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## Anger Management

October 4, 2018 • Rabbi Jesse Paikin • rabbipaikin@gmail.com • @jessepaikin

### Option 1: Resist Habituation

#### 1. Molly Crockett, *Modern Outrage is Making it Harder to Better Society*, March 2018

Social reinforcement may make expressing outrage habitual. Posting outrageous content is one of the best ways to get "likes" and "shares," and these dopamine boosters are delivered at unpredictable times – a pattern of reinforcement that neuroscientists have shown leads to habit formation. This is intentional. Tech companies design their platforms to reward us in this way because the slow drip feed of social rewards reliably keeps us hooked to our screens. Former Google design ethicist Tristan Harris has likened smartphones to “slot machines in our pockets.”

Harnessing digital outrage for social good will require a mindful awareness of how social media manipulates our emotions. This technology may disconnect our expressions of outrage from our best intentions. Just as a habitual snacker reaches for the bag of chips without thinking about their diet, a habitual online shamer might retweet fake news without thinking about the broader social costs. Another possible consequence is outrage fatigue: Non-stop exposure to shocking information may reduce the intensity of people's experiences of outrage over time. If your news feed is constantly making your blood boil, you may not have energy left for actions that make a difference, such as volunteering, marching or voting.

#### 2. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, *Strive for Truth!*

When two armies are locked in battle, fighting takes place only at the battlefield. Territory behind the lines of one army is under that army's control and little or no resistance need be expected there. A similar situation prevails in respect of territory behind the lines of the other army. If one side gains a victory at the front and pushes the enemy back, the position of the battlefield will have changed. In fact, therefore, fighting takes place only at one location...

With each good choice successfully carried out, the person rises higher in spiritual level; that is, things that were previously in the line of battle are now in the area controlled by the *yetzer hatov* and actions done in that area can be undertaken without struggle and without *bechira*. And so in the other direction. Giving in to the *yetzer hara* pushes back the frontier of the good, and an act which previously cost one a struggle with one's conscience will now be done without *bechira* at all.

## Option 2: “The Principle of Charity”

### 3. Jonathan Haidt, *True Diversity Requires Generosity of Spirit*, November 2015

Philosophers often advocate what they call “the principle of charity.” It means that in any discussion we interpret others people’s statements in the way that makes their argument strongest, not weakest. We give them the benefit of the doubt, rather than trying to twist their words to support the ugliest possible implications...

Here’s the advanced credit reading list: Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount (“*Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?*”). Buddha’s Dhammapada (“*It is easy to see the faults of others, but difficult to see one’s own faults.*”). And a selection of verses from all the world’s wisdom literature passed down to us to warn us of our tendency to be mean-spirited, vindictive, and hypocritical.

### 4. Rabbi Meir Chodosh (1898-1989), *The Mashgiach*

It is not the trait of anger that needs working on, but the trait of goodwill. Once a person’s anger is aroused it is too late to work on it. However, if one maintains goodwill and sees things in a positive light, one will never reach the point of getting angry.

## Option 3: Viewpoint Diversity & Intellectual Humility

### 5. Dr. Pamela B. Paresky, *Psychology for Democracy*, March 2018

Given our natural tendency to selectively perceive things that confirm our existing views, leaders need people around them who see things differently than they do in order to provide information that would otherwise be missed. When our only contact is with people who agree with us, we not only miss the opportunity to learn about other perspectives, we become more convinced of the rightness of our views, and our views become more entrenched — and even more extremist. And of course, there’s always the possibility that we could be wrong. Without being willing to authentically consider different views, we’re unlikely to ever know...

having our views challenged can be uncomfortable, so many of us prefer to avoid it. But when we don’t learn to productively hear disagreement, it becomes easy to view people who see things in ways that are diametrically opposed to our own as fundamentally flawed in some way, irredeemable, or even evil. When we view someone this way, why would we listen to anything they have to say? In fact, why would we allow them to speak at all?

### 6. *Pirkei Avot* 4:1

Who is wise? One who learns from all.

## Option 4: Popping the Bubble & Radical Listening

### **7. Jeffrey Rosen, *America Is Living James Madison's Nightmare*, The Atlantic, October 2018**

Exacerbating all this political antagonism is the development that might distress Madison the most: media polarization, which has allowed geographically dispersed citizens to isolate themselves into virtual factions, communicating only with like-minded individuals and reinforcing shared beliefs.

Far from being a conduit for considered opinions by an educated elite, social-media platforms spread misinformation and inflame partisan differences. Indeed, people on Facebook and Twitter are *more* likely to share inflammatory posts that appeal to emotion than intricate arguments based on reason.

The passions, hyper-partisanship, and split-second decision making that Madison feared from large, concentrated groups meeting face-to-face have proved to be even more dangerous from exponentially larger, dispersed groups that meet online.

