – as I listened to some part of myself saying, “And who else in this room could use this advice?”

The skeptic will say these apparent synchronicities are purely coincidental. I believe they are choreographed by our higher selves and by an unseen wisdom that far exceeds our own – to nudge or jar us into greater healing awarenesses.

These lessons from clients have come so often that I now regularly ask, in each therapy session, “Now, what has this client been sent to teach me?”

Group angers

In inter-racial or international angers, ingrained prejudices tend to be perpetuated. The targets of our angers are dehumanized as “others” – who are less than human, less than deserving of our understanding or compassion; ungrateful recipients of our aid who are draining our resources, sending criminals into our neighborhoods or terrorists into our country; unfortunate but necessary civilian casualties in our crusade for our own causes, an anyway, if they had stopped their leaders from being the nasty people they are, they wouldn't have to suffer these consequences.

If we look only at the surface manifestations of problems, it is easy to escalate to avenging the wrongs we feel have been perpetrated upon us by these “others.” We fail, however, to solve the problem. We prosecute and jail perpetrators of crimes – but end up with criminals who are released from jail only to return to further crimes on the streets, more savvy for having spent lots of time behind bars with other, more experienced and vicious criminals. We attack Afghanistan, and in fact increase the likelihood of further terrorist attacks.

Choices: Revenge vs forgiveness

There are two courses of action to follow when one is bitten by a rattlesnake. One may, in anger, fear, or vengefulness, pursue the creature and kill it. Or one may make full haste to get the venom out of his system. If we pursue the latter course we will likely survive, but if we attempt to follow the former, we may not be around long enough to finish it.

Attributed to Mormon founder Brigham Young

There are countries where revenge is the accepted way of dealing with interpersonal hurts.

In Iran, the relatives of murderers get to decide the punishment, which can include monetary compensation, precisely equal injury or even death. In many instances, injured parties or their relatives may physically participate in the exacting of the punishment – even to the extent of blinding the perpetrator of a blinding injury, or pulling the chair out from under a murderer to hang him. The rich have an obvious advantage of more alternatives in this system of justice, being able to buy their ways out of paying with an eye or other body part. Women are compensated at half the rate that men are; non-Muslims may have partial or no legitimate

claims against Muslims. There are time limits on the acceptable exacting of vengeance (Blumenfeld, p. 91).

In Albania, personal revenge is the cultural norm, standardized in a *Canon*, compiled by a 15th-Century nobleman named Leke Dukagjini, which details injuries and compensation or the extent of revenge that is the accepted norm. This is the legal code for Albania, where revenge is a sacred duty – particularly now, in the chaotic social reality of a government that has collapsed and an economy that is disorganized and despairingly poor. However, revenge has been an essential element in the code of conduct of Albania for many hundreds of years (Blumenfeld, p. 75-76).

While the cultures of revenge circumvent the inequities of the Western legal system, where money, prestige and power can buy justice, it can bring into power those who have brute strength, weapons and a disregard for life. In Sicily, the Mafia maintain their power through the threat of murder and revenge. No one is beyond their reach. Judges, prosecutors and clergymen who have acted or spoken against the Mafia have been murdered.

In our own culture, on a personal level, revenge may be sweet, but it tends to perpetuate and aggravate angry relationships. This is much more so in revenge between clans and nations.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is one of the best alternatives to anger. While this is seen by some to be the choice of a weakling or wimp, it is actually, in most cases, the choice of a deeply wise and spiritual person.

He who cannot forgive others destroys the bridge over which he himself must pass.
George Herbert

Some outstanding examples of immediate forgiveness were seen after the events of 9-11. Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez lost their son, Joe, in the World Trade Towers. When President Bush began immediately his campaign to attack the terrorists, they wrote a letter to the New York Times editor:

Saturday, Sep 15, 2001 8:35pm

Our son Greg is among the many missing from the World Trade Center attack. Since we first heard the news, we have shared moments of grief, comfort, hope, despair, fond memories with his wife, the two families, our friends and neighbors, his loving colleagues at Cantor Fitzgerald / ESpeed, and all the grieving families that daily meet at the Pierre Hotel.

