Cooling Off

How I tamed the raging tiger inside me

June 2, 2015 As told to Kate Ferguson

Several years ago, my sister and I took a walk near a park on our way to the library. We were sharing a joke when out of nowhere, a teenage boy ran past and snatched my sister's costly Italian gold chain from around her neck. For a moment, we stood silent and frozen in place. But after a few seconds, I felt overwhelmed by anger. Totally incensed, I took off after the boy, leaving my sister standing there dumbfounded.

When I couldn't find the chain-snatcher, I returned to the corner where my sister waited. She looked at me in consternation. "That was not a good idea, you running after that kid," she scolded. "Suppose you'd found him; then what?"

My sister was right. Fortunately, I didn't find the young man who'd stolen her necklace. As I reflect on this incident today, I realize that the time that passed while I was running after the thief was a godsend. While I pounded the pavement looking for him, I'd cooled off and checked my anger without even knowing it.

It's the same principle that applies when you count to 10 before you react to something that makes you angry.

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