

TO YOUR HEALTH

DR. KEITH LEVICK

Anger can be expressed in a healthy way

At the mall last week, I witnessed what is a far too common occurrence: a customer screaming at a worker. The rage in her voice was frightening. Reflecting over this incident while driving home, I noticed two drivers engaged in what appeared to be a "vehicle battle" — yelling at each other and riding each other's bumpers. By the time I pulled into my garage, I realized how angry society has become.

All of us experience the normal emotion called anger. Sometimes it arises from nowhere and other times it brews inside and becomes a type of pressure cooker. Some vent, others resort to physical attacks, and still others suppress their anger. Anger has three components: bodily reaction, thought and behavior.

The body responds to anger by preparing itself for a fight. The heart pumps faster, blood pressure rises and hormones are released throughout the body. This physiological response is a normal reaction to any stressor and helps us when we are in danger. Unfortunately, there is a downside which I'll return to shortly.

Becoming angry just doesn't happen. Its roots are found in our thought process. How we appraise (think) an event determines how we feel and behave. If you think a person cut you out of money, the most obvious reaction is to become angry.

Anger is expressed behaviorally and this varies from person to person. Acts of violence through acts of suppression or behavioral declarations of anger. When anger is expressed, therefore, determines its effect on all parties involved.

Although anger is a normal emotion, it's very misunderstood. We are taught that anger is an inappropriate emotion. Children often hear, "Don't you talk to me that way!" The message is that children are not expected or have the right to become angry. Other mixed messages derive from the professional community — vent your anger, venting leads to violence, suppressed anger leads to heart disease, etc. We are unsure what to do with our anger.

Part of the confusion lies in semantics. An abundance of scientific research exists on the effects of anger. Recently, hostility (the overt expression of anger) has emerged as a major health culprit. To me, anger and hostility express the same concept (hostility can also be a thought or an action.) With that being said, the negative consequences of chronic anger are:

- Anger is related to heart disease because it raises blood pressure and places undue stress upon the heart.

- Research shows a relationship between anger and cancer.

- Anger is associated with increased levels of violence (spousal, children, workplace, etc.)

- Anger can undermine relationships. How do we express anger in a healthy manner? Any display of violent behavior (physically and verbally) is totally unacceptable. Communicating with civility and respect is the ideal and is easier said than done when we're angry. Anger distorts perceptions. The world is seen through red-hot sunglasses. It becomes difficult for an angry person to see things rationally. We often regret what we said and/or how we behaved in the "heat of the moment" because our brains are unable to function logically.

Suppression is another inappropriate way to deal with anger. Burying anger can lead to self-loathing, anxiety and physical and emotional symptoms.

Trying to determine the healthiest way to deal with anger can be confusing. If suppression and physical outbursts represent opposite ends of a continuum, the ideal place is in the middle. I firmly believe that verbal and constructive works best; this doesn't mean chronic fits of rage. Rather, it means explaining why you feel angry and how it can be overcome.

Keep in mind that words can be as harmful as physical expression. Instead of suppressing anger, allow yourself the freedom to express what you feel. Anger is a by-product of life. Expressing it respectfully becomes a civilized choice.

Dr. Keith Levick is a health psychologist and the director of The Center for Childhood Weight Management in Farmington Hills. You can reach him at 248-661-6825 or send him an e-mail at Klevick@aol.com.

Erbium laser aids wrinkle removal

By BARR PENT TEMPLTON
SPECIAL WRITER

When Gail Le Roy recently met some friends for lunch they knew the 41-year-old mother of two looked a bit different, but they couldn't actually pinpoint what had changed.

"They just kept saying, 'You look so refreshed,'" smiled Le Roy, of Lake Orion. "When I finally told them that I had laser surgery to get rid of my wrinkles they just said, 'all right that's it, give me his card.'"

That "card" belongs to Dr. Thomas Spoor, director of oculoplastic services at The Detroit Medical Center/Wayne State University's Kresge Eye Institute.

An alternative method

Spoor was recently introduced to a brand new way to help people get rid of their wrinkles with less pain when he saw a demonstration of the Erbium laser at an out-of-state medical conference.

Physicians in Germany have been using the Erbium laser for three or four years but the breakthrough technology has only been around the states for a year or so. In Spoor's practice, which includes sites in Oakland and Macomb County, he had been using a CO₂ laser for orbital surgery and neurosurgery when a procedure for skin resurfacing was introduced.

"When we looked at it and used the CO₂ for the skin resurfacing it was like this in all well and good but these patients are red forever," said Spoor, who had one friend of the family who was red for five months.

When Spoor saw an alternative method that was quick, less painful and came with a one to two week recovery period for patients, he wanted an Erbium laser for his own.