We see our hurt and anger reflected among everybody we meet. We cannot pay attention to the daily flow of news about this disaster. But we read enough of the news to sense that our government is heading in the direction of violent revenge, with the prospect of sons, daughters, parents, friends in distant lands dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against us. It is not the way to go. It will not avenge our son's death. Not in our son's name.

Our son died a victim of an inhuman ideology. Our actions should not serve the same purpose. Let us grieve. Let us reflect and pray. Let us think about a rational response that brings real peace and justice to our world. But let us not as a nation add to the

inhumanity of our times.

Copy of letter to White House:

Dear President Bush:

Our son is one of the victims of Tuesday's attack on the World Trade Center. We read about your response in the last few days and about the resolutions from both Houses, giving you undefined power to respond to the terror attacks.

Your response to this attack does not make us feel better about our son's death. It makes us feel worse. It makes us feel that our government is using our son's memory as a justification to cause suffering for other sons and parents in other lands.

It is not the first time that a person in your position has been given unlimited power and came to regret it. This is not the time for empty gestures to make us feel better. It is not the time to act like bullies. We urge you to think about how our government can develop peaceful, rational solutions to terrorism, solutions that do not sink us to the inhuman level of terrorists.

Sincerely,

Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez

Often, forgiveness follows a period of anger. This may come when tempers cool, immediately following an injury or altercation, or it may come only after years of bitter struggles and battles that leave the warring parties exhausted, bleeding and mourning their dead. It is helpful to have an outsider mediating between the aggrieved parties – to create a safe space in which to meet, to help explore differences in a gradual and reasoned (rather than heated) manner, to smooth ruffled feathers and calm prickly tempers, and to suggest alternatives to habitual patterns of perceptions, feelings, anticipations of being attacked and other dysfunctional and counter-productive interactions.

The most important part of such mediation is getting the parties to sit down together and have some normalizing human interactions, breaking the pattern of perceiving the opposing parties as “other,” as “enemy” or as “inhuman.” In many cultures it is acknowledged that if you break bread together with another, then you are much less likely to be unkind to each other. So an introductory period of getting acquainted and rubbing elbows with each other is important, prior to exploring differences.

The most difficult parts of forgiveness may be forgiveness of self – for having let anger get out of control – and, even more difficult, examining the bucket of angers we carry from various personal experiences and realizing we have dumped an undeserved load of buried emotional garbage on a convenient target. The last is so difficult that very few people manage this.

Because forgiveness is such an important process in choosing healing alternatives to anger, and because we are coming to understand how to help people to reach this healing for angers, an annotated reference list has been gathered at the end of this editorial.

Changing patterns of behavior

The Latin roots of 'resentment,' re and sentire, mean 'to feel again' -- to feel over and over again the pain caused by the wrong that was done. Letting go of that resentment is a lot of the 'personal work' done in forgiving, and is often what takes so long
(Andrew Knock)

Once we establish individual and group behaviors, they tend to persist. Blaming others and venting anger on them provides some relief from carrying around buckets full of hurts and angers. Not knowing any alternatives, this often feels like a successful way of handling frustrations.

Changing such patterns can be very difficult. First, we have to begin to feel there might be something wrong in the way we are handling our negative feelings. We might be confronted with pictures of "others" who are as human as we are. We might be inspired by healing responses of people who have been hurt in conflicts but did not respond with anger.

We might begin to see contradictions in the messages our leaders are putting out. The glaring self-interests of Bush and his supporters in promoting wars may come to roost in our awareness when we begin to pay the human and monetary costs of war, or when the media (if they are not censored) bring us information or images that sway us towards healing. Seeing our own soldiers wounded and dying, or seeing enemy civilian casualties of our attacks might just bring us to seek more healing approaches to problems.

