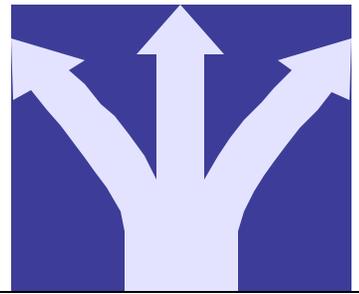


# OUTLOOK ASSOCIATES of New England

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Volume 2, Number 4

October 2002

## The Anger Depression Connection- Part I

At Outlook Associates, we often work with individuals that experience difficulties with both anger and depression. Understanding the link between the two is crucial. This newsletter kicks off a two-part series that will provide you with a look at recent research and information about the anger-depression connection.

Recently, a study was published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry that bolstered the idea that anger and depression are associated. Dr. Kyung Bong Koh of Yonsei University College of Medicine in Seoul, South Korea who was the lead author was quoted in a news interview stating that, "Depression is closely associated with anger or hostility. In particular, depressive disorder patients tend to express anger verbally and physically."

The researchers evaluated 73 patients with depression, 67 with anxiety disorders, 47 with somatoform disorders (A disorder characterized by physical symptoms of illness that are either initiated or worsened by psychological stress) and a "control" group of 215 healthy individuals.

As a group, depressed patients had higher anger scores than all the other participants. The study also found that the severity of the depression was directly related to the level of anger expression.

### "Anger Attacks"

The research by Dr. Koh and his colleagues in Korea appears to support the work of Dr. Maurizio Fava, MD and Jerrold Rosenbaum, MD at Massachusetts General Hospital who in the early 1990s reported on a series of patients who experienced sudden outbursts of anger resembling panic attacks. These "anger attacks" were described as uncharacteristic behavior that was inappropriate for the situation at hand and were

directed at others during an anger attack. They also had a further definition of anger attacks based on the criteria for panic attacks including the occurrence of at least 4 of the following autonomic and/or behavioral features: 1) heart palpitations, 2) body tingling, 3) flushing, 4) chest tightness, 5) light-headedness or dizziness, 6) excessive sweating, 7) shortness of breath, 8) shaking or trembling, 9) intense fear or anxiety, 10) feeling out of control, 11) feeling like attacking others; 12) physically and/or verbally attacking others and, 13) throwing or destroying objects.

In a number of studies that have been done, the prevalence of anger attacks in depressed patients was between 30-40%. In addition, Dr. Fava has reported that each 20% increase in depressive symptoms increased the risk of severe aggression against one's spouse by 74%.

### Anger= Depression Acted Out

Terry Real in his book *I Don't Want to Talk about It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression* makes a compelling argument that men, because of cultural expectations and socialization, are not allowed to express certain feelings such as depression or sadness. Experiencing these feelings put men in a vulnerable position that is often not socially condoned. Men who may be struggling with these difficult feelings will exhibit anger and act out in an aggressive manner as a way of avoiding these feelings.

William Pollack, PhD, co-director of the Center for Men at McLean Hospital has noted in his work that depression in men has often been under-diagnosed. He believes, like Terry Real, that men are more likely to deny depression because it is unacceptable to their self-image. He also indicates that men are also less inclined to express shifts in feelings than are women and clinicians may not assess men for symptoms of depression.

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Dr. Pollack has offered an alternative diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder-Male Type. Symptoms include: 1) Increased withdrawal from relationships; 2) Over-involvement with work activities; 3) Avoiding the help of others; 4) Increase in intensity and or frequency of angry outbursts; 5) A denial of any sadness; 6) Depleted or impulsive mood; 7) Concentration, sleep weight disorders and; 8) Increased use of substances to assist in numbing of feelings.

### **Depression as Internalized Anger**

While depression can manifest itself in anger directed outward toward others, it has also been considered "anger turned inward." Suicide attempts and less serious efforts to harm oneself such as cutting oneself with a razor or punching one's fist against the wall are forms of aggression toward the self. These types of self-destructiveness are often generated by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that are associated with depression.

There is some disagreement as to whether the frequency of depression in women is due to their inability to express their anger. Some empirical studies have show that women and men get angry with the same intensity and frequency and for the same reasons. But as already noted above men are more likely to express their anger through verbal or physical aggression. It is interesting to note that with regard to suicide women are more likely to attempt suicide than men but men are more likely to complete suicide usually because they use more violent means such as a gun.

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### **DESK RAGE**

⇒ According to a survey of American workers released by Integra Realty Resources, Inc, "desk rage" may be on the rise due to corporate layoffs and poor economic times.

The survey reports that 10% of employees say they work in an atmosphere where physical violence has occurred because of stress, with 42% saying yelling and verbal abuse occurs in the workplace. While only 1% of Americans say workplace stress has caused them personally to strike a co-worker, 29% admit to yelling at co-workers because of stress.

*The Boston Sunday Globe, January 13, 2002*

### **Anger Control Problems in the News**

A 38-year old Lowell woman was arrested for allegedly punching and kicking a 51-year-old woman outside a supermarket. The victim brought 13 items to a check out line with a 12-item limit. While the woman was walking home, the other woman allegedly pulled up beside her and struck her with her knee and foot.

*Boston Metro, February 15, 2002*

Minnesota Vikings receiver Randy Moss was recently charged with two misdemeanors for pushing a traffic officer with his car after she stepped in front of it to stop him from making an illegal turn. The officer was slightly injured when she fell off the car. The 25-year-old player faces a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and \$1,000 on each charge.

*CNN, September 27, 2002*

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### **Outlook Associates Updates and News**

- ◆ On September 13, 2002, John Didio presented "A Perspective on the Treatment of Anger Problems," for the monthly regional meeting of the Employee Assistance Programs Association (EAPA).
- ◆ On September 17, 2002, John Didio presented "Managing the Angry Employee," for the Metrowest Human Resources Management Association.
- ◆ On October 19, 2002, Joe Pereira will present "Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Anger Control Problems in a Time-Limited Group" for the 24th Annual International Symposium of the Advancement of Social Work in Groups in New York City.
- ◆ Joe Pereira has a two-part article on anger control problem diagnosis and treatment in *Focus*, the Massachusetts Chapter of National Association of Social Workers (NASW) monthly newsletter.
- ◆ Our website [www.outlookassociates.com](http://www.outlookassociates.com) now has an anger consequences questionnaire that can be downloaded and completed to assist in determining the level of anger control problem a person may have.
- ◆ Referrals are now being accepted for a men's anger management group in Arlington and Framingham and a women's anger management group in Arlington.