



PEACE AND JUSTICE NETWORK

Presbytery of Grand Canyon

WHAT'S ANGER GOT TO DO WITH IT?

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You may have in the past attended a domestic violence educational workshop in Arizona or New Mexico, but memories fade with time. A recent conversation I had revealed a common misunderstanding about domestic violence: how anger is often viewed in abusive situations. But first, let me define DV in the fewest possible words. In DV situations, the abuser uses a pattern of behaviors designed to maintain power and control over his/her partner.

One of these behaviors is anger. Anger is a tool, used carefully and precisely by the abuser, to get the reaction he desires from his victim. While he may appear to be out of control, he is using his finely-tuned weapon to achieve the goal of controlling his partner.

Therefore, when a perpetrator of violence is sent by the courts to “anger management classes”, it amounts to a gentle slap on the wrist. He already IS managing his anger quite skillfully. His issue isn't anger; the problem is that he (or occasionally she) feels that he has the right to dominate, control and expect obedience from his partner. There is no room for mutuality in this relationship. In almost all cases of abuse, he will never let the control be taken away from him. Only about 7% of abusive men make a decision to change, even after court-mandated classes or time in jail. Murdering a partner/spouse who dares to disobey or leave them is often the final expression of control.

There is much for us to learn, and as importantly, much to unlearn about violent relationships. Domestic violence has not disappeared. In all its forms-- dating violence, elder abuse and intimate partner violence, it continues at epidemic levels. 1/4 to 1/3 of women experience violence in their lifetimes, with Natives experiencing much higher rates.

Contact me for more information: Joan Fenton rjfeniton5@gmail.com.

If you suspect abuse is happening to a person close to you, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-799-7233.