

CONTAINING ANGER

GUIDED MEDITATION

For a direct taste of containing anger, try the contemplation below which is designed for moments when you are triggered or feel aggressive. Whether you are feeling aggression right now or preparing for the future, this practice is an act of peace.

Take a few slow easy breaths to anchor your attention in your body. Feel the quality of the aggression there. Let this be an encouragement and a perpetual reminder to take a few breaths before you consider any expression. If possible, encourage yourself to delay talking, as the anger will likely leak into the conversation; no matter how hard you try to stop it.

Notice how much you are contracted and angry. If it's severe, pay even more attention and recognize that you are more likely to be destructive. Ask yourself, "Do I have an agreement with this person that it's okay to express my anger directly?" This is never something to be presumed. If the answer is, "I don't know," ask them when you are calmer if it's okay to share what you're feeling.

Once you have a clear agreement, start by acknowledging that you're angry, and that you'll do your best not to hit below the belt. Recognize your intention to do some damage control, and to have a more harmless communication. Pause and see if you can understand what it is that you wanted, that you didn't receive, which you believe made you feel aggressive.

Now, let the person know what it is you wanted, or if you don't know, let them know you are frustrated, but can't articulate the reason. Give them time to respond. If their response is not leading in a direction of receptivity, suggest that you wait until a later time to try again. If that isn't possible, see if you can agree to disagree. See if you can maintain eye contact while you are talking, which will help you remember that you are both vulnerable human beings - - something that we can forget when we're angry.

If a person says they don't want to hear what you have to say while you're angry, there are virtually no situations in which it is healthy to override their view. Think of a time that worked out well, when you were pressing your anger against another person's will. Don't be surprised if you can't find any, because even the "good" situations likely resulted in that person retaliating at a later time.

See if this reminder will help you delay what you have to express, and lead you to the more advanced practices suggested later in the chapter. Stay alert to the consequences that can help guide you, the next time you're in a similar situation. Each time, be careful to note afterwards whether you could have waited, and how clear, simple and harmless you were or were not. Appreciate your effort to do your best and to learn from what you did. Plant seeds to continue this practice. Recognize that being less destructive and more peaceful is needed for healing, for reaching your heart, and accessing your pure intentions.