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Book Review: Cage Your Rage for Women

Cage Your Rage for Women, by Judith E. Urquhart and Murray C. Cullen, American Correctional Association, 2004, 108 pp.

Cage Your Rage for Women is an anger management workbook specifically targeted to women. The exercises are intended for women working with their counsellors either individually or in a group setting. Nevertheless, the workbook's focus on women's anger issues suggests that its content can be helpful to all women, not just those in counselling with a trained professional.

The preface noted that a workbook addressing women's anger issues is essential for several reasons. First, women have learned to suppress rather than express their anger, often denying it. They also are held to a different anger standard than men; that is, women who act aggressively are more often viewed negatively than men who act in a similar manner. In addition, there are negative physical and mental health implications for women who suppress or deny their anger. Further, women often fear their anger because they have not learned healthy ways to express it. Finally, the incarcerated female population, consisting mostly of mothers, continues to escalate. When released from prison, they will be able "to teach their own children better anger management skills than they had learned".

Complementing the introduction are seven workbook chapters. The introduction helps female readers identify whether anger has been a problem in their lives. Subsequently, for each chapter topic, the authors provide lecture material and workbook exercises that require personal application. In Chapter 1, "Anger: When Did I Become So Angry?", the authors define anger, explain how it exhibits itself (inwardly and outwardly), discuss the need for a program of change, discuss how past experiences shape present expressions of anger, and ask readers to determine if their anger is expressed inwardly or outwardly.

Chapter 2, "Anger Has Many Faces", addresses the many ways that anger can express itself, including verbal abuse, blame, vengeful anger, low-grade anger, passive-aggressive anger, and internalized anger. In Chapter 3, "Feelings: All Is Not as it Seems", the authors introduce two types of feelings, love-based and fear-based, and explain that when anger is expressed it may be a mask for a deeper, more painful feeling such as fear. Building on Chapter 3, Chapter 4, "Shame, Guilt, and Embarrassment", discusses how these feelings can contribute to anger build-up.

Chapter 5, "Managing Anger", clarifies how past perceptions, ideas, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings manifest into particular behaviours. For instance, if women are able to understand why they react in certain ways to certain events, it will help them realize that they must change the behaviours that result in negative outcomes. Identifying bodily responses to anger, taking timeouts and keeping anger logs are the focus of Chapter 6, "Tools that Help: Time-Outs and Anger Logs".

At the end of Chapter 7, the authors state that their goal was "to help you learn how to use your anger to work for you ... to introduce you to a new way of thinking about your anger" and "to help you journey to new self-awareness and self-discovery so that you can grow in self-respect." The final chapter, "Other Anger Management Skills", introduces additional techniques that women have found helpful in controlling their anger.

Cage Your Rage for Women is a well-written, comprehensive, up-to-date, easy-to-read, and simple-to-use workbook authored by two corrections professionals. The organization of the workbook is just right, with each chapter building on the previous one. The references and suggested readings allow readers to obtain additional information on the principles and theories introduced in the book. Moreover, it fills a void in the literature and will benefit any counselor, therapist, psychologist or social worker who has female clients. This workbook is beneficial in the correctional setting and beyond.

Reviewed by Marylee Reynolds, Ph.D., professor of sociology and criminal justice at Caldwell College, Caldwell, NJ.
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