



"I would not look upon anger as something foreign to me that I have to fight... I have to deal with my anger with care, with love, with tenderness, with nonviolence..."

Thich Nhat Hahn

EMPOWERING EMOTIONS: **ANGER**

Anger is a legitimate, necessary emotion. It arises automatically when you detect you are being violated, whether this violation is real or perceived. It indicates that you, or someone you care about, has been wronged now or in the past. Constructive anger can function like a red light on the dashboard, indicating your boundaries, values, sense of self, needs, and/or safety are threatened. It may also indicate that important needs are going unmet.

Unfortunately, many of us were not taught emotional health skills, nor how to identify and understand our anger. We were taught to shame or fear anger due to early experiences in childhood. We end up being unaware and lost in the extremes of anger - either **hidden/repressed** or **uncontrolled/reactive**. Both extremes are negative and destructive. This worksheet serves to help you recognize how you deal with anger and it offers constructive ways to identify, honor and process through anger.

1 IDENTIFYING YOUR EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH ANGER

HIDDEN/REPRESSED ANGER Tom grew up with parents who never argued or talked about feelings. If he or his siblings got mad, they were immediately scolded and told to stop and be quiet. Anger was shamed. Tom grew up feeling guilty for being angry and resentful at his wife, Lisa. Lisa unintentionally took advantage of Tom's easy-going nature. She splurged and spent all their savings. She thought Tom was fine with it. While Lisa lived on spending sprees, Tom sank deeper into compliance, resentment and depression.

Tom is an example of someone who learned to shame and repress his anger. He feels shame and guilt for feeling angry! And thus, he automatically suppresses it so fast he may not even be aware of his own rightful angry feelings. The fact is, NO ONE IS IMMUNE TO ANGER. Repressing anger does not solve anything - it creates more problems! It festers and mutates into resentment, shame, self-hate, substance use, emotional eating, depression, passive-aggression and seething silent treatments.

UNCONTROLLED/REACTIVE ANGER The impact of uncontrolled, reactive anger is equally toxic. This is what most people imagine at the very mention of "anger." Angie grew up with a father who screamed at her during his rages. Her father believed this is how you make children respect and behave. As an adult, Angie feared her own feelings of anger because she didn't want to lose control like her father. Anger felt overwhelming and disgusting. However, her attempts to ignore her angry feelings didn't work. She'd flip into reactive rages. It became too much for her fiancée who left her.

Angie is an example of someone who learned to try to control her anger in fear of it being explosive. However, attempts to suppress and control anger doesn't make it go away. Angie needed to learn that anger can be a constructive tool when it is identified, honored, understood and processed - it helps reveal real issues in order to find viable solutions.

To understand your relationship with anger, it is imperative to look back on what you learned about anger in childhood.

Expressing anger in my family:

was taboo and punished

was terrifying from what I remember (I remember feeling scared when my parents or other adults were angry)

was something only adults should do

usually involved yelling

was viewed as tough and powerful

typically involved violence and destruction

was viewed as weak and out-of-control

was listened to, understood and handled in a constructive manner - I learned to honor and process my anger

resulted in causing physical pain, hitting, spanking, punching, etc.

My mother expressed her anger by (giving the silent treatment, yelling, slapping, scolding, slamming doors, etc.)

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When I felt anger as a child I (hid in my room, yelled, cried, numbed it, clammed-up, temper tantrums, acted-out, lied, etc.)

My parents responded to my anger by (yelling at me, sending to my room, punished, shamed it, told stop complaining, etc.)

I began to believe that anger was (bad, would make things worse, was awful, destructive, too much too handle, etc.)

How has your family's expression of anger affected your current expression of anger? (my parents were rageaholics, now I can't seem to actually feel my anger, anger terrifies me, I feel guilty or shameful when I feel angry, etc.)

My parents:

Now I:

When someone gets angry with me I (I think he or she is right, just try to make them happy and be compliant, try to get out of the way, I avoid them, I one-up and go into attack mode by criticizing them or reactively defending myself, etc.)

