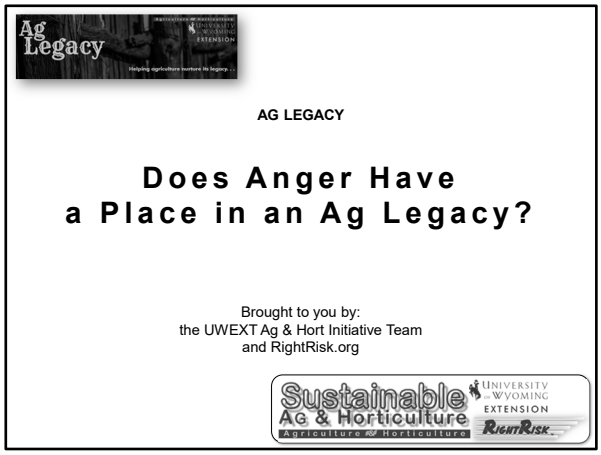


Welcome to another AG LEGACY recording.

AG LEGACY is a series of presentations and other online materials intended to assist rural families
in creating their own legacy by beginning the thought process and opening the lines of communication.

Today's recording will address the question: Does Anger Have a Place in an Ag Legacy?

Today's Speaker

John P. Hewlett
Ranch/Farm Management Specialist,
Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics,
University of Wyoming

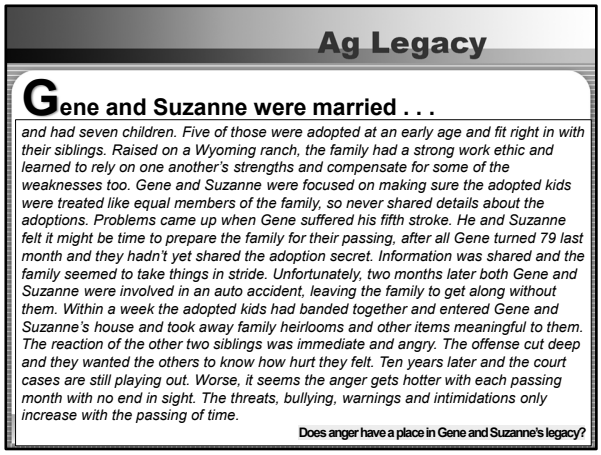
I'm John Hewlett, a Ranch and Farm Management Specialist in the Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics at the University of Wyoming

I will be your speaker for today's AG LEGACY presentation.

Getting a handle on anger presents many challenges.

There are steps we can all take, however. These steps and our efforts to get organized become part of the legacy we leave behind.

So what all is involved and where do we start?

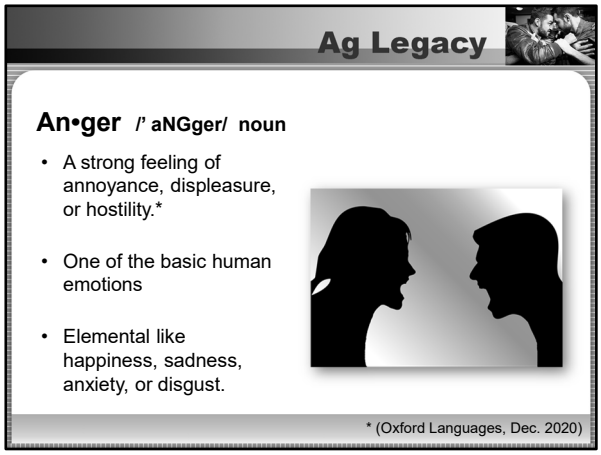


Gene and Suzanne were married . . .

and had seven children. Five of those were adopted at an early age and fit right in with their siblings. Raised on a Wyoming ranch, the family had a strong work ethic and learned to rely on one another's strengths and be compensate for some of the weaknesses too. Gene and Suzanne were focused on making sure the adopted kids were treated like equal members of the family, so never shared details about the adoptions. Problems came up when Gene suffered his fifth stroke. He and Suzanne felt it might be time to prepare the family for their passing, after all Gene turned 79 last month and they hadn't yet shared the adoption secret. Information was shared and the family seemed to take things in stride.

Unfortunately, two months later both Gene and Suzanne were involved in an auto accident, leaving the family to get along without them. Within a week the adopted kids had banded together and entered Gene and Suzanne's house and took away family heirlooms and other items meaningful to them. The reaction of the other two siblings was immediate and angry. The offense cut deep and they wanted the others to know how hurt they felt. Ten years later and the court cases are still playing out. Worse, it seems the anger gets hotter with each passing month with no end in sight. The threats, bullying, warnings and intimidations only increase with the passing of time.

