**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_            **Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***Some Benefits of Anger***

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| **Objective:** To explore positive aspects of feeling angry and productive ways to express anger |

A yellow emoji with a angry face

Description automatically generated

1. Robert Biswas-Diener and Todd Kashdan, two prominent happiness and emotion researchers, co-authored a book, *The Upside of Your Dark Side: Why Being Your Whole Self—Not Just Your “Good” Self—Drives Success and Fulfillment.* In it, they said:

“Anger is in itself neither good nor bad—it’s what you do with it that matters*.”[[1]](#footnote-2)*

* 1. What does this quote from Biswas-Diener and Kashdan mean to you?

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b. The title of Biswas-Diener and Kashdan’s book seems to indicate that allowing yourself to feel anger can bring about “success and fulfillment.” Does that idea surprise you? Why or why not?

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***Some Benefits of Anger* (Continued)**

1. Read the following passages about anger, adapted from Biswas-Diener and Kasdan’s article, “The Right Way to Get Angry,” and respond to the questions:

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| **The Right Way to Get Angry**  It's a mistake to think that certain emotions (compassion, love, fairness) are always good while other emotions (anger, rage, dislike) are negative feelings which should be avoided. "Positivity alone is insufficient to the task of helping us navigate social interactions and relationships," say Biswas-Diener and Kashdan. "A healthy society is not an anger-free society." Anger is best viewed as a tool--it can help us read an upsetting situation and respond to it.  Think about it--we often become angry when we perceive threats to ourselves or to those we care about. And often, reacting angrily in those situations can bring about good results. We should get angry when we see a bully in action, when someone treats us unfairly, when we see prejudice or injustice in the world. How do we react appropriately in those situations? |

1. Consider this quote from Malcolm X:

“Usually when people are sad, they don't do anything. They just cry over their condition. But when they get angry, they bring about a change.”

1. How does Malcolm X’s quote relate to Biswas-Diener and Kashdan’s ideas in the passage above?

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1. To what extent do you agree that anger can “bring about a change” or “bring about good results”?

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**Apply Your Learning for *Some Benefits of Anger***

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| **The Right Way to Get Angry, Part 2**  According to Biswas-Diener and Kashdan, when you want to express anger or negative emotions, one way to do so is to start with what they call the “discomfort caveat.” A caveat is a kind of warning, so a “discomfort caveat” is a way to explicitly warn someone that you are experiencing intense emotions and therefore it’s more difficult than usual for you to communicate clearly. A “discomfort caveat” is a way to apologize in advance, not for your emotions, but for the potential lack of clarity in how you might convey what you’re about to say.  A discomfort caveat might sound something like this: “I am angry about what is happening here, and I want us to stop and talk about this issue. But because I’m upset, and I haven’t had time to think about how to say this, I might not say this in the best way…”  The aim of the discomfort caveat is to **disarm** the other person, to keep them from becoming defensive or increasing the negative emotions in the situation. When someone hears that you are uncomfortable and that the conversation is difficult for you, it increases the likelihood that they will approach what you have to say with empathy. After using this opening, you can then **delve** deeper into what bothers you, what you think and feel in the aftermath of whatever happened (why anger emerged instead of other feelings).  Remember, when a situation makes you feel angry, remind yourself that anger often signals an opportunity to address and solve a conflict.  **disarm**: to make someone view you more positively, especially when they did not expect to  **delve**: to examine in more detail |

1. How would you explain the discomfort caveat?

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1. In what situations, or with what people, do you think the discomfort caveat would be most helpful? Is there a situation in which a discomfort caveat might not be useful?

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**Apply Your Learning for *Some Benefits of Anger* (Continued)**

1. Imagine you are involved in the following situation during the school day:

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| Your friend is trying to talk to you during a class assignment, but your teacher has explicitly said the work should be done silently. Your teacher thinks you’re the one who is talking, and they ask you to stay after class. You are angry at your friend because they don’t speak up and say it was their fault, and this class is important to you. This is also not the first time they’ve tried to talk to you during class at an inappropriate time.  Your friend sits next to you at lunch and starts joking with you, but you’re not in the mood. In fact, you’re still angry about the situation and frustrated with your friend. You decide to talk to them about it. |

1. What reminders do you want to give yourself before you start? Consider your tone, your relationship with this person, the setting in which you are having this conversation, or anything else you learned from “The Right Way to Get Angry, Part 2”.



1. Write a discomfort caveat that you might use to begin the conversation:

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1. If this situation had really happened, how or why might having this conversation benefit you personally? How or why might it benefit your relationship with your friend? Jot some thoughts below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Personal Benefits** | **Relationship Benefits** |
|  |  |

**Apply Your Learning for *Some Benefits of Anger* (Continued)**

1. **Challenge**: Read the two examples of how you might express your anger below. Neither example is meant to be correct or perfect. Consider:

* Do you prefer Example 1 or Example 2? Circle your preference.
* If you wrote an expression of anger, which parts of each example might you include? Underline the words or phrases you would use.

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| **Example 1** | **Example 2** |
| “I’m really mad at you because you played around in class and I’m the one who got in trouble. You didn’t say anything to our teacher when he assumed I was the one talking, and I got in trouble. That class matters a lot to me, and I wish you had said something to our teacher after class or in the moment to correct his misunderstanding.” | “I want to talk to you about what happened in class earlier. This is hard for me because I’m frustrated and having a hard time expressing myself, so bear with me. I was upset when you tried to talk to me in class earlier. I think you should have confessed to being the one talking. In the future, I’d prefer you didn’t try to talk to me when we’re supposed to be working.” |

1. **Challenge**: Write your own expression of anger using the guidance you’ve learned from this lesson.

Feel free to use the situation above, to imagine a different situation, or, if you’d like, you might use an actual situation that happened to you.

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**Reflection Questions for *Some Benefits of Anger***

1. Sometimes, we might find that an expression of anger is not appropriate, timely, or possible. Perhaps someone cuts you off in traffic or your bus is late. There’s not much you can do in those situations. Or perhaps you’ve evaluated the situation and decided that it’s not productive or helpful for you to express your anger in a specific moment.

Biswas-Diner and Kashdan provide some guidance on what you can do in these situations:

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| **When You Can’t Express Your Anger**   1. Breathe carefully in and out, counting your breaths as you go. You might choose a number like 10 breaths before you react. 2. Put your phone down for a bit. Electronics tend to amplify anger, particularly because you can vent quickly and without pausing via text or social media. 3. Take a break. This might mean you take a quick walk or ask to remove yourself from a situation for a few minutes. 4. Check in with yourself frequently to assess whether your anger is increasing, decreasing, or stable in the given situation. If your anger level is very high, or increasing, you are going to need more time before you can effectively navigate the conflict. Steps 1-3 become more important and useful in this situation. |

1. Which of these tips do you think would be most helpful for you? How or why might it help you?

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1. Add at least one additional tip that might help you modulate your anger in the moment.

**Stamp Your Learning for *Some Benefits of Anger***

1. Consider this quote, from Robert Biswas-Diener and Todd Kashdan:

"A healthy society is not an anger-free society."

How might expressing your anger be helpful to you or to others?

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1. What are two takeaways that you’d like to remember from today’s lesson about anger?

1. Robert Biswas-Diener and Todd Kashdan, “The Right Way to Get Angry,” *Greater Good Magazine,* October 20, 2014, <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_right_way_to_get_angry> . [↑](#footnote-ref-2)