"Our skin is approximately 70 percent water, so the water in our skin absorbs the laser light," Spoor explained. "The Erbium laser absorbs water 10 times better than our former technology, the CO₂ laser, therefore, the treatment is better and we see fewer side effects."

When the Erbium laser absorbs that water from the skin only about 10 percent of the laser effect is dispensed as heat to the patient's skin. In comparison the CO₂ process has about 90 percent converted heat which causes



Facial rejuvenation: Lake Orion resident Gail Le Roy was one of Dr. Thomas Spoor's first Erbium laser patients. The above pictures show Le Roy during pre-operation preparation (left), on the third day after the surgery (center) and two weeks after the procedure was done to her mouth and forehead areas (right). To date, Spoor has performed the procedure on 50 or 60 women for mainly cosmetic reasons centered on removing wrinkles.

pain, and scarring and the prolonged redness of the skin.

"The nice thing about the Erbium technique is it basically explodes the skin 25 microns at a time so you can sort of sand your way down to the second layer of the skin and smooth it out," Spoor said. "And what you see is what you get. You don't have any surprises post operatively where you think you've done a perfect procedure but deep heat damage has damaged the tissue."

Patients, who get the cosmetic surgery on an outpatient basis, are given a topical facial anesthetic applied to their face one to three hours prior to surgery. During the procedure they are listening to music with headphones and are instructed to raise their hand if they are experiencing any discomfort or wish the doctor to go more slowly.

"The Erbium laser that I'm using has been approved by the FDA for wrinkle removal, the other ones are sort of approved for 'quote' dermalogical purposes," Spoor said.

Once Spoor officially began doing the new laser technique at several clinics last September, clients began to crowd his schedule. He sees predominantly women patients who want their wrinkles removed. Men are more apt to want removal of acne scars or marks associated with accidents or trauma.

Spoor does point out that procedures on males are better with the new laser because they aren't left with red faces for months like the CO₂ used to do. To date, Spoor has per-

formed the procedure on 50 or 60 women for mainly cosmetic reasons centered on removing wrinkles.

A definite plus
"What the ladies like is they really just get a nice buffing of the skin. When you feel it afterwards it feels like baby skin and it really looks great, and you get that glow back that you sort of lose with age."

Dr. Thomas Spoor
— Director of oculoplastic services at The Detroit Medical Center/Wayne State University's Kresge Eye Institute

burn so the first day ice is your friend," Le Roy said.

"But with the ice and some lotion it's much better on the second day and after that, except for a little redness with me because I'm a redhead, it looks great and your back to normal."

In fact, Le Roy was so pleased with "getting rid of all the crows feet under her eyes" she went back for more laser surgery 10 days later. She had Spoor remove the wrinkles from her forehead and a line on her upper lip area that often caused her lipstick to crease right up to her nose.

"They say it's like childbirth, you forget how awful it is after a couple days and then their happy as a clam and want to do more," Spoor said. "And you know it's a burn on your face — there are no free rides you really are getting a burn for your money — but it gets better quickly which is the beauty of it."

"Right after, you are really red and it looks like a bad kind of like a rubber band popping and really it's the sound more than anything else that kind of bothers you," said Le Roy, who was one of Spoor's first Erbium laser patients and didn't wear headphones. "The other beauty of this technique is it's much, much safer and people are back to work and back to functioning much more quickly."

Le Roy can attest to that fact. She had the laser surgery on Friday, endured a mere 34 hours of actual discomfort, and was back at work by Tuesday morning.

"Not having a long term

healing process limits the postoperative expense of the laser procedure, too. The expense of the laser surgery is priced out by dividing the face into cosmetic units. For example the area near the lips and chin are one unit, each cheek is another unit, the areas around each eye represent units, the forehead a unit as is the neck and chest.

Spoor's specific charges vary but average \$500 to \$600 per unit.

"I play lets make a deal with people, if someone has bad acne scars and not much money I'll make up a good deal for them," said Spoor, who also considers each case individually. "Some people you look at and just know you're going to be lasering them for an hour and half and then someone else may only take 30 minutes so you adjust your price accordingly."

Paying for the new look comes out of most people's pockets as there are generally no insurance premiums for cosmetic surgery. The rare exception would be repairing scars from an injury accident. On the plus side, Spoor said, there's no reason the procedure shouldn't be permanent if the patient takes care of themselves.

"I do tell people that if I laser you and then you go off to Florida and lie in the sun it's going to go right back, your going to burn the hell out of yourself and it's just going to come right back," Spoor said. "It's instant gratification, there's no doubt about it, but you've spent your money for the laser you've got to take care of it."

