

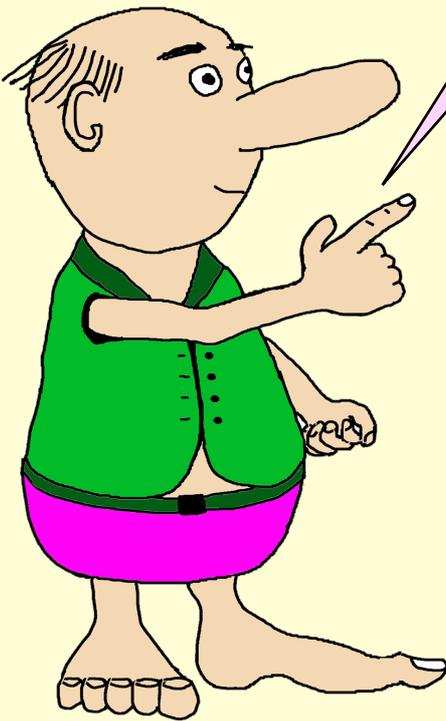
# “DEAR DICK” - ANGER & RESENTMENT

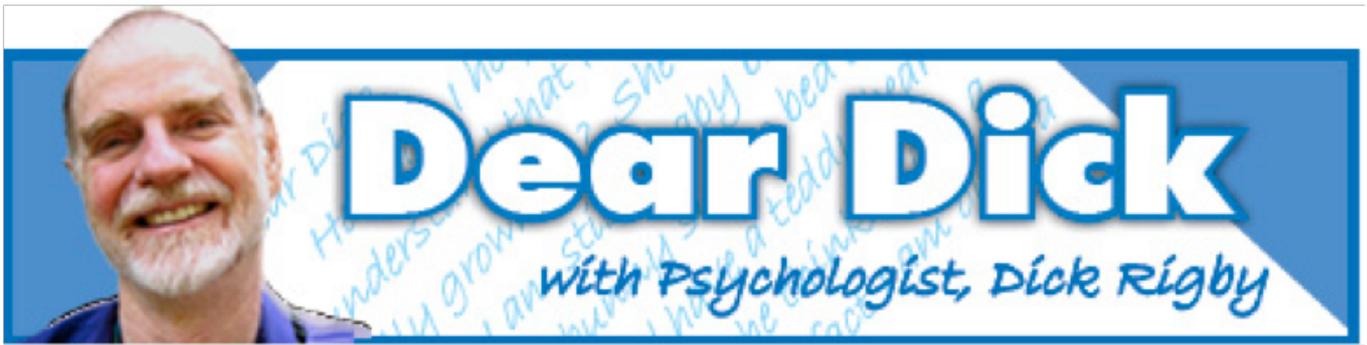
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# Chapter 1. Anger





**“Triggers”**  
**March 1999**

Sometimes when my husband and I have been getting on really well, he has only to say something really innocent sounding and I will get very upset really quickly. Is this normal and what can I do to not be so reactive?

Mrs B

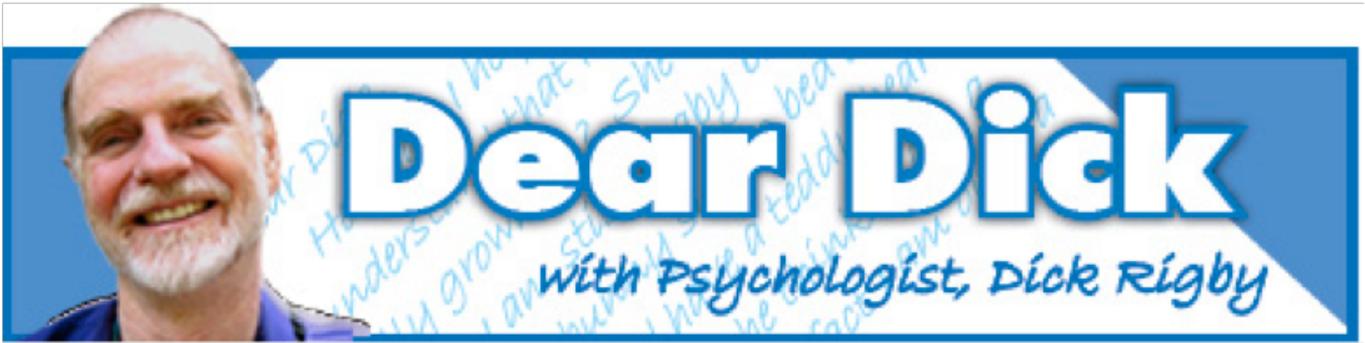
Dear Mrs B

The problem of over-reactivity is quite common. When a person becomes very upset to a relatively innocent sounding comment, this comment is called a “trigger”. A trigger is anything that activates a “core belief”. A core belief is something that was set up in our childhood and stays around even after it is well out of date.

