

Protect Your Family From Your Pain – Now

Chronic Pain is Dangerous

Chronic pain is dangerous. I wrote more about why in [“Pain = Anger = Abuse.”](#) The gist is that abuse is a lack of awareness of others’ needs. When you are angry, everything is completely about you. When you are angry, you can’t respond to the needs of those close to you. As your pain worsens and you become even angrier, the chance of being abusive—that is, oblivious to others—approaches 100%.

But I Would Never Be Abusive

You might not like hearing the word “abusive” even mentioned, much less think that it might in some way apply to you. There are many barriers to waking up to the possibility that the word “abusive” pertains to you.

- The most common barrier is this: many people are so used to being “frustrated” that negative emotions become a baseline. These people cannot perceive themselves as angry. For them, their anger is just a normal state to be in.
 - In the world of chronic pain, frustration and anger are synonyms.
 - When you are upset, you feel so right that you cannot imagine someone not seeing your viewpoint. However, your anger blocks you from seeing the perspective of others.
 - This is particularly true when you are dealing with your children.

Chronic Pain Does Not Elicit Peace and Joy

Everyone with significant chronic pain is angry. It is only a matter of how connected you allow yourself to be with your anger. If you are finding yourself upset this very moment while reading this, then this statement particularly applies to you.

I have seen dozens of patients become pain free. None of them has done so before first dealing with anger.

- Anger and pain are linked neurological pathways.
- One is not going to go away without the other.

I Now Recognize Abuse Daily

For many years, I never put pain and abuse in the same sentence. I just did not see the link. Now, I see it every day.

- Almost every time I mention how difficult it must be to live with someone in chronic pain, the patient’s spouse begins to involuntarily nod.
 - Many start crying.
 - When I ask my patients to think about what it must be like for the children when the patients are angry, the patients invariably get a wide-eyed look and take a deep breath.
 - I watch patients snap at their children in clinic. They seem to think it is OK.

You Will Not be Able to See Your Own Abuse

Very few people wake up in the morning and think about ways they can make their families miserable. Usually, even the those who are making their families miserable, don’t realize they are doing so. They are too busy thinking about themselves to notice. If you are in significant chronic pain, you can only partially

see the needs of those around you. You have to make some stopgap rules. Here are some that I have suggested with some success.

The Family Rules of Anger

1) When you are upset, just disengage.

- Stop and take your own “time-out.”
- No relationship is improved with interactions based on anger–EVER!
- Have a family meeting and ask your children and spouse/significant other what it is like to be around you when you are angry.
- The answers are not pleasant–EVER!

2) The apologies later do not work or make up for anything.

- Ask your family.

3) Imagine that you are your child watching you walk through the front door after just having an argument with your boss or claims examiner.

- Would you be excited or full of dread?

4) How attractive is your partner when he or she is angry? Compare that to when they are smiling.

- So how attractive do you think you look when you are upset?
- **ANGER IS NOT ATTRACTIVE!**

5) **Listen–only listen** for at least a month.

- Do not give **ANY** advice to your children or partner for at least a month.
- It should preferably last forever.
- Advice should only be given when asked for.

6) Your opinion of your children’s “values” is not helpful.

- Find out who they really are.
- They are much more interesting than you might think.

7) Make a commitment to be a source of inspiration and joy to your family–not a nightmare.

- Your family dynamic will change within weeks.

Do Not Delay Taking Action

Anger is a major family problem. You love your family and the last people you would want to hurt would be them. Yet when you are angry, you are destroying them.

You love your family and you also need their support. Do not drive them away.

Protect them from your pain—NOW!

—Dr. David Hanscom