Spoor tries to promote healthy daily skin care to his clients by recommending they get used to using lotions and creams. He said everyone has done their share of using and abusing the sun but once the laser work is done patients should take care of their skin using sun block and a hat with a brim.

"I think this surgery is a really great thing and I've had a ball with it," Spoor said. "It's made me want to go to work on my laser days because it's fun and it gives me instant gratification, it gives the patients instant gratification and it's nice to deal with happy people."

For more information regarding Dr. Spoor's practice, call (313) 677-1356.

Include complex carbohydrates in your diet

There is a common myth about bread that it's fattening and it should not be part of a healthy weight loss plan. Not true!

It's not the bread that's fattening, it's the butter or cream cheese people smother on it that is fattening. Now I don't mean to say you can eat unlimited amounts of bread if you are trying to lose weight, but it certainly is not a forbidden food for dieters.

Breads and grains are just two examples of complex carbohydrates. Complex carbohydrates are also found in fruits, legumes (peas and beans) and other vegetables.

But fruits and vegetables certainly don't have a bad reputation. It's just the starchy foods that dieters seem to want to steer clear of.

Actually, starchy foods are a good source of energy for people who are trying to lose weight. Most are not high in calories until you add the buttery toppings or the heavy dollop of sour cream on your baked potato. Of course, french fries are not a low-fat or low-calorie way to eat potatoes either.

Use good judgment about the way the food is prepared. But for the most part, breads, potatoes and pasta are low in both fat and calories.

One thing about complex carbohydrates is they tend to make you feel fuller which means you may not consume as many calories.

A study published in the January 1997 American Journal of Clinical Nutrition suggested that "altering the composition of the diet in favor of a higher carbohydrate-to-fat ratio may

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decrease the incidence of obesity."

In other words, their research seems to indicate that high-carbohydrate diets compared to high-fat diets with the same amount of calories are not equal. The high-carbohydrate diet may be better for your waistline than the high-fat one.

These findings are really not surprising since we know that a gram of fat provides nine calories whereas a gram of starch (or protein) provides only four calories.

Fiber is also a complex carbohydrate that is excellent for your body. A low-fat, high-fiber diet can reduce your chances of developing heart disease, obesity, and some cancers.

Most Americans eat far more fat and calories in a given day than we need. Most of us get enough protein, as well, and probably do not need to increase our consumption. Replacing fat and cholesterol with complex carbohydrates like starch and fiber is a healthy solution.

Dieters aren't the only ones who can benefit from carbohydrates. According to the American Dietetic Association, diabetics also may benefit from a diet high in complex carbohydrates and low in fat and sugar. Athletes favor carbohydrates as well to give them an energy boost and sometimes to even help their endurance.

If you want to find healthy food choices that contain complex carbohydrates, look no further.

Good sources of starch and fiber
Legumes — whole grain and white cereals — cooked and ready to eat
Flours — whole grain and white
Pastas — such as macaroni and spaghetti
Barley and rice

Legumes — dried peas, beans and lentils
Starchy vegetables — potatoes, corn, sweet peas, lima and navy beans

Good sources of fiber:
Whole grain breads
Whole grain cereals — cooked and ready to eat

Legumes — kidney, lima and navy beans and split peas
Fruits — especially the skins and edible seeds

Nuts and seeds but beware of the fat content of some of these though.

There are plenty of ways to prepare these foods with low-fat toppings. Try toast with low-fat margarine. Skip the mayonnaise and cheese on your sandwiches and instead enjoy lettuce, sprouts, tomatoes, onions and mustard

to spice it up. You can even spread low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese on your sandwich for flavor.

The same thing goes for potatoes. Skip the butter because there are plenty of tasty toppings for a baked potato. Low-fat vegetarian chili is a great alternative, plus it's high in fiber. If you enjoy sweet potatoes, a delicious way to prepare them is to slice them into strips, lightly spray with a low-fat cooking spray, top with your favorite spices and pop them in the oven. Quick and easy!

There are plenty of ways to enjoy pasta when on a low-fat diet, too. Stay away from creamy sauces and try to eat tomato-based ones that have little or no oil in them. There are also clear low-fat broth-based sauces that are excellent for angel hair pasta. Many have fresh lemon juice and/or vegetables in them to add a little zip to the meal.

No matter how you slice it, there are many benefits to having complex carbohydrates in your diet. Just make healthy choices of toppings and enjoy the flavor and variety!

I read every one of your letters and I love your comments!

Please keep writing me with any questions, inspirational stories or suggestions for upcoming articles to: "Talk to the Mirror," Weight Watchers Corporate Communications, P.O. Box 9072, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48334-2874 or fax: (248) 553-7108.

(Florine Mark is an appointee to the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and the Michigan Fitness Foundation.)