

THE DANCE OF ANGER

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Have you ever dispassionately observed two people in a disagreement? Have you ever sat back and just watched the way they behave as they disagree? It is often hard to not become engaged in their disagreement but if we can sit back and watch we may see something rather interesting. People in a disagreement take on a kind of dance. Let me explain.

When one person leans in the other usually leans back – and when one person speaks the other either listens or matches the same level of intensity. As one person opens their arms the other usually closes their arms. There is a dance to anger and according to Harriet Lerner, Ph.D. in her work “Dance of Anger” this dance can be observed.

Anger can play out on an external level when we are angry at others (all the way from a marital problem to being angry that none of the men who help ruin our economy with derivatives are in jail today

<http://moneywatch.bnet.com/retirement-planning/blog/financial-independence/why-are-no-wall-street-executives-in-jail/1223/>.

In an internal level we can be angry at ourselves and this too, can resemble a dance. If I continue to fail to be able to pay off my Visa bill, or continue to weigh more than is healthy for me, or if I continue to yell at my children (and I don't want to), then I'm in a dance with myself. A continuing disappointment with self can feel like an endless slow, pointless dance.

In the field of Leadership we are often dealing with the internal and external motivations of individuals within groups. It is always good to think about the “dances” that are being performed.

For the purposes of this class – think about the dance that you are in with your own creativity and innovation skills. How can you move this dance to become more productive and fun. This is worth thinking about.

Questions to ask if we want to change our “dance”:

1. What am I really angry about?
2. What is the best outcome for my anger?
3. Am I carrying more than my “part” of the anger? (should someone else be as angry as I am – if they are not why not?)

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4. What would I tell my son or daughter to do in this situation?
5. Some things are definitely worth getting angry about – but am I angry more than my share?
6. Is my anger keeping me from being as creative as I want to?
7. Is my anger too passive to be able to ‘get over it?’
8. Is my anger propelling me into creativity?
9. What part does my anger have to do with creativity?

There is an old saying, “A little boy went to school on the first day of class and bit one of the other children, and on the second day of school he bit another child. If this occurs he will probably be known as a ‘biter.’

How can I think of myself as being more creative? How can I either use my anger or release my anger toward enjoying more creativity?

Lerner, H. (1985) The dance of anger. New York: Harper Collins Publishing

Derivatives retrieved on March 2, 2011
CBS Money Watch.com