We tend to think of healing as something one person does to another, but the most important healing is self-healing. This is as true on a group and national basis as it is with our individual selves.

Few people are asking, when we consider terrorist activities and other violence in the world, "What have we done that has contributed to or provoked the violence?" When we start to look in these directions, we find many things we can do to promote healing. Western arrogance in assuming that we have the best way of life, and Western promotion of ways of life that run contrary to traditional values in other cultures can be highly provocative to people who are not eager to give up their own values. While capitalism has improved material quality of life for those at the top of the social order, it has destroyed family ties and created a culture of competition and self-interest that easily degenerates to destructive selfishness and greed. America's growing poverty levels - witnessed by increasing numbers who find themselves unable to afford health care or even a home - are not good advertisements for our way of life. America's exploitation of material and human resources in other countries is increasingly perceived as a red flag in front of a bull. Fighting off the vengeful terrorists and adopting defensive lifestyles may prove less effective and more costly in terms of diminished quality of life in the long run than dealing with some of the underlying problems that generate terrorism.

Bioenergy and spiritual responses anger

Some bioenergy practitioners recommend putting up a mirrored energy shield around ourselves, so that any angers directed at us will bounce right back to their source. While this may protect us from angers, it will also perpetuate the anger at the very least, and may spread it around to others who were not the original sources of anger.

My personal practice is to have a strong bioenergy shield that is coated with loving pink healing energies. The shield neutralizes any negativity directed at me.

Others have suggested inviting your guardian angels to coat the shield with healing light; praying for the light of Christ or God to surround you (Allah, Buddha, saints, or other protectors and guides may – literally – suit you better); or creating a slippery shield that directs

any negativity deep into the earth, where Gaia can neutralize it. The latter was favored by a gardener in one of my workshops, who pointed out that the earth is a wonderful composter, and can transform all negativity to positive, nurturing energies.

Bioenergies “charge up” and strengthen physical realities. They are necessary for life and contribute to health and illness. We usually think of positive energies as building and creating and negative energies as destroying. While this can be the case, in a conflict situation we see that negative energies often add to the “charge,” make the sparks fly, and fan the flames. If we enter into a conflict with those who are spoiling for a fight, our energies will fuel their energies. If we can detach ourselves from angry responses, we will not fuel the fires. If we can bring ourselves to send loving, healing energies, we may be able to neutralize the negative energies.

Experiential exercise: Conjugations

How we say things to each other can soothe or provoke. It can be fun and helpful to practice “conjugating” various statements, in order to sensitize ourselves to the “how” of our communications.

Here are several examples:

I'm a teeny bit overweight.
You're a bit chubby.
He's a fat slob.

I tend to say what I have to say very directly.
You're rather blunt at times.
She's a sarcastic ass.

I can be distracted sometimes when I'm driving.
You're a bit careless changing lanes.
He's a frustrated LeMans racing driver.

I'm upset.
You're angry.
She's a flaming fury.

I slipped up.
You made a mistake.
He screwed up

Such exercises are not just for humorous entertainment. They can help us to choose the most healing approaches when we're expressing angry thoughts and feelings, cutting others the slack that we allow for ourselves.

Neutralizing fears and anger

Carrying resentments is poisonous in many ways. When we have a potful of anger that is just waiting to spill, we often feel “prickly” to others. We are resentful, edgy, touchy, suspicious that others are going to hurt us, paranoid that we will be misunderstood, carry a frown or worse on our face, speak with an edgy or annoyed voice, and are likely to say and do things – minor and major – that we might later regret. Other around us will quickly sense they are dealing with a porcupine or a skunk. If their buckets aren't full, and they're not spoiling for a ruckus, they may steer clear of us till we calm down. If they're ready to dump some of their anger garbage

they've stuffed away, they may use us as convenient sparring partners, as beating posts, or may provoke us to the point that we explode – expressing their angers for them while they don't have to take the consequences.