Let me give an example. John says to his wife Mary, “You should be able to fix that, it’s not all that difficult”. Mary becomes enraged. Her core belief is that she is stupid. In her childhood, this belief was reinforced over and over by her father. (Mary is actually quite intelligent). One of Mary’s triggers is anything that implies that she is stupid. Her response to such a trigger is instant rage. It is all on automatic pilot. Mary doesn’t know why she gets so angry so quickly. She hasn’t made the connection between this trigger and her father putting her down during her childhood.

In order to get control over such a strong reaction, Mary will have to understand something about the connection with her childhood and her father putting her down. She will have to learn how to communicate with that part of herself that runs the core belief that she is stupid.

It can often take quite a bit of therapy to learn about our core beliefs and how to change them to bring them up to date. In this process of recovery it is necessary to learn how to have our adult part on charge of making a decision about whether to react or not. In the example given above, the adult part of Mary would need to assess whether John was really trying to put her down with his comment “it’s not all that difficult”, or whether he was just making a light hearted joke. Learning what ones triggers are and how to control them is very empowering.



**“Road rage”  
June 2002**

What is “road rage”? It’s when a driver gets angry at someone else about some inconsiderate action, and that anger is much greater than is warranted. Alex has road rage. He was driving along the Western Freeway. He became furious when another car cut in in front of him. He tailgated the other driver. Even when the other driver turned off the freeway onto Moggill Road, Alex followed him taking Alex out of his way.

Fortunately, Alex gave up the chase after a while and returned to his journey. What made Alex behave this way? Firstly, Alex felt an overwhelming sense of injustice. He wasn’t going to let this other driver get away with such “inconsiderate” behaviour. He was going to “teach him a lesson”.

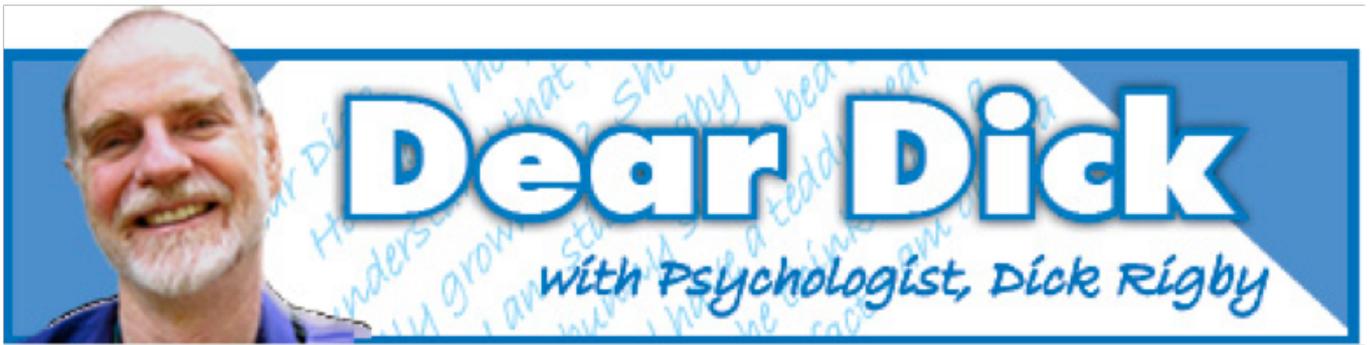
As a child, Alex learned to be quick tempered. It worked for him as a child. This behaviour has never gone away. As a middle aged business man, he is quick to anger. On the occasions that his wife travelled with him in the car, she would become frightened of his reckless driving when he became enraged. It came to a head one day when Alex nearly caused a serious accident. His wife insisted the he receive treatment.

He and his wife went to a psychologist. After some talking, he was able to admit that his rage was out of control and dangerous. He agreed that this behaviour was addictive. He gained satisfaction from being in a state of self righteous rage.

He was also able to accept that no one wins when he gets into a rage. His treatment involved three stages. The first stage was admitting that there was a problem. The second stage involved understanding where the rage was coming from and understanding the beliefs of his subconscious parts that fed his rage.