Does anger have a place in Gene and Suzanne's legacy?



ANGER is a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.

Psychology Today describes anger as one of the basic human emotions.

It is related to the fight, flight, or freeze response of the nervous system; it prepares humans to fight. But fighting doesn't necessarily mean throwing punches; it might motivate a person to take action in other ways to address their situation.

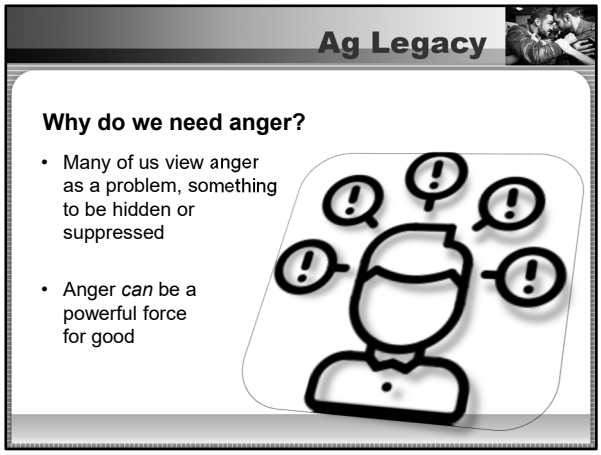
Passive Aggression - Many of us do not like to admit that we are angry, because we don't like confrontation – this is called passive aggression. This comes out in things like becoming silent when you are angry, sulking, procrastinating, and pretending everything is fine.

Open Aggression – When a person responds by lashing out, becoming physically or verbally aggressive, and potentially hurting themselves or others. This response is shown by fighting, bullying, blackmailing, accusing, shouting, bickering, sarcasm and criticism.

Assertive Anger - The healthy way to deal with anger is through a controlled and confident approach, talking and listening, and open to help in dealing with the situation.

Assertive anger can help relationships to grow. It means thinking before you speak, being confident in how you say it, yet open and flexible to the other side.

It means being patient; not raising your voice; communicating how you are feeling emotionally, and really trying to understand what others are feeling. When you deal with anger assertively, you demonstrate that you are mature and care about your relationships and yourself.



Ryan Martin a psychology professor at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay says, “Anger is associated with a bunch of consequences - everything from physical aggression and physical fights, verbal fights, property damage, cardiovascular disorders, other negative emotions, and substance abuse problems.”

When people experience anger in great intensity too often, they are also likely to experience interpersonal or physiological problems.

Martin suggests that, “Anger is a powerful and healthy force in your life. It’s good that you feel it. You need to feel it.”

Anger tells us when something feels wrong or unjust or unfair. But that is not necessarily bad.

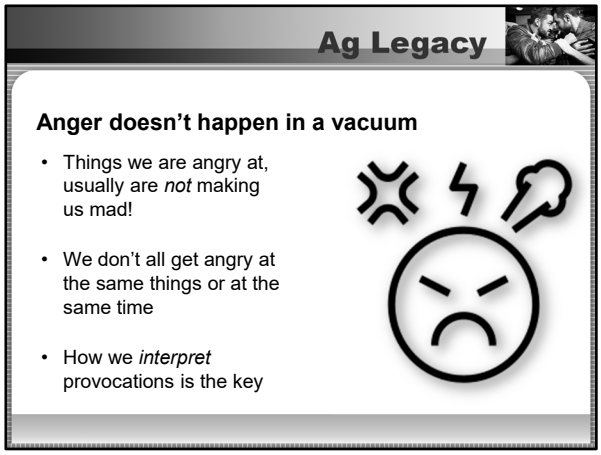
We should keep in mind that emotions exist in us to alert us to things:

- Sadness, which also feels bad in the moment, alerts us to loss;
- Fear, which feels bad in the moment, alerts us to danger; and
- Anger alerts us to injustice.

We should understand that if we are angry it must mean something.

If we consider the real basic reasons why we get angry, one of the most basic reasons is when our goals are blocked and achieving goals is pretty important to human beings.

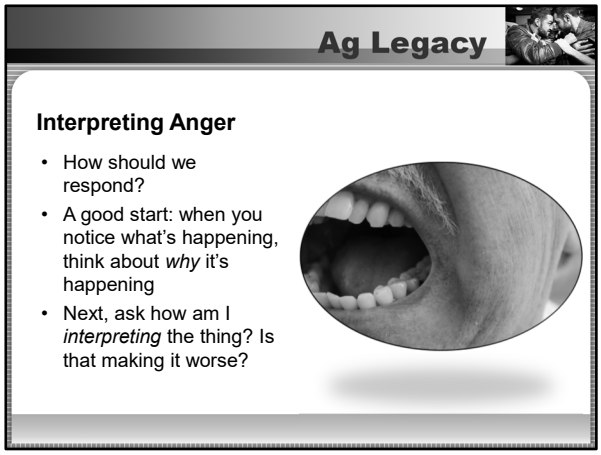
We can think of anger as one of the mechanisms that allows to power through those frustrations and break through it to obtain our goal.



