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## ANGER AS A DEFENCE AGAINST VULNERABILITY

in the time of COVID 19

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*The Covid crisis has exposed the emotional vulnerability of the entire human race like nothing before it. No one is spared. Neither the most powerful and wealthiest individuals and nations, nor the ones with the largest defense arsenals are immune to the dreaded virus of vulnerability.*

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Most of us right now, faced with the crisis, are going through a whole range of feelings; anxiety, fear, incomprehension, confusion, uncertainty, sadness, grief, feelings of loss and anger as well. Of course, there are times when we feel good and well and happy and loving and caring and hopeful. And we can slide from one feeling to another in the same day or even in a matter of hours.

But let us take a look at the angry feelings that come up from time to time, and especially those that come up in response to the numerous losses and deprivations we are presently confronted with. So much has changed now; the loss of the many freedoms we enjoyed, the loss of a particular way of living and relating and socializing and importantly the loss of our sense of security and safety.

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These angry feelings and are often passing feelings, but there are also angry states of mind when angry feelings endure and dominate our entire minds leaving no room for thought or other feelings which could possibly modify the anger. When anger becomes a habitual response to difficult feelings, its roots usually lie in early childhood histories.

In these angry states, we feel the anger is justified, for some outrage has been committed against us by some outside source (there are reports of an increase in domestic violence, as well as outbursts of mob violence in recent weeks). And so angry feelings can rage, and we fuel and fan them within our minds. This is when anger can come to serve a particular purpose (unconsciously) especially in these times of turmoil.

For now, with so much anger raging within us, we turn our entire mental energy to this outside “enemy” which has become both the cause of and the target for our anger. The anger has thereby served us by distracting and diverting us from some of the more difficult and unbearable feelings the crisis had brought us face to face with. Such as our fears; the fear of losing our loved ones, our own lives, of losing our jobs and livelihoods, fear of losing the life as we lived before, fear of losing the freedoms we enjoyed, and fear of change and of the uncertainty about our future. In addition, the anger has pumped us up with a feeling of so called ‘strength’ and agency, a sense of power when we are feeling powerless, and a sense of purpose when we are feeling helpless. In short, it has served to defend us against feelings of vulnerability.

The Covid crisis has exposed the emotional vulnerability of the entire human race like nothing before it. No one is spared. Neither the most powerful and wealthiest individuals and nations, nor the ones with the largest defense arsenals are immune to the dreaded virus of vulnerability. With this pandemic, from feelings of relative safety and security, power



and certainty and in some instances a sense of near invincibility and omnipotence it has brought us to our knees. We feel unsafe and insecure, powerless and helpless. All of the world's leading scientists in their different fields are voicing one thing today about this virus: "we do not know, or, we do not know enough". We are all faced with not knowing, with great uncertainty about our future and an overwhelming sense of our vulnerability. It is our vulnerability and the uncertainty that we find very difficult to bear, and the anger then shields us precisely from this.

This is because our vulnerability puts us in touch with our helplessness, our neediness and our dependence on others. Uncertainty about our future, makes us think of all that has changed already and what changes the future holds, and all that we have now lost. It confronts us with our losses and deprivations.

If however, we can work through our anger and bear feeling vulnerable and look at our losses and importantly lament them, we can find meaning and value in what we have lost. In valuing people, we find love and gratitude towards them which uplifts our spirits.

It is in only in acknowledging and valuing what we have lost that we have gained our humanity; our capacity to be in close touch with all our feelings, the loving and compassionate ones



as well as the more unwanted and painful states of uncertainty and vulner-

ability.

*Vulnerability then is not our weakness but our strength, for to feel whole-heartedly is to be emotionally alive.*