It is normal and human to feel angry. We all face situations and triggers in life that stir up angry emotions. Think of the last week in your mind. List five events or triggers that made you angry.

1

2

3

4

5

Is hard for me to remember things that made me angry?

yes

no

Can you imagine appropriate anger without rage or violence?

yes

no

Are you able to see why anger is a valuable and essential emotion to identify and understand?

yes

no

What do you fear may happen if you allow yourself to fully feel and identify your anger in order to learn how to understand it and process through it in a balanced way? (I might get overwhelmed by anger, I might not be able to calm down, I may end up reactive and hurting someone, I am scared of feeling angry because it makes me feel sick, I might end up in a panic attack, etc.)

3 UNDERSTANDING RESENTMENT

Resentment is repressed anger compounded overtime. When we learn to ignore and repress anger, resentment is inevitable. Resentment is complex. It hides within layers upon layers. Resentment may end up internalized, morphing into self-resentment. Each layer of resentment must be peeled away to expose the next layers of anger, sadness (disappointment and hurt to be grieved), and the core fear of not being 'good enough' to be loved.

RESENTMENT DUE TO NEEDS NOT BEING MET & NOT FEELING LOVED AND VALUED

ANGER DUE TO FEELING VIOLATED FOR NEEDS NOT BEING MET AND LACK OF LOVE

SAD AND HURT THAT YOUR NEEDS MIGHT NEVER BE MET AND YOU MAY NEVER FEEL LOVED

CORE FEAR THAT YOU MAY BE UNLOVABLE OR UNWORTHY OF GETTING YOUR NEEDS MET

EXPLORING AND TAKING INVENTORY OF YOUR RESENTMENT TO UNCOVER DEEPER LAYERS OF ANGER

Resentment stagnates and erodes like toxic waste underground. The good news is, once layers of resentment, anger, hurt and fear are uncovered it can be processed through and it dissipates. This is work, as it involves back-draft emotions and revealing vulnerable, tender pains from the past - stemming all the way into unmet needs in childhood. Fear, shame, anxiety and even your sense of worthiness may be the very core of every resentment you hold.

Name four people who are involved with your anger or resentment, either presently or from your past.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Explore deeper layers and thoughts about these four people.

I have **resented** (name)

I am **angry** (or was angry) because

I was **sad and/or hurt** because

My sadness and hurt may have stemmed from the **fear** that

I have **resented** (name)

I am **angry** (or was angry) because

I was **sad and/or hurt** because

My sadness and hurt may have stemmed from the **fear** that

I have **resented** (name)

I am **angry** (or was angry) because

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IDENTIFY THOSE THAT MAY APPLY TO YOU

1. I always acknowledge - at least to myself - that I am angry and I think about how to share my feelings when calm
2. I scream at whoever happens to be nearby when I feel angry or that powerlessness feeling associated with anger
3. I try my best never to be angry
4. When I get angry, I give the person the cold shoulder
5. When someone makes me angry, I get back at them in passive ways
6. I accept anger as a natural response to disappointment or a perceived violation and I am able to honor my anger
7. When someone makes me angry I feel I have the right to unload on them and "let them have it"
8. I just try to do better when I am angry
9. I never say anything to the people who anger me, but I sometimes enjoy payback and frustrating them in return
10. I don't tell people I'm mad at them, I just get them back in subtle ways or silently distance myself over time
11. I rarely let my anger get out of control, but sometimes it catches me off guard I get reactive
12. I can't control myself when I am angry
13. When I'm angry I try to figure out what I've done wrong to make someone else treat me that way
14. I never get angry but sometimes other people get irritated with me
15. I have secretly done nasty things to people I am angry at, like letting air out of their tires
16. I think of anger as just one of a number of health emotions and each emotion has valuable information
17. I flow up easily
18. I'm never angry at other people; I just get angry at myself
19. I may purposely be late for an appointment with someone who angers me or who I resent
20. I joke about sensitive topics with people I don't like
21. I'm not afraid of my anger; I know I can identify it, honor it, understand it and process through for resolve
22. I usually feel guilty when I yell at others, but I don't apologize or know how to make amends
23. I am always to blame with there is anger involved; I should always know how to make people calm and happy
24. I gossip about people I'm angry with or about people I feel have wronged me
25. I love to hear that people I don't like are having troubles
26. I have worked through anger and come up with positive results many times
27. I'm uptight and angry most of the time and/or I am angry at myself a lot
28. I cut myself, take pills, or binge on substances or food when I am angry at myself or others
29. I put off doing things I resent (or for people I resent), even though I get to them eventually
30. I don't get mad, I get even

