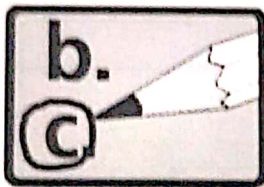


Does Anger Get the Best of You?

WC. Fields was once asked, "Are clubs good for children?" His tart retort was, "Yes, but only if all else fails." Fields's wisecracks, of course, were calculated to maintain his image as a rascal of social irreverence. His behavior was an effort to increase his box office profit, but some of us get bogged down with ill will as a way of life, feeling chilly toward everyone in general, and usually losing friends as a result.

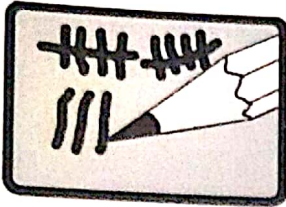
But humans are not born mad or hostile; rather, frustrations usually cause such emotions to well up within us and incite problems. Animosity is directly linked to insufficient emotional well-being. Where do you stand? Do you have more than your fair share of ire to dole out? Take the following quiz to see if you're on the warpath with others.



TEST

The following quiz is similar to those used to gauge social interaction patterns.

1. I am usually the one to stand up for the rights of other people.
True False
2. It irritates me when peers or family members tell me what to do.
True False
3. Expressing anger to someone who annoys you is emotionally healthy.
True False
4. It bothers me very much to be considered "second best."
True False
5. Most of the time, I am willing to fight for what I want.
True False
6. I would have no qualms talking back to an authority figure such as a guard or police officer.
True False
7. I like to direct the actions of others.
True False
8. I probably would try to get even with people who had been bossy or pushy toward me.
True False
9. If I'm upset with someone, I don't hesitate to let him or her know about it.
True False
10. People will take advantage of you if you are humble.
True False
11. A person who is spontaneous in releasing anger is better adjusted than one who is slow to express it.
True False
12. I would feel quite glad if someone told off a person I found obnoxious.
True False



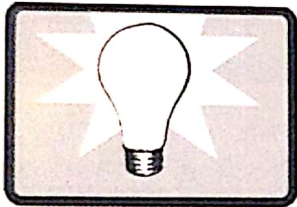
SCORING

To tally your score, give yourself 1 point for each “True” response.

A score of 0–6: You have an average degree of hostility that you’d be willing to vent toward others.

A score of 7 points or more: You have an above-average amount of anger and might do well to examine what’s setting you off. It may be that the ways you’re expressing your feelings are increasing your level of hostility. Chances are you’d benefit from a more controlled release of this volatile emotion.

Note: There is always a chance that the introduction to a test can tip you off to what is being measured, causing you to inadvertently slant your answers in a socially approved direction. If you fear this may have been the case, ask someone close to you to take the quiz with you in mind, then compare your answers.



EXPLANATION

Social animosity is so extensive, some experts used to view it as an inborn trait. But this belief has changed. Dr. Karen Horney, a Freudian disciple, maintained that anger is not an inborn quality but a reaction acquired through experience, especially with one’s parents.

Horney theorized that humans have a built-in capacity for aggression, and it’s triggered when one is faced with parents or caregivers who are indifferent, inconsistent, or interfering. A child in such a setting becomes reluctant to express his or her frustrations or animosity, so represses these emotions to a point where they stimulate feelings of guilt and unworthiness. This complex emotional web fosters a love-hate relationship within the child, which he or she resolves in one of three ways: by moving toward others (in an attempt to please or placate them); by moving against others (being anti-social or domineering); or by moving away from others (acting aloof or distant).

Unfortunately, there is no dearth of differing notions about anger, how it’s caused and how it should be expressed. For example, item 11 of our quiz deals with how anger should be released in order to alleviate ire. Dr. Jack Hokenson addresses this topic in his book *The Dynamics of Aggression*, in which he summarizes studies that show that venting anger does not always reduce its ill effects. In fact, if people in conflict fail to deal with the root of their emotions, the conflict may only worsen.

Further, spontaneous hostility (which is discussed in item 12) is best quelled with restraint rather than expression. A study by M. K. Biaggio at the University of Idaho found that students who were quick to anger were less emotionally healthy than those who showed self-control.

People who respond “True” to the majority of items on our quiz tend to bear more hostility toward others than do those who respond “False.” They are likely to be unfriendly, untrusting types with fewer social commitments. Among this group the level of self-sufficiency is high—these people tend to avoid situations in which others may be able to take advantage of them.