

Coach [from previous program]:

This is what ten-year-old John is thinking: “I want to sit with my dad because I hardly get to see him, but mom wants me with her because she is mad at him. She also hates his girlfriend. But if I sit with my mom, my dad will be upset because he says he hardly gets to see me. And Dad wants me to like his girlfriend, but I like mom.

I’d really like to sit with Dad, but if I do I will hurt my mom. But if I sit with my mom I’ll hurt my dad.”

Host: Welcome to Champions Arise. I’m your host _____.

This dialog was from our last program. Coach Kent Darcie, the founder of Adult Children of Divorce Ministries, used this story to illustrate one reason why children of divorce have anger issues. Today we are going to look at effective ways to conquer anger issues so please stay with us.

Music Theme out

Host: Coach, in our last program we looked at some reasons why adults with divorced parents often suffer with anger issues. As an adult child of divorce, did *you* have any issues with anger?

Coach: Unfortunately, yes. I was thirteen when my parents divorced. In hindsight, I can trace my anger back almost to the announcement of the divorce. But for most of my teenage years, I didn’t realize that I was angry inside.

But we live in a sin-filled world. Life throws us curves. People let you down. And I found that I had more and more justifiable reasons to be angry. By the time I was a father of three, I had major issues with anger. I am not normally the explosive type, but I can cut someone to shreds with my words. It came to a head one night when I was very angry at my oldest son and I think I grabbed him. It was at that point I realized anger had gotten the best of me.

I apologized to my sons, told them that this behavior was not acceptable for a Christian man, and told my wife I was going to get professional help. And I did.

Host: That must have been hard.

Coach: Well, tougher was seeing the scared look in the eyes of my kids and my wife. Ironically, the counselor tried to point me to my parents’ divorce, but I kept shifting the blame for my anger on other things and people. And I’m not alone.

Right now, there are men listening to us that are relating to what I’m saying.

Please hear me. It is not a coincidence that you caught this program today. Accept this as God’s wake up call for you. Take the necessary steps to heal. Get outside help. I know you don’t want to do that. Neither did I. We men are proud, but we also can face facts. The fact is, if you could’ve changed by yourself, you would have done it already.

Host: So this is where your ministry’s key verse comes in?

Coach: Yes. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 3 and 4 state “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*” [ESV]

God helped me with my anger and comforted me and my family. It's a process and a journey, but I am well down that path. I praise Him for His faithfulness. Now I want to share His comfort and encouragement with others like our listeners.

Host: Amen. So what are ways we can deal with our anger?

Coach: There are five steps we'll look at that can reduce and control our anger. I'm going to summarize the first four. Then we'll spend some time with the last one.

*Number 1 - Accept the truth that anger is a choice. You might say, "*Well, hot tempers just run in my family.*" That doesn't matter. The truth is, if I gave \$1000 for every consecutive day that our listeners didn't get angry and kept that up for 30 days, I'm confident most of them would make it through—even those with hot tempered families.

And those who didn't complete the month would still probably make it a week or two; even though anger is a daily occurrence now. The bottom line is anger is a choice.

*The second thing is get more information before you respond in anger.

Is there another side to the story? Do you have all the facts?

Asking this question helps us see the bigger picture and buys us time to cool down.

* Number three is, tell God how angry you are, and why.

We sometimes think that we can't be truly honest with God, but we can.

Psalm 142: verses 1 through 3 say, "*I cry out to the LORD; I plead for the LORD's mercy. I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles. For I am overwhelmed, and you alone know the way I should turn.*" [NLT]

I think the words "I am overwhelmed" describe the dilemma some men are facing when it comes to taming their anger. Praying to God and telling him all our troubles, as the psalmist wrote, is very, very helpful.

*The fourth item in our list is: do something constructive that discharges the anger.

Pray, listen to God-focused music, take a walk, read a book, play a sport, or call a friend. It is important to diffuse the physical energy that can come with anger.

Host: So let's review.

- We need to accept that anger is a choice,
- learn more about a situation or person before we respond in anger,
- share with God in prayer why we are angry and how we feel,
- and find constructive outlets to diffuse anger.

Coach: That's right. Now we are going to look at a tool that brings all this together.

It is very important to identify the real cause of our anger. When we are angry, we tend to blame people or things. Actually, we get angry because particular emotions are triggered. These include guilt, insecurity or inadequacy, envy or jealousy, fear, and trauma or pain.