This works through subtle energies and intuition as well as on psychological and social levels. When we put out negative vibrations, negativity that is floating around is attracted to us. If we're seeking opportunities to discharge negativity, we will telepathically attract and be attracted to others who are seeking the same. Energetic like is attracted to like.

Politicians take advantage of our tendencies to blame others. Politicians offer us convenient targets for our angers. By painting the "others" as despicable villains, deserving of punishment or death, they invite us to pour out our buckets of wrath. (This serves their interests well, crating a pool of soldiers who will sacrifice themselves for the politicians' gains.)

While we all feel better with this catharsis, we are still left with the real sources of our angers – the buried hurts we carry in our buckets – untouched. It is like throwing burning coals at an enemy from a fire in our home, giving us a sense that we have made good use of these embers of our misfortunes... but not dealing in any basic way with the flames that go on smoldering in our home.

I have been exploring and practicing the use of love, acceptance, healing and forgiveness to neutralize negativity for several years, both for myself and with clients. I have yet to find a negativity that cannot be softened or eliminated using these positive energies that are born in a place of love. I am therefore certain that love is stronger than any negativity, so this works for me and for my clients.

If neutralizing approaches were taught to children in school, then people wouldn't grow up holding as many hurts in their buckets. There would be much more energy available for positive projects, for healing others, for building sweetening spirals - of loving acts for others that beget caring acts in return, that stimulate kindness in return.

Not only would this be helpful to them personally, it would reduce the collective angers that are manipulated by politicians to make war.

In summary

The bottom line is:

No one can make you angry

Anger is one of many choices you can elect in response to a life challenge.

Healing our international conflicts should begin at home.

*If there is light in the soul,
There will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person,
There will be harmony in the house.
If there is harmony in the house,
There will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,*

There will be peace in the world.
--Chinese Proverb

References

Blumenfeld, Laura. *Revenge: A Story of Hope*, New York: Simon & Schuster 2002

Kauffman, Stuart, *At Home in the Universe: The Search for Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity*, Oxford University Press 1996.

Young, Brigham <http://website.lineone.net/~andrewhdknock/ImagesWords.htm>

In this issue of *IJHC*

Col. Rees Ryder Stevens, a chaplain with the US Army, reports on a healing mediation between Croats and Serbs in Sarajevo, Bosnia, in the early 1990s. This is a clear example of how it is possible to bring warring parties to begin a peaceful dialog through shared personal experiences. (These principles are discussed in greater detail in a book review in the September issue of *IJHC*.)

Michelle Sloma, RN discusses spiritual interventions in end of life nursing care, with various theoretical frameworks supporting these. This is a vastly neglected aspect of health care.

Charles Zeiders, PHD discusses similarities between Christian healing, bioenergy healing, and the Confluent Somatic Therapy of Steven Vazquez. While prayer and religious rituals may color and shape healing approaches and healees' expectations and responses to healing, there appear to be many overlaps between these approaches.

There is a wealth of experience in religious traditions of healing. Healing has often been viewed as the exclusive province of religious authorities. The editor of the *IJHC* believes that God speaks all languages and that healing prayer and intelligent design are not proprietary approaches that belong exclusively to any one religion.

Of related interest is the current controversy over Intelligent Design (ID) in the world, which is being debated as an alternative to Darwinian evolutionary theory. The December *IJHC/DHN* Newsletter carries a brief discussion of the stance against ID taken by the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Sadly, they have turned this into an ideological argument rather than encouraging scientific studies. There is evidence that human intention can influence genetic processes, which would leave one to believe that a higher intelligence could do so too – and on much broader and more profound levels.

Several articles in this issue of *IJHC* focus on materials that can serve as vehicles for the imprinting of intent, including healing intent.

