

Menopause and anger

“There’s a fire in my belly these days and it burns hot. It’s not that I want to be irritable all the time, but the slightest little thing lights a fuse in my heart, and the angry words seem to tumble out. Often, I can’t find the brakes. As I vent my frustration, I think to myself, ‘stop talking – this isn’t going to help!’ but the words keep coming. Then come the tears. Tears because I have been hurt by the words or actions of others – tears because I hate being the person I am – tears because I’m frustrated and don’t know what to do.”

Uncontrolled anger is never good. Anger whose volume has been turned up by the hormonal changes experienced can be terrifying to the person suffering and everyone else close by. There’s an intensity to it that feels different to normal anger – it’s an anger that won’t listen, won’t be comforted, and won’t abate. So, what can we do?

- Communicate – it’s best to be honest with family, friends and colleagues that you are experiencing more anger these days. Giving them an opportunity to understand your struggles will hopefully enable them to be more supportive in this season.
- Gain awareness – it can be helpful to think through what triggers angry outbursts. It’s easy to say “when others do something irritating” but that’s too vague. Is it when people give the impression they don’t care? Is it when people increase your workload unnecessarily? It is when people say something that suggests you are not as sharp or as capable as you once were?
- Attend to your heart – knowing what your vulnerabilities are, actively reminding yourself of what the Lord says about you. Meditate on Scripture that reminds you that you are safe, loved, precious, gifted – not to puff yourself up but to combat the lies that you believe so easily about yourself. Psalm 46 might be a place to begin.
- Model humility – angry outbursts may come, but they don’t have to be the last word. After the anger has subsided, you can acknowledge any unkind words and say sorry for the hurt caused and the attitudes expressed.
- Seek encouragement – it can be useful to give one or two trusted people permission to speak into your life. It’s not helpful to have everyone piling in but a couple of voices who can say “well done – you handled that brilliantly” or “shall we think about what went wrong there” can be a real blessing.

- Practice lament – there are moments when it’s right to hold our tongue with the people around us, but we can always be open with the Lord. Pour out your strong emotions to him and do so with a conviction that he will lead you somewhere better.