

**Handbook of Anger Management: Individual, Couple, Family, and Group Approaches**

by Ronald T. Potter-Efron, MSW, PhD. The Haworth Press, New York, NY, 2005, 279 pages, \$150.00; \$43.95 (paper).

This book, well organized in its structure, attempts to be comprehensive in its content, from assessment of anger through understanding of its etiology and treatment.

Readers may find it useful to have good guidance for assessment and categorization of different types of anger (eg, deliberate anger, anger avoidance, passive aggression, paranoia, sudden anger, shame-based anger, excitatory anger, habitual anger, moral anger, resentment/hate). The *Handbook of Anger Management* gives a fairly good list of differential diagnoses of anger, although it does omit various conditions such as acute and chronic organic confusional states (eg, dementias, brain injuries, toxic confusional states). The *Handbook* gives a useful list of commonly abused substances and their relationship to anger. There are questionnaires included at the end of the book for anger assessment, categorization, and treatment planning. Dr Potter-Efron has also added a quiz to assess anger turned inward. Different behavioral forms of anger turned inward are mentioned, such as self-neglect, self-sabotage, self-attack, self-blame, and, ultimately, self-destructiveness.

There is emphasis on forgiveness, and the reasons given are biomedical. However, with a religious bias prevailing in the *Handbook of Anger Management*, it can be thought of as being driven by a different set of beliefs and needs. There are areas of the book that can be described as somewhat blurred in boundaries, in which the author regards *spiritual* and *existential* as interchangeable. The *Handbook* presents various case studies. In some cases, there are references to God and there is advocacy for the need for the subject to return to a previous level of religious devotion irrespective of hard life experiences (which led to grief and its anger). Some may regard this kind of anger management as frankly irresponsible, while others might think of it as something to be expected from a book with a religious bias.

Anger is acknowledged in the *Handbook* as being sometimes creative, but it would have been helpful to read inspirational examples—history must be full of these examples. Anger related to injustice or other forms of unexpected human suffering holds potential for great energy and great potential to benefit the individual and society. Dealing responsibly with anger can be very beneficial and even financially rewarding. When the physician or therapist is treating clients who have suffered injustice, knowledge of such examples of creative anger might be useful.

The *Handbook* does mention briefly the contribution of feminist sociologists in understanding violence toward women, but it does not go as far as to include recommendation of feminist therapy in treatment of anger, nor does it give reference in text to these feminist writers. The text also shies away from acknowledgment of the reality that misogyny is a part of all major religions. Attachment theories are used particularly in understanding marital aggression, romantic jealousy, and antisocial behavior.

Psychoanalytic and cognitive behavioral approaches are addressed well. There are fairly detailed programs for individual and group therapy, and many counselors and therapists may find these very useful. For angry children and adolescents, there is a section that incorporates techniques appropriate to that age group. In the reference section, there are no obvious further reading recommendations for assertiveness training, and there are some minor errors.

The *Handbook of Anger Management* contains material for all those involved in managing patients with anger problems: psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, and therapists. The religious bias is in keeping with some of today's political leadership in the United States and the United Kingdom. Tomorrow is another day.

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