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MANAGEMENT

Does Anger Have You or Do You Have It?

Anger is a natural emotion that occurs when something important is threatened. For example, a threat to a corporate value (we will deliver exceptional customer service); a threat to a promise (I will get the financials to you by Friday); or a threat to a process (failure to adhere to governance policies) can understandably trigger anger.

When executives lose control, they make the situation all about themselves and their anger. When that happens, they are no longer providing leadership to their organization. Leadership is about others. Executives should be in control of their anger instead of having it control them.

Name, claim, reframe. The first step in learning to deal with any emotion, especially anger, while still being able to lead, is having self-awareness.

NAME: Pay attention when anger begins to set in: What is being threatened? Is someone breaking a promise that will cause you to break a promise to others?

Often, when people become angry, it is a reflection of one of their own faults or insecurities. If Bob is a person who continually misses deadlines and his tardiness causes you to miss your deadlines, you may subconsciously fear you could become labeled undependable.

These are valid fears. Recognize (name) when the anger begins and that it is OK to feel this way when something important is threatened (claim).

CLAIM: Accept the anger and take a deep breath. The key to controlling your anger without it controlling you is what you do next. Will you explode into an uncontrolled rage that causes some to become defensive,

or will you choose to express it in a more constructive way?

REFRAME: The best way to reframe your anger is to ask, "How can I express my anger in a way that leads us through the breakdown?" In some circumstances it might mean calmly telling someone how angry you are and involving them in solving the problem. Instead of yelling at Bob for missing another deadline, explore why he misses deadlines in the first place. Maybe he has too much on his plate, lack of clear priorities or not enough resources. Showing anger is useful in letting people know this is a serious situation and they need to do something different NOW!

The next time anger sets in, realize it is OK to be upset—it is merely a display of your passion for your work. However, understand that when your actions are about you and your anger, you surrender your chance to lead.

Source: Michael O'Brien, PhD, CEO of the O'Brien Group in Cincinnati. For more information, please visit www.obriengroup.us.