We can feel angry at the same time that we're feeling scared or sad or feeling a host of other emotions.

Perhaps most interesting is that, when we study this further, we discover that these provocations are not making us mad--at least, not on their own. We know that because if they were, we would all get angry over the same things and we don't.

The reasons I get angry are different than the reasons you get angry. So there must be something else going on. That something else is how we interpret the provocation.

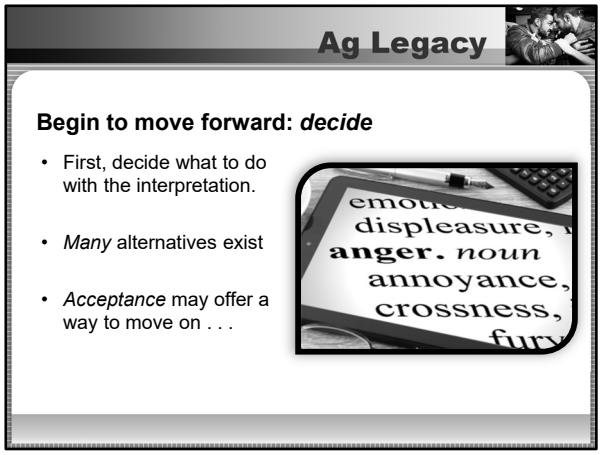


What should we do when we start to recognize ourselves responding to a provocation?

Martin encourages people to search for insight to gain the upper hand in these situations. When you notice what's happening to you, think about why it's happening. Oftentimes, people will externalize that. They'll blame the thing saying, "Well, this thing is making me mad."

That's good as a start. The next step should be to ask, "How am I interpreting the thing? Is that making it worse?"

That is the level where we can often identify the factors that are leading us to blow things up into a much bigger situation or maybe we're being too demanding or maybe we've labeled a person in a way that's unfair.

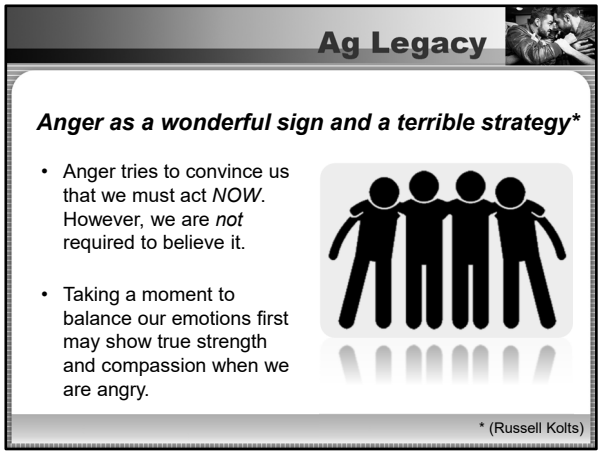


Once we've established how we are interpreting a situation, then we can begin to move forward with an intentional goal of deciding what we want to do with it.

We might decide that, now is not a good time for me to become angry, so I need to take a few deep breaths.

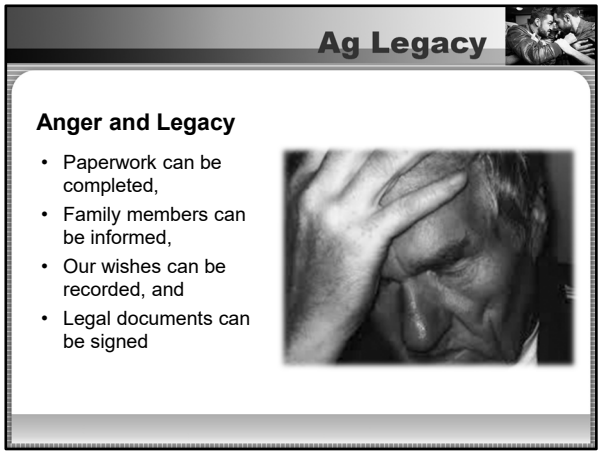
I might need to think about something else for a few minutes. Sometimes, we might need to acknowledge that, this is a thing I can't fix and I need to find a way to go on and accept this.

Acceptance is one of the most complicated psychological processes when it comes to anger because sometimes it works and is associated with positive outcomes. Sometimes, acceptance ends up being more like suppression and is really just someone pretending the situation doesn't bother them anymore. That's not really a healthy way to address the situation.