DETERMINE YOUR RESULTS

To calculate results, circle or count how many check marks you have for each category. Which did you have the most?

CATEGORY A: 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28 Total checkmarks for CATEGORY A: _____

Reflects repressed anger. Hidden and repressed anger usually surfaces in bad feelings toward yourself. It is destructive for many reasons, because it limits your ability to express your true needs, boundaries, and limits in relationships; it creates further problems like resentment and self-resentment; and may be internalized into self-berating, self-hate, etc., leading to depression and illness.

CATEGORY B: 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29 Total checkmarks for CATEGORY B: _____

Shows passive or passive/aggressive patterns. You do not openly acknowledge your anger, but you get back at others in subtle ways. Your true needs and concerns remain hidden and you end up feeling unseen, unheard, and devalued. The person you're angry with likely does not even know what they did wrong. This is not as self-destructive as repressed anger, but it does severely limit healthy relationships.

CATEGORY C: 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26 Total checkmarks for CATEGORY C: _____

Indicates you have a solid relationship with anger and you are able to identify it, honor it, process through it and realize if you need to communicate or make changes in your life in order to resolve the situation. You are able to take responsibility for your anger. You have awareness and an understanding that anger reveals something needs attention.

CATEGORY D: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 Total checkmarks for CATEGORY D: _____

Reveals aggressive and aggressive-passive patterns. You likely remain bottled up, like in category B, however you are more aggressive in your actions and your intentions are to cause harm to those you are angry at.

CATEGORY E: 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27 Total checkmarks for CATEGORY E: _____

Reveals reactive anger. You make little or no effort to identify, take responsibility, and understand your anger. When you're angry, you react. You may believe yelling and tempering out your anger makes you powerful! You may yell things or even do things that hurt others and yourself. Many times your anger leads you into FIGHT mode and destruction.

CONTINUUM OF ANGER

CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E
HIDDEN/ REPPRESSED	PASSIVE/ PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE	APPROPRIATE/ MINDFUL/BALANCED	AGGRESSIVE/ AGGRESSIVE-PASSIVE	HIGHLY REACTIVE/ OUTBURSTS

Find where you are on the continuum and describe what you've identified about how you are with anger.

As you have likely figured out, the goal is to have a balanced way of processing through anger, as described within **CATEGORY C**. Take a few moments to free-write your beliefs on why you learned to deal with anger the way you do?

ANGER IS AN ESSENTIAL EMOTION

By now, you likely realize that anger is an essential, healthy emotion. Learning to identify and experience through anger is an imperative life skill. Without awareness, you may default into your maladaptive ways of either repressing or reactively expressing your anger.

Check the following statements you agree with. HINT: see if you can check them all :)

I realize anger is an essential emotion and it's job is to alert me in order to protect me

I understand anger is the natural emotion when I feel violated or ignored on some level (real or perceived)

Saying I NEVER get angry, is actually deceiving myself and is a form of self-abandonment

I am committed to learning how to identify and process through my anger in a balanced way

I will learn to ask my anger "What has been violated? Safety, sense of self, a loved one, boundary, value, need, etc.?"