The third stage involved him role playing situations that would lead him to road rage. In this role play, he was able to hear the words coming from the angry part of him. He began to find alternatives. This third stage also involved him changing the way he approached driving. He was able to have a more relaxed and less urgent approach.

Alex was successful at controlling his road rage. When another driver showed lack of consideration towards him, he was able to let go of his anger and feel pity for the person who ran their life with so little consideration for others.



**“Anger sickness”  
January 2007**

Some people seem to be angry all the time. Others never express angry. What’s the right thing to do?

Let me start by telling you what isn’t helpful. Being angry a lot of the time is not healthy. It puts your body out of balance and this can lead to serious health problems. The people close to the angry person also experience an increased level of stress which is just as unhealthy.

Rod was quick to anger. He learned as a child that when he got angry, he would get his way, particularly with his mother. Rod learned to be a bully. He would use his anger to intimidate others. His wife and children were afraid of him. Rod would never admit that he was a bully.

Celia could not express her anger. She would get upset, but never angry. Any anger that she started to feel got turned in on herself.

They made the perfect couple - Rod the bully and Celia the pacifier.

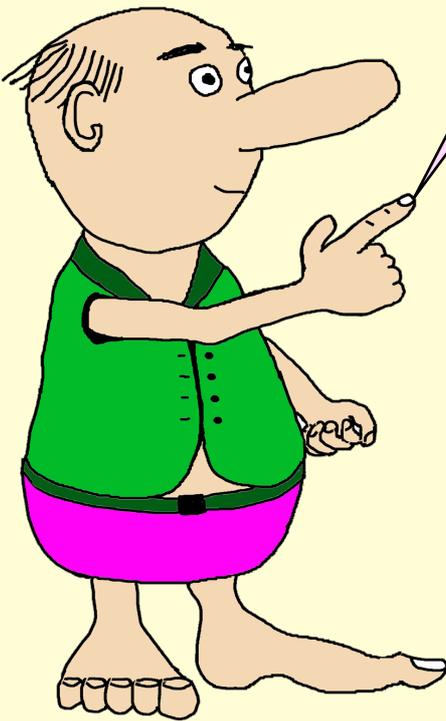
Such an unhealthy situation. When they started therapy, there were some very difficult lessons to learn. Rod had to face that he was an “Anger Addict”. He used anger to avoid resolving interpersonal difficulties. Rod had to learn that he could choose to deal with difficult situations without getting angry. He could listen more carefully without flying off the handle.

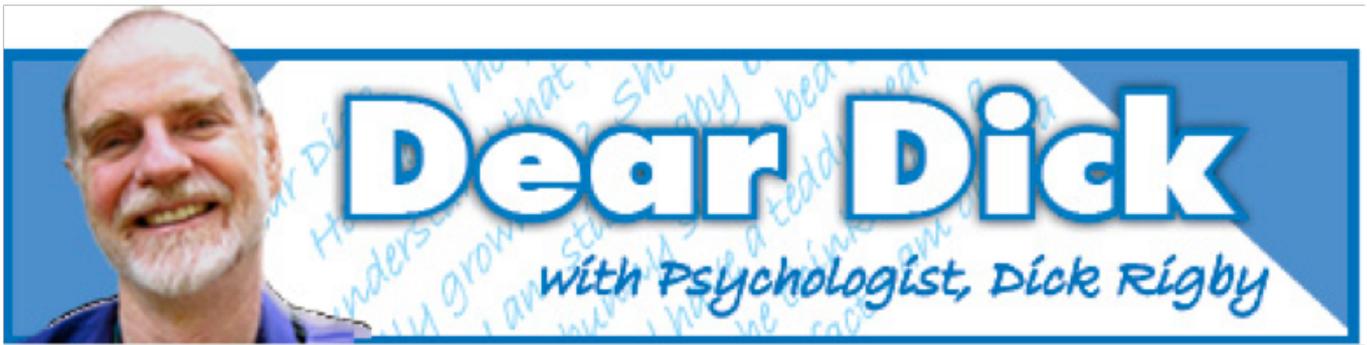
Celia’s lessons were just as tough. She had to overcome her fear of conflict and her fear of not being liked. She had to learn to express herself assertively and even to express her anger on occasions.

Our sympathies naturally go to Celia in this situation. But when I helped this couple, I had to put my biases aside. I had to understand that both people were trapped in a sick situation. Both people needed help to change.

