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KEEPING ONE’S COOL-
HOW DO SOME PEOPLE MANAGE THEIR ANGER WHILE OTHERS LOSE CONTROL
RESEARCH PUBLISHED IN PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY BULLETIN BY SAGE

Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore – (September 29, 2007) Why do some people become angry more often and more intensely than others? Since anger negatively affects people’s health, it’s important to understand how to manage anger more easily. Research published in the September issue of Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, by SAGE, explores this important issue.

The four studies in the article, authored by Benjamin M. Wilkowski and Michael D. Robinson, of North Dakota State University, tested the idea that people who rarely become angry (those who score low on a measure of “trait anger”) automatically employ cognitive tactics helping them control their reactions to hostile thoughts, whereas people who are high in trait anger do not engage in this automatic anger-reduction process.

In the study, the researchers found evidence to support that hypothesis. While low-anger participants were just as strongly affected by hostile cues as those who were high in trait anger, the study confirmed that, when faced with hostility, people who are low in trait anger automatically and spontaneously engage in mental processes reducing their anger.

“Although hostile situations elicit hostile thoughts, anger, and aggression in a relatively automatic fashion,” write the authors, “anger control is not only possible but has been demonstrated. One implication of this research is that people who are high in trait anger may need to work harder to control their anger because they do not exhibit the automatic mental processes to reduce anger that characterize people who are lower in trait anger.”

The article, “Keeping one’s cool: Trait anger, hostile thoughts, and the recruitment of limited capacity control” published by SAGE in the current issue of Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, an official publication of The Society for Personality and Social Psychology, is available at no charge for a limited time at http://psp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/9/1201.

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