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On Temper and Worry

By Dr. Timothy Shaw

Losing your temper is a form of primary self-indulgence. It is probably most often experienced when a problem is trivial or not even real, for when a problem is real and important, we can't afford to expend the time and energy necessary for a tantrum. We are forced to cope.

Most of the time, we worry and become anxious about things that haven't happened. When, in the unlikely event that they do happen, there isn't time for worry. Once again, we must cope. So, worry is the most useless waste of time and energy. Often, worry and anxiety produce a situation in which we become irritable and lose control. This appears to be especially likely to happen with our loved ones who least deserve such treatment. It is probably because we believe that they will love us anyway and we are safe in making idiots of ourselves with them. We can't risk it with acquaintances or strangers who might disapprove of us, thus automatically making us "bad people."

When a problem, disappointment, or frustration is real, one must cope. When it is trivial, it isn't worth the cost in hurt feelings, which result from our loss of control. The temper tantrum which may be so hurtful to someone we love may, in reality, be only blowing off steam, but the cruel and hurtful words cannot be retrieved.

When we have overloaded our circuits or our capacity to endure pressure and stress, it is important to learn how to let others know that we are really just blowing off steam and letting off pressure, rather than lashing out at them.

There may be other times when we need to just be alone to recharge and sort out our priorities. Then we can avoid putting our pressures on those who can't support them any better than we can.