Rod and Celia did make big changes over time. Now they are able to successfully negotiate their way through problems (well most of the time).

## Chapter 2. Jealousy





## **“Jealousy”**

**November 2004**

Prue was hopping mad. She hadn't expected to walk home by that road on that day, but she did it just for a change of scenery. At the end of the road, there was Rod hugging another woman. That was it. She took off her engagement ring and threw it into her pocket and raced home in tears. She knew what men were like. Her mother had told her so many times. This confirmed it. You can't trust any of them.

Straight from the plot of a Hollywood film. You can write the rest of the script. A fight followed when she met Rod again. The truth came out at last. It was his sister visiting from London he had been hugging. It was going to be a surprise for Prue to meet the sister.

Ho hum, usual story, jumping to conclusions. Getting angry before finding out what is really going on. So why does it happen?

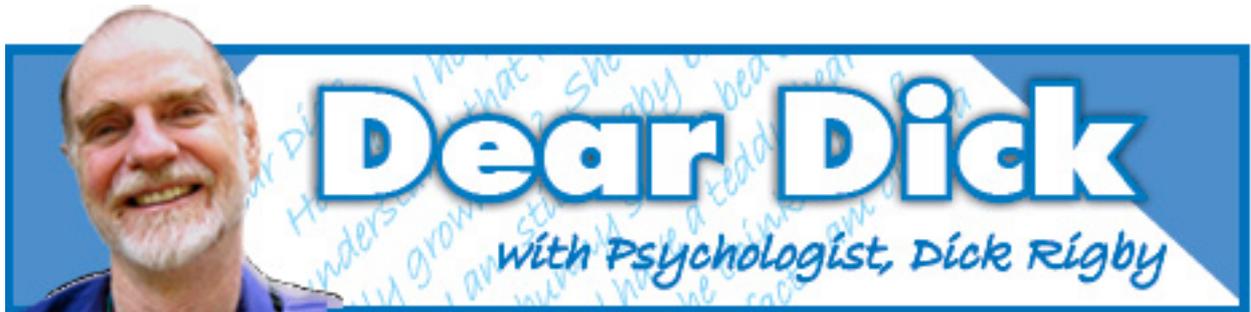
Prue had a history. She has been hurt many times in her 22 years. She didn't believe in herself so she couldn't accept that anyone could really love her. As a consequence she didn't believe that Rod really loved her. She was always suspicious of him.

Also, she had learned from her family of origin to be quick with anger. The pattern she had learned was to make assumptions, and jump to conclusions.

Did she learn from this experience? Well the good news is that she did. She gave herself such a fright with her outrage and she had been so embarrassed. She apologized to Rod and undertook to see a therapist to get help with her feelings of jealousy. Her therapist helped her to recognize that underneath feelings of excessive jealousy is insecurity. She worked hard to learn how to believe in herself. She also learned that jumping to conclusions before checking out the facts can have disastrous results.

The question remains, is some jealousy healthy? I don't think so. If you think someone is cheating on you, be suspicious not jealous. Act on your suspicion to check out the facts. If you find yourself jealous of someone because they are richer than you or better looking or luckier, wish them the best of luck. Focus on all the assets that you have in your life.

Jealousy is a miserable unhealthy state. If you suffer from it, do something to get it fixed. If you don't, it will damage yourself and your relationships.



**“Resentment & forgiveness ”**

**Number of words = 407**

**For March 2011**

Dear Dick

Terry hated his mother and hadn't spoken to her for six years. He held so much resentment for the way she had treated him as a child. Terry was now forty years old and the older of two children. He felt that his mother had never loved him.

His father left home when he was 12 years old. Terry had always blamed his mother for driving Dad away. There had been a lot of fighting between the parents and Terry always sided with Dad. Some of the things that he remembered about his childhood were accurate, but many memories were distorted to fit the model that his mother had caused all his problems.

Terry was now a deeply unhappy man. He had a drinking problem and his marriage was not going well. He refused to take responsibility for fixing his own life because it was easier to blame his mother.

Several years ago he saw a psychotherapist for 10 visits. The therapy didn't go anywhere because Terry spent every session complaining about his mother. Unfortunately, the therapist supported him in his victim role. The therapist never challenged him to take responsibility for making the changes necessary to make his life work well.

