

AVOIDING ANGER THAT KILLS INTIMACY

By Mike Danchak

It's not surprising that research shows an inability to manage anger is a major cause of divorce. When angry we typically react instantly with a verbal or physical response. When you react, you are out of control. Think of a fish on a hook. Your spouse is jerking you around. Instead of you being in control, you have turned control over to your spouse.

When you respond to your spouse, you are in control of your emotions. An anger management skill is to "be quick to listen, slow to speak, and SLOW to become angry." Your spouse has different opinions than you do, and that's okay. Your differences don't have to be a basis for reactionary fighting. You need to keep this in mind, especially when you think your mate's perspective is ridiculous or illogical.

When your disagreements are energized with anger, here is a method that can help you avoid acting in a way that you later regret...in a way that shows disrespect for your spouse and slowly kills intimacy. When things heat up, here is a skill to keep you in control of your anger and in the responsive mode:

- **STOP.** You pause and take a moment. It's helpful to take a couple of deep breaths. This helps to reduce the high adrenalin levels in your blood that drive reactionary, defensive behaviors and cloud rational thinking. By refusing to react immediately and saying the first thing that comes to your mind, you can choose to express yourself in a way that does not attack your spouse...your tone is respectful and considerate. An ancient proverb says, "One who is quick-tempered acts foolishly."
- **THINK.** While you're taking a moment before you respond, think about the situation. Ask yourself, "What is triggering my anger. Do I feel that my

significance, competence or likeability is under attack?” The purpose of thinking is not to come up with an answer or solve the problem, but to help identify why you are angry. stop and reflect, so you can respond appropriately.

- **Finally, your are ready to RESPOND** to your spouse in a way that expresses your feelings in a controlled and respectful manner.

By responding instead of reacting, you create an environment for your spouse to respond in kind.