

Managing Anger



Dr Aju Abraham ■

I am a 28-year-old married woman with two young children. We relocated from New Zealand three months ago for my husband to start his new job in Doha. Prior to coming here I had a good job which I really enjoyed doing. I gave up so that we could all be together. Though my husband didn't put any pressure on me, to be honest, I feel I didn't have much choice, as this was a good opportunity in his career. But since coming to Doha, I've been getting very angry for trivial matters and this is now causing a lot of problems in my marriage. My husband complains that when I get angry, I bring up the past issues over and over. I know that this is sometimes true, but I do this when I feel neglected by him. Looking back, I know he is not doing it deliberately, but I still get angry when I am stuck in the house looking after the children. When I am in the state I just can't go past the anger and sometimes I cannot stop myself from getting out of control. I keep remembering the old issues and these days I just can't forgive him easily. Please give me some advice on how to deal with this problem.

SB, BY EMAIL

Anger is one of the commonest emotions. It's a natural reaction to the pain and suffering experienced when you believe that an offence or injustice is committed against you or against someone you care for.

In your case, there are some major stress factors perpetuating your anger. Having to relocate to a different part of the world with two young children is quite stressful. On top of that, giving up the job that you enjoyed for the sake of your husband's career seems to have brought about a sense of resentment towards him. Suddenly, life could seem very different for you with a lot of dependence on your husband. Further to this, when he is unable to fully meet your needs, you may end up feeling victimised by him, resulting in your anger towards him. In your heightened state of anger you may tend to lose your self-monitoring capacity and objectivity. When this happens, you may become very sensitive to any kind of negative reaction from your husband, which in your view, justifies your anger towards him. From your description, this seems to have

become a repetitive behavioural pattern between you and your husband.

To be able to maintain your self control when you are experiencing anger, you need to learn to look beyond your negative assumptions about your husband and stop reacting impulsively. Urge yourself to take time out of such situations. When you're feeling less emotional, discuss the matter with your husband. It's usually better to communicate to him, what made you feel angry towards him, when you are not in the state of anger. This might help him to listen to your problems without being too defensive about his behaviours. Tell him that your intention is not to fight with him, but to address your underlying negative feelings and anger. You could also look at having some marital counselling if you feel that there are some significant communication issues between the two of you. Try to look at your current situation as temporary as in the near future life could start getting more settled for all of you. Your husband is likely to feel more settled in his job and you are likely to develop your own social and support networks here. For example, having a driving licence and a car helps you to move around more freely and your over reliance on your husband diminishes.



Finally, it's important to know that your anger could also be a symptom of an underlying mental health problem. For a young mother like you it could be related to an untreated Post Natal Depression. There are other conditions such as Bipolar Affective Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Psychotic Illnesses etc which may sometimes cause intense bouts of anger. It is uncertain from what you have written whether these could be contributing to your anger. To assess these in more detail and to formulate a treatment plan you should visit a psychiatrist, before things get worse.

Dr Aju Abraham is a Doha-based Consultant Psychiatrist who writes an exclusive column for The Woman. For any queries on emotional problems, email him at editorthewoman@gulf-times.com