Healers report that they can offer healing through healer-treated materials, such as cloth, water and paper. This is not a new innovation. Christ and the Apostles gave healing through handkerchiefs. Holy water and oil are used in religious ceremonies for healing. Relics of saints are alleged to convey many benefits. In recent years, Dolores Krieger, PhD, RN, who was one

of the originators of Therapeutic Touch healing, has suggested that healing can be given through cotton that has been held between the nurse's hands and given TT treatments. Nurses who give healing to chemotherapy IV bottles report that their patients have fewer and less severe side effects of nausea, vomiting, headaches and diarrhea.

In recent decades, research has begun to confirm that healing through various physical *vehicles* is verifiably possible. Studies have shown that water treated by healers can enhance plant growth. Cotton treated by a healer slowed the development of goiters in mice that were fed an iodine-deficient diet.

Allan Handelsman developed a method reported to convey healing through plastic cards imprinted in a secret manner.

In the next issue of *IJHC*, Mary Miller, of The Gentle Wind Project, describes several devices imprinted with healing energies, with testimonials from a few of millions of satisfied customers who felt that these were healing.

William Tiller, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University, is a physicist who has been studying healing phenomena for more than three decades. In this issue of *IJHC*, he reports on a device he developed that can be imprinted with a specific intent to make water more or less acidic, to alter the activity of enzymes, and to accelerate the development of fly larvae. To demonstrate this, he sent devices with coded numbers (but no indication regarding the intent imprinted on them) to a laboratory hundreds of miles away. The devices produced the predicted changes in acidity of water when they were tested by the distant experimenters, who remained blind to the intent on the devices until after the study was completed.

In addition, Tiller found that the laboratories in which these experiments were done were measurably altered by the experiment, apparently mediated by these devices.

Tiller's experiments confirm that mind can interact with matter. This lends support to reports of healing through vehicles, mentioned above.

Another series of studies of intent is reported by Masaru Emoto, in his books, *Messages from Water*. Emoto's book features beautiful photos of water crystals, showing how their shapes are influenced by people who project positive and negative thoughts to the water prior to the experimenters freezing it. Positive, loving, healing thoughts lead to crystals that have symmetry, order and beauty. Negativity leads to crystals that are poorly formed.

The wonderment engendered by mind influencing matter, and by the self-organizing properties of water in crystallization (and other processes in nature) inspired Stuart Kauffman to observe,

If biologists have ignored self-organization, it is not because self-ordering is not pervasive and profound. It is because we biologists have yet to understand how to think about systems governed simultaneously by two sources of order, yet who seeing the snowflake, who seeing simple lipid molecules cast adrift in water forming themselves into cell-like hollow lipid vesicles, who seeing the potential for the crystallization of life in swarms of reacting molecules, who seeing the stunning order for free in networks linking tens upon tens of thousands of variables, can fail to entertain a central thought: if ever we are to attain a final theory in biology, we will surely, surely have to understand the commingling of self-organization and selection. We will have to see that we are the natural expressions of a deeper order. Ultimately, we will discover in our creation myth that we are expected after all.

Mirtala, whose sculptures and poetry were featured in our previous issue (September 2002), shares here how some of her sculptures have been reported to elicit unusual responses from people who hold them and to facilitate healings.

Medical intuition is the opposite side of the coin of interactions with matter. There are gifted people who can “read” a person and report on their condition: physical, emotional, mental, relational, and spiritual.

Sue Hannibal reports on her work in medical intuition combined with psychotherapy. Sue also uses Meridian and Chakra Based Therapies for healer healing and self-healing. This combination is highly effective in releasing old emotional traumas and in transforming inner and outer problems, as testified by rapid changes in several of her clients. Two physicians provide brief reports on the effects of Hannibal’s work.

Mara Meritt, a 4th year medical student, describes her struggles to maintain her healing presence in treatment settings that are often less than healing.