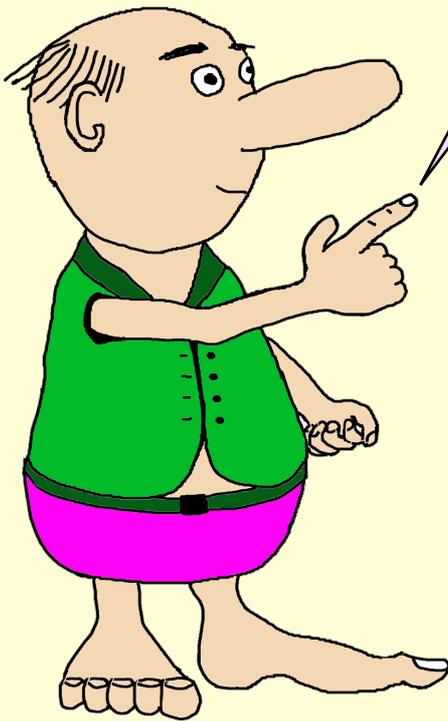
At his wife's insistence, Terry saw a psychologist called Peter. Peter told Terry that his stored resentment was poisoning his life. This was very difficult for Terry to accept. If he stopped blaming his mother, he would have to take an honest look at his own life.

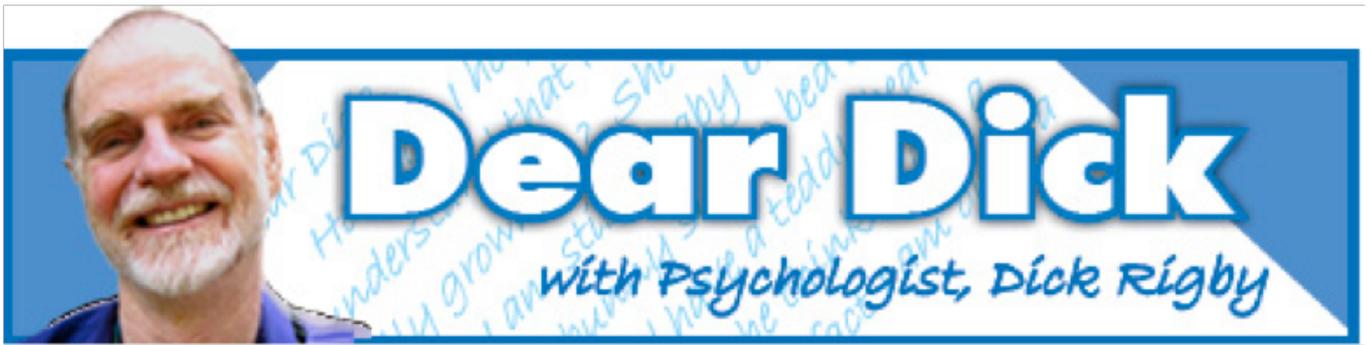
Lucky for Terry he made the decision to keep seeing Peter. Terry was encouraged to look at his mother's positive points. For instance, how she cared for her children after Dad left. He was also encouraged to take Dad down from his pedestal.

Peter taught Terry how to let go of resentment. It was a long hard road, but Terry had the courage to walk it. He was able to make contact with his mother again and begin the process of reconciliation. He also took his father down from the pedestal and recognized that Dad had contributed to the marriage breakup.

Terry began to accept that no matter what happened in his childhood, it was now his responsibility to repair his own life. He began to take responsibility for his feelings and his actions. His marriage improved, his drinking stopped and he began to feel that a heavy load had lifted for the first time in his life.

# Chapter 3. Resentment





**“Weapons of mass destruction”  
February 2005**

Resentment and bitterness. If you suffer from these, they will eat away at you. I believe that many physical and mental diseases have their origins in stored resentment.

Rod had been separated for six years. His wife left him for his best friend. These two had been having an affair for over a year before Rod found out. Rod felt betrayed by his wife and by his best friend. Quite a blow for a hard working and loyal guy like Rod.

Rod was so angry that it took months for the anger to subside. He was then left with a gnawing resentment. He kept the photo of his wife in the living room and brewed over it. His health started to suffer after about six months.

He was depressed most of the time, socially withdrawn, prone to upper respiratory infections and his asthma worsened. Rod didn't try and date women, he spent time with his parents and a couple of friends from work. He was bad company because he was miserable, obsessed with his wife and quick to anger.

Things got so bad that he went to a psychiatrist. The antidepressants he was prescribed helped him feel better, but they didn't change his obsessional resentment of his ex wife.

