

July 2007

# Tina's Musings

## -RAGE AND OTHER OVERREACTIONS-

Toby came in today feeling baffled and ashamed of the rage episode she experienced over the weekend. Her reaction was so out of proportion to the situation, she said. She felt so out-of-control; like she was "psycho". It had to do with her guy not "getting" what was so upsetting to her. In this case, it felt survivally important that he "get" it. (In less intense situations, it just feels supremely irritating.)

The intensity of Toby's reaction was fueled by two sets of circumstances.

- (1) Her current circumstances which involve her admitting wrongdoing to her ex-husband and thus she is feeling bad about herself.
- (2) Her past circumstances that had to do with being a child who was ignored by her mother. Though Mother paid little attention to what was important to Toby, she focused a great deal on Toby's younger brother. As a kid, Toby used to slam doors and kick holes in walls because of the rage that welled up in her. She didn't know what to do about the situation; there likely was nothing she could do. And she didn't know what to do with her anger.

Feeling ignored by her boyfriend re-stimulated her old feelings of rage and they burst out, as much to her surprise as to anyone's.

There is a rage that wells up when we don't feel listened to; taken seriously; heard. When it feels like what we need is not cared about or taken into account. It might be about something small but dismissive attitude of the other and total disregard of our feelings brings on intense feelings within us that can be very difficult to keep within us and can take a very long time to shake.

Susan wrote:

**"Rage...**Sums up the problems in my relationship with my husband. I was overprotected and coddled, he was neglected and taken advantage of by his single mother. It's like he resents my happiness. I'm not happy much anymore because I get a dose of completely ridiculous rage from him more and more frequently every day. He's winning.

Example... My cousin and I are close, working to be closer. She announced her wedding date and I cheered and told her we wouldn't miss it for the world. My husband's old friend (an undesirable in my opinion) someone who did him no favors, disrespected me and has been out of our lives for 3 years or more was marrying on the same day.

I, naturally was not thinking of the other wedding date when I told my cousin we'd be there. My husband completely lost it on me and told me my attitude was appalling, that I had no right to make that decision without him, that this was just "typical b.s." that I put him through. How could I not remember the other commitment? Etc.

But why then at the end of the day, does he admit that there is no contest and that of course we would go to my cousin's wedding over his old friends'.

Why did he have to put me through this and similar outbursts (which really, really upset me to an awful extent) for seemingly no reason. How do you deal with someone like this when you feel in your heart that you do not deserve to be treated that way and feel resentful and somewhat abused? "

There's a lot to be learned by exploring overreactions. If he can see himself in Toby's story, he might be willing to talk about the hurt, anger and fear that underlie rage. Those feelings need respect and attention from both of you. You both have to be aware of the extreme sensitivity associated with them.

The expressions of rage can also be used to make the point loud and clear to the other that this feels intolerable. It does feel intolerable in the moment and can be very difficult to get under control.