### **8. *Babylonian Talmud, Chagigah 3b***

There are Torah scholars who sit in groups and engage in Torah study. Some of these scholars declare an object or person as being ritually impure, while others declare it to be pure. Some prohibit some behaviors, while others permit it. Some deem something invalid, while others deem it valid.

Now lest you say: “How can I study Torah, when it contains so many different opinions?!” Ecclesiastes 12:11 states they are all “given from one shepherd.” One God gave them; one leader spoke them from the mouth of the Blessed Master of all creation, as it is written: “And God spoke all these words.” (Exodus 20:1)

So too, you must make your ears like a funnel and acquire for yourself an understanding heart to hear both the statements of those who render objects ritually impure *and* the statements of those who render them pure; the statements of those who prohibit actions, *and* the statements of those who permit them; the statements of those who deem items invalid *and* the statements of those who deem them valid.

## Option 5: Get Angry

### 9. Rebecca Traister, *Fury Is a Political Weapon and Women Need to Wield It*, September 29, 2018

[Christine Blasey Ford's] voice trembled in moments of intense recollection; it sounded as though she might be crying, though no tears appeared to fall. She described a past sexual assault and the more recent media assault on her in excruciating and vulnerable detail, but did not yell, did not betray a hint of the fury she had every reason to feel as she was forced to put her pain on display for the nation.

That is how women have been told to behave when they are angry: to not let anyone know, and to joke and to be sweet and rational and vulnerable.

Outside the room where Christine Blasey Ford was testifying on Thursday morning, women were incandescent with rage and sorrow and horror. They were getting angry in a new way, a public way, an unapologetic way — a way that is typically reserved for men, and that would again serve men well, when afternoon came.

What happened inside the room was an exceptionally clear distillation of who has historically been allowed to be angry on their own behalf, and who has not.

And outside the room was a hint of how it might be changing.

Most of the time, female anger is discouraged, repressed, ignored, swallowed. Or transformed into something more palatable, and less recognizable as fury — something like tears. When women are truly livid, they often weep...

If you are angry today, or if you have been angry for a while, and you're wondering whether you're allowed to be as angry as you feel, let me say: Yes. Yes, you are allowed. You are, in fact, compelled.

If you've been feeling a new rage at the flaws of this country, and if your anger is making you want to change your life in order to change the world, then I have something incredibly important to say: Don't forget how this feels.

The future will come, we hope. If we survive this, if we make it better — even just a little bit better — the urgency will fade, perhaps the ire will subside, the relief may take you, briefly. And that's good, that's O.K.

...

What you're angry about now — injustice — will still exist, even if you yourself are not experiencing it, or are tempted to stop thinking about *how* you experience it, and how you contribute to it. Others are still experiencing it, still mad; some of them are mad at you. Don't forget them; don't write off their anger. Stay mad for them, alongside them, let them lead you in anger.

## 10. Selections from *Jeremiah*

“The blood of the innocent poor is on your clothes... Yet, despite all these things, you say: ‘I have been acquitted, surely, God’s anger has turned away from me.’ No, I will judge you for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’ How you cheapen yourself, by changing your course! You shall be put to shame...” (2:34-36)

“For among My people are found wicked men, who lurk, like fowl hunters lying in wait. They set up a trap to catch men. Like a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of guile. That is why they have grown so wealthy. They have become fat and sleek; they pass beyond the bounds of wickedness, and they prosper. They will not judge the case of the orphan, nor bring justice to the pleas of the needy.” (5:28-26)

“‘Turn back, O Rebel Israel,’ declares God. ‘I will not look on you in anger, for I am compassionate... I do not bear a grudge for all time.’” (3:12)

## 11. *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 119b*

Jerusalem was destroyed because they neglected the education of school children; for it is said: ‘Pour out God’s anger because of the children in the street.’” (Jeremiah 6:11) Why pour it out? Because the child is in the street.

Jerusalem was destroyed because its inhabitants were not ashamed of each other...

Jerusalem was destroyed because they did not rebuke each other...

## Concluding Thoughts

### 12. Marie Sambilay, *Joy Is Not a Luxury, On Being*

“We can’t be in anger and sadness forever.” (Maria Hinojosa). Rage and despair are exhausting, unsustainable – however generative their fierce energy can be. To nourish the lifelong work of building a community in which all are dignified, we need not daily rage, but daily joy.

Joy isn’t a luxury... Not blind, naïve happiness in spite of painful realities, but an orientation to the world and one’s work in it, an insistent and consistent practice of meeting triumph and despair with hope, curiosity, and, as often as possible, with laughter. And it will not always be possible, Maria acknowledges.

But it is a practice. It is something that we work at. The point is that we try.

### 13. Sharon Salzberg & Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams, *Love Everyone: A Guide for Spiritual Activists, November 2016*

[I]n social justice work the only option is loving everyone. Otherwise, there is no path to real change. Whether we’re leaning toward the spiritual community or the activist community, what we need is the combination of a mind that wants to change the world and a mind that is steady, clear-seeing, and seeks change from a place of love, rather than from a place of anger.