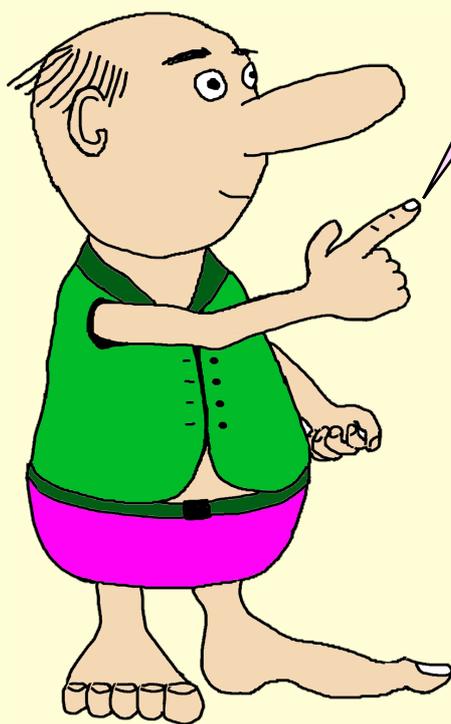
He visited a psychologist. The psychologist helped Rod to take stock of his life. He was able to escape from his victim mode way of thinking. He started to realise that he had contributed to the breakdown of the marriage. This eased the resentment as he took responsibility for his contribution.

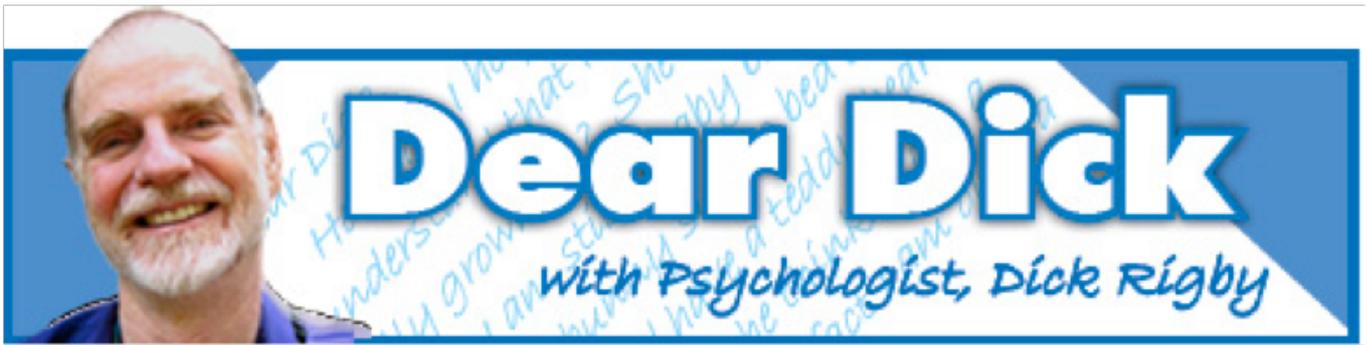
Rod also started to understand that he had been living in the past. But he didn't want to just “forgive and forget”. He started to work out a formula for change with his therapist. This involved letting go of the attachment to his ex and using this experience to help him in future relationships.

Rod chose to let go of the resentment, repressed anger and preoccupation with his ex. Some would call this forgiveness. His life started to change. Now when he went on a date he wouldn't spend all the time telling his date what a lousy thing his ex had done to him. His conversation turned to positive things and he started to laugh. He hadn't laughed properly for about 15 years. What a release.

Resentment is a weapon of mass destruction and the person who is hurt the most is the person carrying it.

## Chapter 4. Letting go of stuff





## **“Letting go of rocks”**

**March 2007**

Ron walked with his back permanently hunched even though he was quite a young man. He carried rocks on his back. Even in his sleep he carried rocks. The rocks had different names. One was “Responsibility” another was “Guilt” and so on. One of the heaviest rocks was “Worry”.

Ron was never happy. He had the occasional laugh with his friends, but he was never happy. He felt heavy and trapped. He worried about money and the future of his family and almost everything.

He went to his GP for a check up. (Yes, he worried about his health as well). His doctor said, “Ron, you’re depressed”. This came as a bit of a shock. His doctor believed that Ron could change the way he thought, so she didn’t prescribe antidepressants. The doctor recommended that Ron see a Clinical Psychologist.

