

# ANGER: A Thwarted Desire

by Greg Mooers

**A**nger is an interesting word. It comes from the Latin “angustus”, which means narrow or tight. Such constriction is what prompts people to “act out” attempting to expiate some trapped energy demon. At the very heart of anger is an angst, a fear, a frustration. A popular definition of anger is “a thwarted desire.” Understanding the root of resentment can change our lives and our world.

Our American culture has never really outgrown its strong puritanical roots, and this is why, even today, many consider it inappropriate to express (particularly negative) emotions strongly. In contrast, the typical Italian family considers it healthy to have a full-out argument once a week! Americans view both “desire” and “anger” as basically negative – “good people” are not supposed to have either. Well, hello! Who do you know who doesn’t have desires and gets upset when they are thwarted? Anger and rage are generally considered energies that need to be kept under control. But every anger is hiding a deep seated conviction; after all, would you bother being angry if you were not committed to something? I believe that every time a person becomes enraged they are committed to something beautiful that is being blocked or violated.

I once staffed workshops for the families of delinquent teens. Participants could be quite challenging, but I figured if they are willing to challenge, they must be committed to something, so I looked for that thing amidst their anger. If they said, “Who do you think you are? Don’t tell me what to do! I’ll do whatever I want!” I might respond with, “I see that you’re committed to independence, and I’m committed to seeing that you experience that!” He was quiet. Or the 16-year old gang-banger who stood up and shouted, “I hate restrictions, and authority and if I feel like it, I’ll just leave!” Instead of resenting his resentment, I said, “Wow! I can see that you’re

powerfully committed to freedom. Let me know if I violate that conviction, will you?” He cosented.

My question is this: What is the difference between these hostile young men and a Martin Luther King? Each is committed to brotherhood, independence and freedom. All were angry, even at times enraged. The chief difference was how they expressed these very primal energies. With training, I believe almost anyone can learn to express healthy intolerance, and then they won’t need rage. I believe the difference between a hero and a terrorist is often razor-thin; after all, one man’s terrorist is another man’s hero.

Basically, whenever we become angry, it is because something we deeply desire is being blocked or violated. If we don’t learn to ask for what we want in healthy ways, we are headed down a passive-aggressive road that eventually leads to some form of blow-up. The people we call heroes are those who learned to identify what they wanted, acknowledged their boundaries (you don’t set boundaries, they are already set), and committed themselves to their cause. The common denominator both heroes and criminals share is INTOLERANCE. Both have a deep commitment to something, both are enraged, and both “act out”; society creates statues of one group and puts the others in jail. Why?

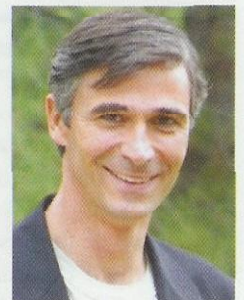
Mother Teresa was not the “mother of sympathy”. She was so intolerant of the urban poverty in Calcutta that she channeled her anger into service, and became the “mother of compassion”. Abraham Lincoln was so intolerant of slavery, and committed to unity, that he championed equality at the cost of civil war.

Who are your greatest heroes? Who has always inspired you? What were they committed to? These are vital clues to define exactly what means the most to you, your convictions.

Can you remember the angriest moment of your life — when you were so outraged that it seemed some power outside yourself took you over and made you do something so powerful, so out of character, that it shocked and even frightened you? Perhaps you hung up the phone, threw something, or said something you otherwise would never have said. Welcome to the world of the heroes, whose rage leads them to perform “outrageous” feats, thus becoming heroes or stars.

Let me be perfectly clear about something; I’m not encouraging or condoning any form of violence or abuse. I’m simply saying that we all are taken over by powerful forces that are connected to something deeply meaningful to us. When we learn what it is that we most deeply want, when we learn what triggers our anger, and when we learn to take responsibility for our responses — we are on our way to becoming heroes.

At LifeCamp, we have tools to uncover the hero in everyone. It has become my life work. In my work of personal empowerment, I have coached Academy Award winners, Olympic gold medalists, celebrities and billionaires. Each of these people had something so meaningful to them, it enraged them when violated and when fulfilled they became super-achievers. What one quality is most haunting you to become a hero?



*Greg Mooers is a public speaker and author of Our Hearts Virtue. His CD’s, workbooks, and inter-active website [www.Lifecamp.com](http://www.Lifecamp.com) are the core of a revolutionary process of self-discovery. Call Greg at 310-428-0400 for more information.*