To help us remember this, Drs. Tom and Beverly Rodgers, authors of *Adult Children of Divorced Parents*, created the “GIFT exercise”¹ with the acronym GIFT.

G is for guilt

I is inferiority or inadequacy

F is for fear and

T is trauma

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G is for guilt

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G, I, F, T.

The Rodgers created the GIFT exercise to help people *work through* the anger-causing situations they face, instead of just *reacting to* them.

Simply put, when anger is triggered in us, we need to figure out which one of these four items is most likely the culprit.

Are we feeling Guilt?

Are we feeling Inferior or inadequate?

Are we experiencing Fear?

Are we experiencing Trauma or pain?

G-I-F-T

Host: This sounds very interesting. How would this exercise be applied?

Coach: Here’s an example; tonight when you get home from work, you go into your house and you find a note on the kitchen table that says you have to make your own dinner. You’ve had a long tough day so you get angry.

But *why* are you angry? That’s easy you think. Because she is supposed to have dinner for me when I get home. But is that the *real* reason? Let’s check with the GIFT exercise.

The first letter is G

G - Are you feeling guilty?

Maybe your wife has been complaining that you are always coming home late. She feels unappreciated and unloved. You know this is true. But instead of trying to empathize with how she feels, you get angry and grumble that she doesn’t understand the pressure you are under to put a roof over her head. You actually feel guilty, but it comes out as anger.

The second question starts with the letter I; Are you feeling inadequate or inferior?

Has her note triggered feelings of inadequacy or inferiority?

Maybe she has been complaining about the job you have *that causes* you to come home late. You’d like to get another job, but you don’t feel competent enough to do it. You also feel inadequate as a husband because you think you’re doing your best, but it never seems to be enough. Anger is what comes out, but you’re actually feeling insecure and inadequate.

“Do I feel inadequate?” is a tough question for men, but the third question – the F in our GIFT exercise, is worse; do I have fear? Am I afraid of something?

Host: Men don't believe “male” and “fear” belong in the same sentence, do they?

Coach: Not usually. The movies, TV shows, and books we enjoy, tend to have fear-less men as the leading characters. Unfortunately, it is well-documented that parental divorce can produce a multitude of fears—fear of conflict, fear of abandonment, fear of doom, fear of inadequacy and inferiority, fear of marriage. these are all common for adults with divorced parents.

So when we get the fix your own dinner note on the table, even though we know in our hearts that she was probably running late for her Bible study, there's a little voice that says she's gone. She's mad and not coming back. The fear comes because the memory of our mom unexpected leaving is deep in our brain. Or dad left and we feared that our mom might leave too. But if we don't diagnose the issue, when our wife gets home, we'll respond in anger to the note. In reality the note triggered our fear of being abandoned.

Lastly, T is Trauma. As we just discussed, the note may have triggered a traumatic childhood memory of being left alone, or a parent leaving, or having no food. Sometimes we are aware of the trauma. Sometimes we aren't. But anger can erupt as a result.

Host: This sounds like a powerful tool.

Coach: It is. I like the GIFT exercise for three reasons

First, by forcing us to think, it gives us time to calm down.

Second, it changes the anger from a “you” or casting blame focus – “you are making me mad,” to a “me” focus—what is triggering *me* to react this way?

The third reason I like the GIFT exercise is because it works in a wide variety of situations. I encourage our listeners to think of your relationships with your spouse, relatives, friends, neighbors, or coworkers.

Do you have problems maintaining relationships because they always “do things that make you mad”?

Re-look at the things that “bug” you by using the GIFT exercise. You'll be surprised what you learn.

All these tools are good, but Christian counseling with a pastor or counselor is very helpful. This is particularly necessary if your anger comes out in any sort of abusive way.

There is no Biblical justification for physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. Ephesians 5 verse 25 says “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”²

Host: That is God's command. May we all take it to heart.

Music Theme in

Host: We trust that the men who have heard these programs will take the steps to deal with their anger and bring healing to their relationships in and out of the home.

To contact us, or to learn more about this series, go online to www.championsarise.org. and click on the “Breaking the Cycle of Divorce” link.

That’s it for this program. We invite you to join us next time as we continue to look at issues that affect adults with divorced parents.

I’m _____, for _____. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise.

¹Tom and Beverly Rodgers, Adult Children of Divorced parents: Making Your Marriage Work,
76-77

²NKJV