Russell Kolts, a clinical psychologist who specializes in compassion-focused therapy, suggests that the problem starts when the typical responses that are motivated by anger can lead us to saying or doing things that cause problems in our relationships or in the workplace or whatever context we find ourselves in.

Anger tries to convince us that we must act right now. However, we are not required to believe it. We can take a moment, to work to balance our emotions first, then we can work with the situation more effectively.

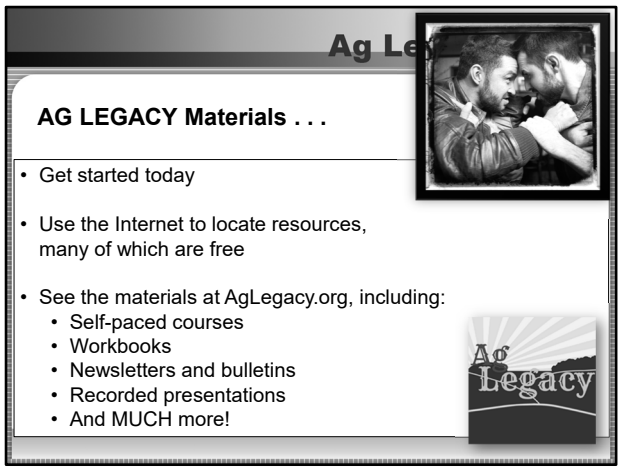


How might Suzanne and Gene have handled their situation differently?

Obviously, we can't predict how everything will go after we pass from this life. However, there are steps we can take to prepare for that event:

Paperwork can be completed, family members can be informed, our wishes can be recorded, and the legal documents can be signed.

Perhaps more importantly, our preparations can help clear the air and make sure anger does not have a foothold in our legacy.



AG LEGACY can help, materials are available. . .

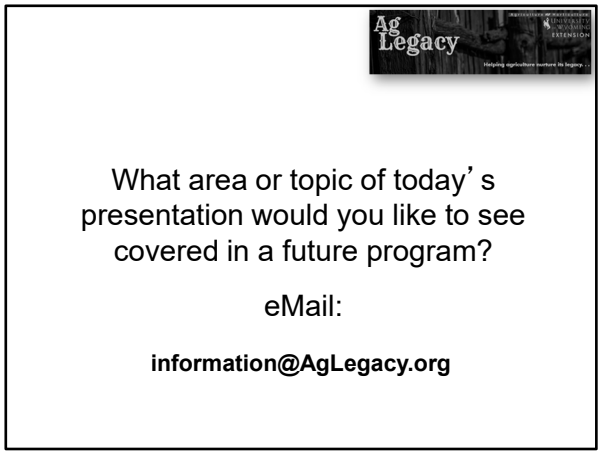
- We recommend you get started making positive steps toward your Legacy today!

- Use the Internet to locate additional resources if needed | Many are available free of charge

- Also, see the materials at AgLegacy.org, including:
  - Self-paced courses, Workbooks, Newsletters and bulletins, Recorded presentations
  - And MUCH more!

Keep in mind, it is never too late to get started.

Plan to take a step or two and get things rolling soon…

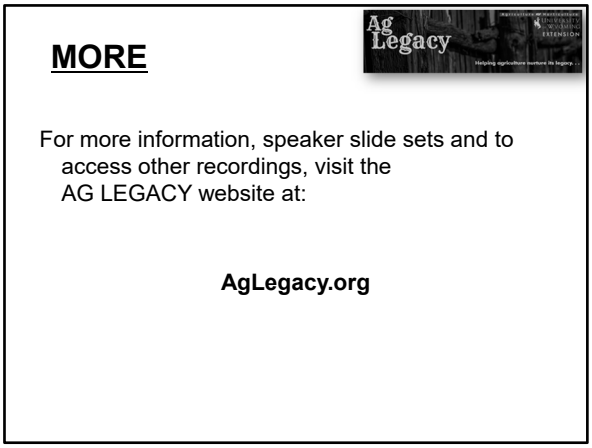


We would like to hear from you about topics or presentations you would like to see offered in the future.

Please consider sending an email to information@AgLegacy.org

OR

Visit AGLEGACY.org for more information



In closing, let me extend my thanks to our AG LEGACY team for making this series possible.

We would also like to thank you, our viewers, for taking time to view this AGLEGACY recording. We sincerely hope that you find today's content of value in your work.

We hope to see you again in one of our upcoming programs. Until then, we offer you our sincerest hope for success in creating an AG LEGACY for yourself and your family.

…..For AG LEGACY… I'm John Hewlett