ForeWord Reviews

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

Cooling Red Hot Relationships: New Ways Couples Can Defuse Anger and Keep the Passion

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Heated debates, controlling attitudes, and blaming judgments wreak havoc on relationships already fragile as couples struggle with the pressures of everyday life. The authors present practical techniques to help couples reduce the frequency and intensity of their anger, while building a more fulfilling relationship.

Drawing from their extensive experience counseling couples in workshops and in New York City after 9/11, Kirkland and Lindstrom provide an inside look at the techniques in action. Readers will learn how to recognize characteristics and behaviors of angry people; identify irrational beliefs; turn "boiling" thoughts into more appropriate and rational "cool" thoughts; and how traditional anger "discharge" techniques fall short as long-term anger-management solutions. Homework assignments enable couples to practice applying their new skills.

The authors, who hold Ph.D.s in clinical psychology from the University of Arizona, both practice at Kaiser Permanente. Kirkland has appeared as a psychology authority on television and radio, and Lindstrom's practice focuses on managing anger and stress. They explain how one's cognitive map (whether accurate or not) influences how one views the world. To help overcome perfectionist attitudes (a characteristic of angry individuals), the authors suggest that couples complete "shame-attacking" exercises. "Both of you ride in an elevator backwards, facing the rest of the people, and smile." Using their sense of humor completing these exercises, couples start functioning more like a team. "When a perfectionist partner or couple gets over needing other people's approval to feel good about themselves and each other," the authors assert, "they will be taking positive steps toward building a more satisfying life and relationship."

Readers will learn how thinking, feeling, and behaving are connected. The authors invite couples to concentrate momentarily on making themselves angry, without thinking about anything. "People are going to feel the way they think," they say, "and as a result, react to

situations based on these feelings." Couples find they are unable to get angry, revealing that the root of anger is the thinking process.

Cooling Red Hot Relationships challenges readers to examine their inner world to address the root of anger, and empowers them with new skills to overcome anger's grasp. Although written specifically for couples, anyone seeking to more effectively manage anger would benefit from the in-depth discussion and practical techniques.

By implementing the authors' four-step process in the face of anger, couples will be equipped to identify, uproot, and deal with underlying irrational beliefs and issues that trigger anger. With practice, the techniques will enable couples to develop healthier and more satisfying relationships.

Sharon R. Winberg