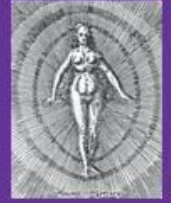


# CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



## Invest in Yourself by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

*“What is not brought to consciousness lures one as fate.”*  
— C.G. Jung

Jack was late for dinner — again. And, again, he hadn’t even bothered to call Beth, his wife of 15 years, to let her know. Jack’s chronic lack of consideration made Beth upset and she reacted with anger and resentment — which she stuffed and let fester. It never occurred to her that she had choices and could actually learn to handle her anger in other ways. She could, for example, make a strong point by letting Jack’s dinner get cold, or not even make dinner at all. Or maybe she could *talk* to him about how his lateness makes her feel. It might even help her

understand why it’s such a hot-button issue with her. In Beth’s situation, her way of handling anger is something she’d learned in childhood as a way of protecting herself from her parents’ neglect. Their poor treatment of her made her feel “I’m not good enough,” and the same pattern was now being repeated in her marriage. Jack’s lateness made her feel “I’m not good enough.”



### Childhood Roots

Most such anger has its roots in childhood narcissistic injury. Children get wounded when normal dependency needs don’t get met. If you didn’t get *heard* as a kid, then it can become a really sensitive issue in adulthood and a person may actually need to learn *how* to be heard as an adult. Children can also be hurt when they get substitutes for love instead of the real thing. For example, parents who are more focused on material

acquisition than they are on the needs of their children, breed children who may be prone to anger, depression or acting out behaviors. Many children are taught that expressing anger about these unmet needs and wounds is “bad,” which can then become generalized to *all* feelings so the child builds defensive walls to survive. When triggered later on, they may revert to a “knee-jerk” anger reaction, get defensive, go into attack mode, or do the opposite, and swallow their feelings, hide their pain with a mask of pleasantness, and just try to learn to “live with it,” as Beth did.

### Different Responses to Anger?

Since everyone responds differently to the same stimuli, do you know what triggers you? Are you aware of what makes you particularly angry? Have you figured out where that comes from? And what is your anger “style?” Do you shut down or lash out? Poor impulse control, shutting-down and angry acting out, is a learned self-defense strategy. Why not try something new — a more workable middle ground? Once you recognize where the pain behind the anger comes from, you can eliminate those knee-jerk ways of reacting and deal with the presence of anger in a more grown-up and successful way.

### New Rules

Invest in yourself by learning healthy communication strategies. Learn to use language to convey your inner thoughts and feelings and free yourself from playing the victim. If your goal is to be taken seriously, and to

respond effectively without defensiveness, then learn these New Rules for communication and start experiencing the joy of finally being in charge of your own life.

In individual therapy and in our Women's and Men's groups we learn to identify these destructive patterns and the narcissistic injury that got turned *against* the self. The goal is to develop a healthy sense of self instead of an unhealthy sense of self — *healthy narcissism versus destructive narcissistic injury*.

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