Ron came to see me a week later. We talked about his family of origin. His mother worried all the time. As Ron was growing up, his mum worried about Ron’s health, his safety etc. At an early age, Ron learned to leave the fun of childhood behind and start to collect rocks for his back. By the time Ron was 7 years old he was a fully fledged pessimist.

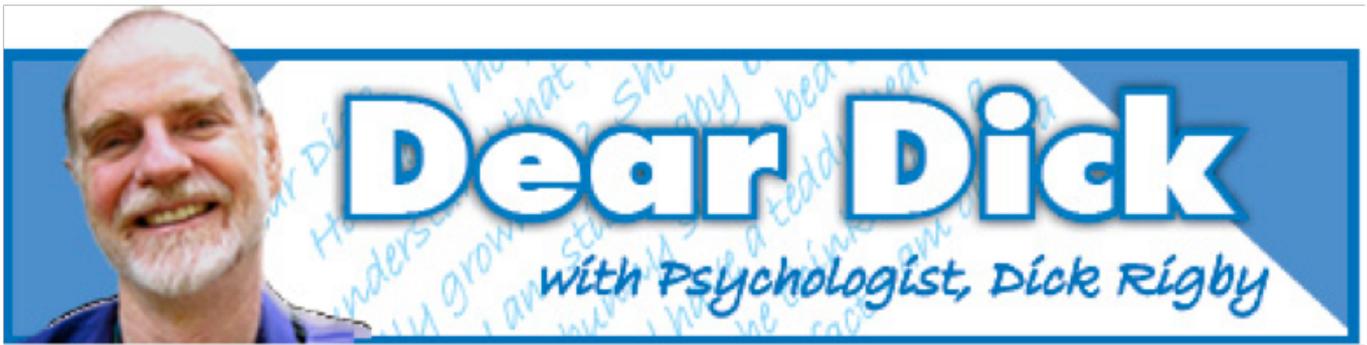
By coming to me, he wanted to learn how to feel light and joyful. But deep inside he did not have permission. Something always stopped him. In therapy we begin to unravel all these silent scripts that he had.

I used Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). I found this to be the quickest way of changing stubborn belief systems. I had him repeat after me “Even though I worry about all sorts of things, I deeply and profoundly accept myself”. While he said these words, he tapped on particular points on his upper body.

It was like peeling an onion. After we changed one belief system, there was something at a deeper level to tackle. One thing I admired about Ron was his determination. He stuck to the task. Gradually he gained permission to be light and have fun. He and his wife joined a Latin Dance class – just for the fun of it.

Every time Ron started to worry excessively or was too pessimistic, he would stop himself and give himself an affirmation.

Now Ron walks tall.



**“Freedom”  
September 2007**

Most of us want freedom? But what is it we want? There seem to be two types of chains that bind us. We have chains that are outside us and we have chains that are inside. Let me tell you about two of my clients (I have altered details so they cannot be identified). The first is Marion. Marion’s chains were within. Her chains were her fear that kept her from achieving.

Before Marion married, she achieved a degree in Graphic Arts. She was good at this. But she had never worked as a Graphic Artist. Marion chose to stay at home. What’s wrong with that? Nothing, but Marion wanted more.

Marion felt imprisoned at home. She knew she had talents but she was too scared to try them out in the work force. Marion came to me last year wanting to be free of the chains that stopped her from achieving her goals.

We did quite a bit of work challenging these old beliefs about “not being good enough”. The Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) helped her with understanding and the Emotional Freedom Therapy and Voice Dialogue Techniques helped her make the changes happen.

Her entry into the work force was gradual and cautious. Marion now works part time as a Graphic Artist and feels free. She really enjoys her work. Wonderful outcome!

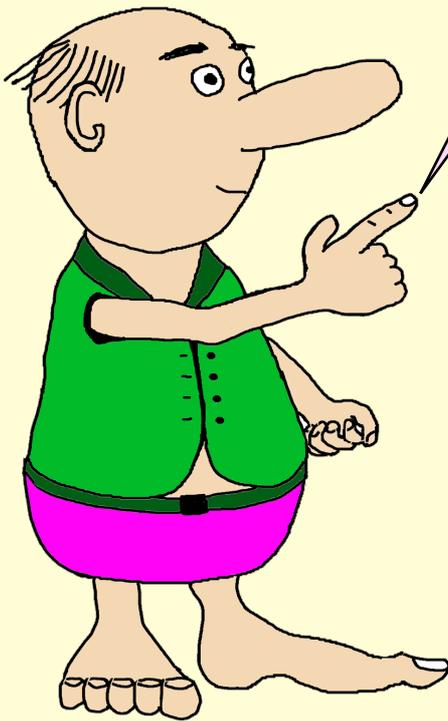
The second person, David appeared to be different. He had a job that he hated. He told me how his boss picked on him and how he felt trapped. He clearly saw his chains as external and himself as the victim.