Douglas Stone, an American healer in Peru, reports on his shamanic healings. It is helpful to have a practitioner from our culture reporting on the efficacy of traditional approaches that sound odd and incredible to outsiders. We have much to learn about healing from other cultures.

Forgiveness resources and references

Forgiveness web

<http://www.forgivenessweb.com/Pages/links.html>

Annotated web resources - Knock, Andrew

<http://website.lineone.net/~andrewhdknock/Links.htm>

Forgiveness sites

<http://www.forgiveness-institute.org/>

<http://www.forgiving.org/>

<http://www.forgivenessday.org/>

<http://website.lineone.net/~andrewhdknock/ImagesWords.htm> (pictures)

http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/items/blank/item_186.html

Books

Raymond G. Helmick, SJ and Rodney L Petersen (eds), *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*, Philadelphia/London: Templeton Foundation Press 2001)

This is a profoundly insightful book, dealing with interracial, sectarian and international conflicts. See review in previous IJHC book review.

Robert D. Enright, *Forgiveness Is a Choice: A Step-By-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope* American Psychological Association 2001 299 pp \$19.95

Amazon.com

From Library Journal

According to the results of the Human Development Study Group at the University of Madison, WI, forgiveness leads to improved physical and mental health as well as better relationships. This practical, nonsectarian, self-directed guide is deeply rooted in that study, of which educational psychologist Enright was a leader. Unlike other books on forgiveness (e.g., the writings of Lewis B. Smedes and Philip Yancey), this work doesn't cater to the casual reader seeking hints for self-improvement; Enright's readers must be committed and immerse themselves in the four stages of self-discovery uncovering anger, deciding to forgive, working on forgiveness, and discovery and release. Stressing that the process of forgiveness is different for each person, Enright advises flexibility, discourages the premature setting of specific goals, and encourages readers to draw on the support of a friend or therapist as they work through the phases. This debut title of the American Psychological Association's new trade imprint, APA LifeTools, is highly recommended. Lucille M. Boone, San Jose P.L., CA Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

A licensed psychologist and professor of psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison presents research and guidance relating to the process of forgiveness, which he argues is a central, vital skill in overcoming resentment and excessive anger.

Book News, Inc.®, Portland, OR

Michael E. McCullough (Editor), Kenneth I. Pargament (Editor), Carl E. Thoresen. *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Guilford Press 2001

Amazon.com

Basic and applied research is enhancing our understanding of the nature of forgiveness, how it develops, and its consequences for health and relationships.

Conceptual and measurement issues, II. Basic psychological research, and III. Applications in counseling, psychotherapy and health.

Everett L. Worthington (Editor), *Dimensions of Forgiveness: Psychological Research & Theological Perspectives* (Laws of Life Symposia Series, V. 1), Templeton Foundation 1998

Amazon.com - From Library Journal

The flames of violence engulfing the world have prompted social scientists to look for fresh solutions, one of which is forgiveness. Although theologians and philosophers have written much on the subject, social scientists subjected it to "benign neglect" until 1985, when some empirical research...

Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve*, Harper San Francisco 1996, 176 pp

Ingram (Amazon.com)

In *Forgive & Forget*, Lewis B. Smedes show you how to move from hurting and hating to healing and reconciliation. With the lessons of forgiveness, you can establish healthier relationships, reclaim the happiness that should be yours, and achieve lasting peace of mind.

Lewis B. Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving: When You Need to Forgive and Don't Know How*, Ballantine Books 1997) 192 pp

Amazon.com

When a heinous act is committed, sometimes one wonders if forgiveness is even possible. Lewis B. Smedes would certainly advise it. "When we forgive," he says, "we set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner we set free is us."

Robin Casarjian, *Forgiveness: A Bold Choice for a Peaceful Heart*, New York: Bantam 1992 245pp 7pp refs and reading list \$12.95

Excellent discussion by an author with a gift for pattern recognition and a clear connection with heart. Helpful exercises for reaching into heart and forgiveness. Particularly helpful are brief discussions of blocks to forgiveness.

