

CHOICES

Vancouver Island Counselling
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What Happens When Anger Takes Over and What We Can Do Instead

When communities experience loss, betrayal, or sudden change, anger is a natural response. When businesses close it's not just an economic event; it is an emotional one. For many families, it meant lost livelihoods, broken routines, and a sense that decisions were made far away by people who would never feel the consequences. In moments like these, the urge for revenge, blame, or "getting even" can feel justified. But science tells us something important: revenge rarely heals what anger breaks.



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Why Revenge Is Addictive

Revenge doesn't just feel emotional — it's chemical. When we imagine or act on revenge, the brain releases **dopamine**, the same neurotransmitter involved in addiction, gambling, and social media engagement. That surge creates a temporary sense of power, control, and relief.

But like any addictive loop, the effect fades quickly. The brain then seeks another "hit," which often means more outrage, more blame, more conflict. Over time, this conditions the mind to **crave anger as stimulation**, trapping people and communities in cycles of resentment and escalation.

In simple terms: revenge rewards the brain short-term and drains the soul long-term.



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Anger Is Not the Enemy — Suppression Is

Anger itself isn't bad. It's a signal that something matters. What harms us is either exploding outward or stuffing it down until it turns into bitterness, burnout, or depression.

Psychologists describe healthy anger processing as having three stages:

1. **Acknowledge it** – “This hurts. I feel angry.”
2. **Understand it** – What value was violated? Security? Fairness? Respect?
3. **Redirect it** – Channel that energy toward something constructive.



From Closure to Collective Healing

Anger often turns inward or sideways, toward neighbors, institutions, or social media arguments. That fragmentation benefits no one. What actually rebuilds resilience is shared meaning and forward momentum.

This can look like:

- Supporting retraining and local job initiatives
- Preserving community identity through storytelling and history
- Advocating for fair transition policies instead of personal retaliation
- Turning frustration into civic action rather than personal attacks

How to Deal with Dark Thoughts When They Show Up

When revenge fantasies or intense anger surface, try this science-backed approach:

- **Pause the body first** – Slow breathing (4 seconds in, 6 seconds out) calms the nervous system.
- **Name the emotion** – Simply labeling “anger” or “grief” reduces intensity.
- **Ask the better question** – Instead of “Who’s to blame?” try “What would actually help me heal?”
- **Limit outrage fuel** – Doom scrolling and rage-based content amplify stress and distort reality.

Choosing Strength Over Satisfaction

True strength isn't found in retaliation — it's found in refusing to let loss define our future. Communities that recover best aren't the ones that suppress anger, they are the ones that **transform it into purpose**.

Anger can burn bridges. Or it can light the way forward. The choice, collectively and individually, still belongs to us.



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