

‘I am more peaceful, energetic and decisive’

For years, Vera (40) had extreme anger attacks towards her partner. With PRI she learned to recognise the mechanism and pain that were hidden behind her anger.

The result: Less anger and a “lighter” life.

The problem: “I got furious”

“When, in my opinion, my boyfriend did something wrong, I got an anger attack. I did not just get angry, I got furious. I shouted at him and called him names. I said mean things to hurt and humiliate him the best I could. Sometimes it had gotten so bad that I completely lost it. I even hit him a couple of times and spat in his face. Often, the cause of my anger was something trivial: he had forgotten something or was late to notify an appointment. Telling this, I feel so embarrassed, but I could not control myself. I guess on average I had one extreme anger attack per month. My boyfriend just sat it out. Because if he got angry too, I got even more furious. Of course he was upset; it was no fun for him either. But he could very well disregard it. After the attack had subsided, everything was fine again. And then it was out of our minds. We’ve been together for sixteen years, of which I had anger attacks during the last ten years. The attacks did not always occur, there were more peaceful periods as well. When we had children, the anger attacks were gone for a while. But a couple of years ago, they returned. They even had gotten worse.”

The turning point: “I could not do this to my family”

“It happened a couple of times that I got extremely angry in front of the children. I was screaming and shouting at my boyfriend in the living room, while our daughters were sitting on the couch or playing. Afterwards, I felt terrible; I could not do this to them. Seeing mummy like this of course was terrifying and detrimental to their development. It had to stop. My boyfriend also let me know that his limits had been reached; he had gotten sick and tired of my attacks. Our relationship was at stake. But how could I stop my anger attacks? I had been in therapy, but that had not helped, apparently. I had talked about it so much, it had been going on for so long, what else could I do about it? I had reached an impasse, I really did not know how to solve this. In this period a friend gave me the books of Ingeborg Bosch on PRI, Past Reality Integration. I brought the books with me on vacation and read them in one go. This was it! Finally I had an explanation for my behaviour that I trusted for one hundred percent – this was how it worked. I had read selfhelp books before, but none of them had given me new insights. These books did: a new world opened up to me. Immediately after returning home, I made an appointment with a PRI-therapist.”

The therapy: “I learned to feel what was behind my anger”

“The idea behind PRI is actually quite simple. According to PRI we all develop defence mechanisms in order not to feel the pain that was caused in our early childhood. To be able to function, the child we were had to repress and deny this pain. But as adults, these defence mechanisms can still,

unconsciously, be activated. For example when one encounters a person or situation that unconsciously reminds us of the old pain. In my case it was my boyfriend who triggered my defense mechanism. I was emotionally neglected as a child; my mother was way too young when she had me and she had psychological problems. Because of that I was very lonely as a child, many things were lacking in my childhood. As soon as there was something “wrong” with my boyfriend, e.g. when he had forgotten something or when he wasn’t feeling well or sad, it felt to me as a threat: being that he could not completely be there for me. That feeling unconsciously touched the old pain. My defense mechanism was activated, and I got furious. This was very hard for my boyfriend. When, for example, he was worrying, I got angry with him: he was not allowed to have weaknesses. He was not allowed to worry. He had to be the strong person in my life, who always had to be there – in contrast to my mother, who had never been there for me. In therapy I learned to observe myself and to recognise my symbols and defense mechanisms. I learned how we can stop defense mechanisms in order to feel what is coming towards us. Then we feel the old pain. In PRI-therapy we go back to the painful event in our childhood. Then we can allow the old pain to come up and accordingly “re-store” in the brain as an old reality. That’s how we consciously learn to let go of our defense mechanisms.”

The transformation: “It feels as though I’ve been living underneath a woollen blanket for years”

“A defense mechanism is a strange thing. We are protecting ourselves against something that is already over. But we don’t know any better, we’ve been doing that since we were children. If we are able to make the switch, and feel that it is actually about something else, our whole perception changes. To me, this was an enormous discovery. In hindsight, it feels as though I’ve been living underneath a woollen blanket for years. When I feel an anger attack coming up nowadays, I immediately recognise it. Subsequently I stop it, and allow the feeling that is underneath to come up: the pain I had as a child. That is not too intense, because it is old. You can see it as sort of a scar. After I’ve taken these steps in my mind, and the anger has subsided, I don’t know anymore what was bothering me so much. My life has become so much lighter. Other defense mechanisms I got under control as well. For example: I was an extreme procrastinator, I had all sorts of dreams and ideas but I never got to realise them. I wanted to start my own business. I knew exactly how I wanted to do it, but every time I got the chance, I procrastinated. Now I know that I was plain scared: afraid of failure. Meanwhile I’m working on my own business one day a week, and it’s going in the right direction. I used to be a couch potatoe seven nights a week, watching stupid tv shows. I knew that that made me feel even worse, but I did not have the energy to do something about it. Now I turn off the tv and grab a book, or continue something I was working on. It sounds like a cliché, but PRI-therapy really gave me inner peace; I feel more energetic and I am more decisive. Funny, because I don’t like this kind of “woolly” talk at all. But I have become a more balanced person, there is no way I can deny this.”

Past Reality Integration (PRI) was developed by Ingeborg Bosch. She wrote three selfhelp-books about it. According to PRI, repressed pain from your childhood influences the way you handle all kinds of situations. This can lead to destructive feelings and behaviour, such as fear, sadness, stress, anger and addiction. PRI provides an instrument to learn to recognise the repressed pain and to take your life and behaviour in your own hands. More information and a list of PRI-therapists are available at www.pastrealityintegration.com.