Mariah Burton Nelson, *The Unburdened Heart: Five Keys to Forgiveness and Freedom*

Harper San Francisco 2000, 224 pp

Amazon.com

Molested as a young teenager, Mariah Burton Nelson found herself decades later still consumed with anger. Drawing on her own poignant story of betrayal and reconciliation, along with psychological studies, spiritual wisdom, poetry and original interviews with others who have forgiven offenses great and small, she shows how forgiveness can help us achieve a profound and lasting peace...

Nelson, today an accomplished sportswriter, had a highly ambiguous, clearly exploitative relationship with her married 25-year-old athletic coach when she was 14. She was angry at him for two decades, but after a long series of telephone conversations, letter exchanges and in-person meetings with him, she felt herself able to forgive. Are there limits to forgiveness? No, not really, writes Nelson in "The Unburdened Heart." Though she draws on Christian and Buddhist teachings, Nelson's own narrative is the most interesting part of the book; she reports on both sides, so the reader can to some extent decide ... (Beliefnet, June 2000)

Beverly Flanigan, *Forgiving the Unforgivable: Overcoming the Bitter Legacy of Intimate Wounds*, John Wiley & Sons, 1994 288 pp

Amazon.com

This book deals with methods to overcome the events that cause friends and family to become speechless, or worse, withdraw from the wounded in shock and confusion. It's a challenging book - take it slowly: it's well worth the effort.

William A. Meninger, *The Process of Forgiveness*, Continuum Pub Group

Amazon.com

Writing at the intersection of popular psychology and spiritual advice, Meninger describes forgiveness as a process that develops through five stages from "claiming the hurt" to wholeness. Forgiveness is not a matter of forgetting so much as it is a matter of letting go. He illustrates the process with reference to the popular "enneagram" model of personality types, then describes meditational tools for forgiveness grounded in monastic "centering" traditions and Eugene Gendlin's "focusing" technique...

Donald W., Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*, Oxford University Press 1998, 300 pp

Amazon.com

...three powerful and moving cases from recent American history--our postwar dealings with Germany, with Japan, and our continuing domestic problem with race relations--cases in which acts of forgiveness have had important political consequences....

Michael Henderson, Shirley S. Rosenberg (Editor), *The Forgiveness Factor: Stories of Hope in a World of Conflict*, Grosvenor Books 1996 290 pp

Amazon.com

Studies in resolution of social, political, and economic conflicts. The Forgiveness Factor offers a model of healing based in a "philosophy of reconciliation".

IJHC reviewer's notes

Contains a wealth of descriptions of Moral Rearmament experiences of bringing together prominent representatives from warring factions - with outstanding successes. Style is dull for material that is potentially exciting.

Beverly Engel, *The Power of Apology: Healing Steps to Transform All Your Relationships*, John Wiley & Sons 2001. 272 pp

Amazon.com

Engel, a longtime therapist, takes it up as "a cause," claiming that this healing practice can prevent divorces, family estrangements, lawsuits and even atrocities like school shootings. Giving and receiving apologies for mistakes, oversights or offenses which many people avoid,

sometimes for legal reasons are "crucial to our mental and physical health and well-being," she asserts. Failing to admit error and express regret "adds insult to injury" and "is one of the most blatant ways of showing disrespect," she says. Engel provides detailed information on how to make "meaningful apologies... that will be heard and believed," made up of the "three R's: regret, responsibility, and remedy." She is also unusually conscious of the gray areas, where apologizing or forgiving may be inappropriate or impossible, and where "overapologizing" may reflect low self-esteem. A particularly fresh and useful chapter on the workplace offers excellent practical advice for responding to unhappy clients, customers, co-workers, employers and employees. Unfortunately, Engel devotes little attention to the difficult task of asking for apologies, after declaring that "it is your responsibility" to do so when feeling injured.