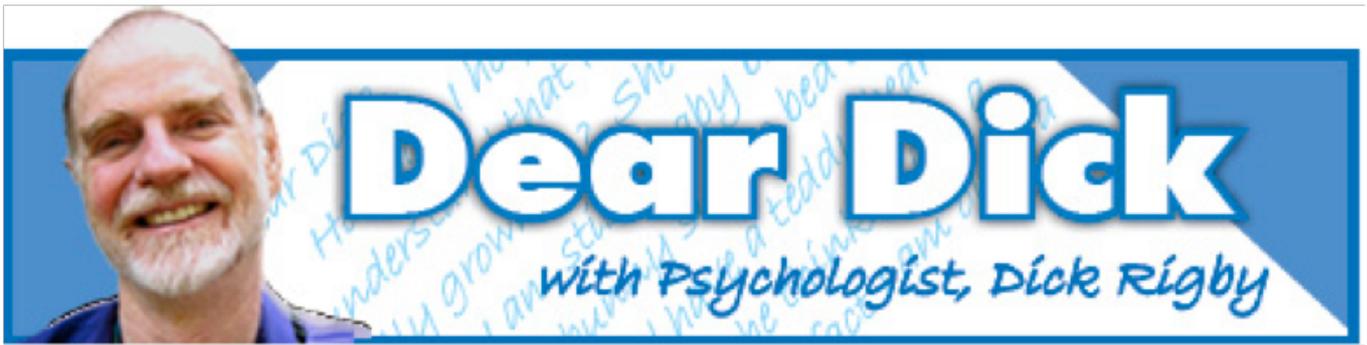
David saw me two years ago and I helped him change the way he looked at things. Again it was fear that stopped him looking for a job that would suit him better. His chains were also on the inside. We worked on overcoming his fears. After a while we got a good result. He learned to apply for other jobs despite the fear of rejection. He did land another job and now feels good about it. He is on his way to freedom.

I believe that most people carry their chains on the inside, not the outside. Of course there are chains on the outside. There are non psychological things which hold us back. But I have witnessed so many people with external handicaps that have the courage to overcome these chains and achieve things that nobody thought they could.

It feels good to feel free.

# Chapter 5. Victim stuff





**“Angry Victim”  
August 2009**

Dear Dick

This is a follow up to “The victim trap” article from last year.

Try this test to see if you are an “Angry Victim”. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I often get angry when dealing with difficult issues?
2. Are all my problems someone else’s fault?
3. Do I only hear the information that supports that I am hard done by?
4. Do I misinterpret what other people say to make out they are attacking or criticising me?

This profile may not be you, but it may fit a person you live with, or work with. As you know, the “Angry Victim” is common among teenagers.

May I suggest a way of making sense of it. I call it an addiction which is defined as “escaping from dealing with something important”. The Angry Victim strategy does the trick perfectly. You can’t negotiate with a person like this because everything you say is misinterpreted as an attack. The Angry Victim is living in a world of fear. They have poor self esteem and feel that they are under constant attack and therefore have to defend themselves. They find it very difficult to differentiate between friend and foe.

I saw Lindy and Mike recently. They had been married for 5 years. Lindy came to see me first. She complained about Mike. She said how he bullied her, he would listen, he would yell at her, criticize her and belittle her in front of friends. It sounded like Mike was a real cad.

I asked Lindy did she contribute to the problem. She made it clear that it was all Mike’s fault. This aroused my suspicions. It’s very rarely just one person’s fault. After the first session, I asked if Mike would come along to the next session.

Mike did come to the next session. Mike was the sort of person who tended to take the blame for everything. The picture became clear. They fitted together very well, in a dysfunctional way. Each person was unhappy with their life.

To cut a long story short, I worked in a very gentle and supportive way to get Lindy to accept responsibility for her behaviour, and to use empathy and negotiation to resolve conflict with Mike. I helped Mike learn that he didn’t have to please everybody all the time, and it is OK to have some conflict.

It took a while, but now both of them resolve their difficulties by negotiation using empathy and understanding.