



The Case of Wrath

Anger is one of the most instinctive emotions we can experience. It rises from the depths of our guts and explodes before we even have time to realize it was there. If we generally know what situation triggered it, we often do not know what deep inner element is attached to it and how to get rid of it.

Some time ago, when I was negotiating my departure from one of my former jobs, one of my cases of anger literally jumped out at me. I had expressed to my boss my wish to leave my position very quickly but, a few days later, he came back to me expressing doubts about the validity of my arguments. After reading his email and while waiting for the interview that was to follow a few hours later, I felt the anger rising inside me without really understanding where it came from because there was no harm in explaining myself further on that matter. As I wanted to talk to my superior in a peaceful way, I listened to my anger with curiosity to understand where it came from in order to get rid of it. Indeed, I knew that if I conducted this interview with anger, my arguments would not be listened to and that was precisely what I was afraid of, the exact feeling that was expressed in this anger: the fear of not being heard or listened to. My arguments were spinning my head caught in an obsessive endless loop and I couldn't stop them. This fear was all the more disconnected from reality than my superior just wanted to talk to me to understand my leaving motivations and validate them ; so, basically, he just wanted to listen to me.

This anger was not a stranger to me and was rather recurrent, as it is often the case. Regularly, despite the fact that I know and value the importance of listening to others, I get carried away in discussions with friends, cutting them off and even sometimes raising my voice to make my point heard at all costs. I was aware that this behavior was not aligned with my listening and caring



values but, since it was a reflex emotion, I could not control myself.

To return to the situation described above, having understood the origin of this anger, I arrived at my interview calm and relaxed, having gotten rid of that fear, often expressed through aggressivity, which usually interfered in my exchanges; I listened to my boss's arguments before kindly advancing my own. By mirror effect, my superior listened to me calmly and validated my departure without difficulty.

I'm not saying that this fear will not return because, even though I changed the code in my brain-computer, its durability may take a long time to settle: anchoring a new behavior line of code in one's mind can take several months, even several years when the pattern is old. Nevertheless, having brought this fear, and therefore this anger, back to my consciousness, it will be easier for me to identify it if it reappears and to get rid of it quickly in favor of the new emotional reaction that I wish to adopt, namely in this experience, a benevolent attentive listening to others.

A few tips for when you feel anger rising within you:

- Breathe and start counting (this process triggers another part of the brain that physically by-passes, for a time, the one that manages emotions),
- Never react in a hurry, sleep on it and ask yourself what really makes you angry, what initial wound this anger belongs to,
- Also ask yourself your share of responsibility in the situation and try to put yourself in the position of the person who triggered your anger,
- Finally, ask yourself what reaction on your part will make your suffering disappear more rapidly and what kind of human being you want to be in that situation – benevolent, magnanimous, vindictive... –, what kind of behavior would you admire in someone else reacting to the same situation, what kind of values you want to carry with your behavior.

As you can see, it is very important, when we feel a surge of anger rising within us, to ask ourselves a posteriori where it originated from, what fear it is clinging to, because anger is always linked to a fear or to a fear-linked frustration. Once this fear has been identified and, therefore, once we have determined that it is not attached to any real imminent danger, we are able to purely and simply eliminate it from our behavior and replace it with the positive emotion of our choice.