I will learn to CATCH my anger ASAP and use the INNER PROCESSING steps before REACTING to anger irrationally

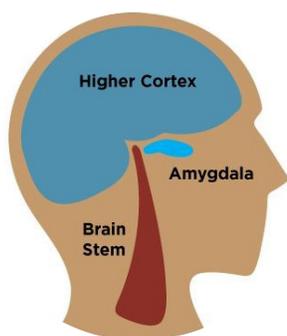
I understand that my own and others' anger is a signal of underlying hurt, fear, a violation, and/or unmet needs

I realize resentment is a sign that I have not identified my anger and communicated my genuine needs and limits

WORKING THROUGH YOUR ANGER WITH INNER PROCESSING

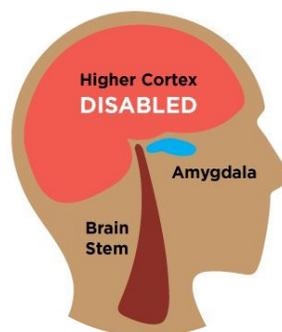
Learning to work with anger takes PRACTICE! It is important to understand that anger involves a RUSH OF ADRENALINE and what is known as an "amygdala hijack." Anger triggers an amygdala hijack which disables access to your Higher Cortex, which is the rational, calm, intelligent, caring part of our brain.

This can feel overwhelming and your automatic reaction to this adrenaline may be to take immediate IRRATIONAL action, by yelling, throwing something, reacting irrationally, being mean, or causing destruction. You may also default into a compliant pattern and doormat yourself by repressing anger. Neither is productive and neither is healthy for you nor your relationships.



USING INNER PROCESSING
TO IDENTIFY, VALIDATE AND
PROCESS THROUGH YOUR
ANGER IN ORDER TO RESTORE
CALM AND RATIONALE

CHOOSE RESPONSE BASED ON
CALM & HIGHER INTELLIGENCE



WITHOUT AWARENESS WE CAN
END UP REACTING TO ANGER IN
IRRATIONAL, EVEN
DANGEROUS WAYS

REACTIONS BASED ON SELF-
PROTECTION & SURVIVAL THREAT

INNER PROCESSING ALLOWS FOR CALM Do not communicate with reactivity (unless of course you are in real danger). Allow for calm, then respond. Depending on the circumstance, this may require an emergency evacuation plan, a time out, a few minutes to process, a walk, **maybe even a few hours or days** to calm prior to responding in an ideal way. *Allowing for calm before communicating is essential.*

STEPS FOR INNER PROCESSING ANGER

Proceed through these steps within your inner dialogue. This allows you to experience through your angered emotional experience, without repressing/ignoring, nor expressing/reacting to your anger. THIS IS NOT TO BE USED FOR IMMEDIATE THREATS WHEN YOU WOULD CLEARLY NEED TO REACT ASAP TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND/OR OTHERS.

CATCH AND IDENTIFY ANGER WHEN YOU FEEL IT

LOCATE WHERE YOU FEEL ANGER IN YOUR BODY

100% OWN AND ACCEPT YOUR ANGER - TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR EMOTIONS

VALIDATE ANGER - YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO FEEL ANGRY & IT'S TRYING TO PROTECT YOU

HONOR YOUR ANGER LIKE A PROTECTIVE WARRIOR

DECIDE IF YOU CAN CALM IN THE MOMENT OR USE EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

ASK YOURSELF OR JOURNAL "WHAT HAS BEEN VIOLATED OR WHAT NEED IS UNMET?"

ONCE CALM DECIDE IF SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE RESOLVED & COMMUNICATED

PLAN FOR WAYS TO RESOLVE ISSUES AND THE RIGHT TIME TO COMMUNICATE IF NEED BE

LIST SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO HELP PROCESS THROUGH ANGER AND ALLOW FOR CALM

List specific actions you can take that would help you physically process through the high energetic state of anger. Remember, anger is the emotion that puts you into an IMMEDIATE PROTECTIVE MODE. It is highly charged with adrenaline, so finding ACTION-ORIENTED ways to physically move and/or FLEE the argument or event that is causing you to feel angry is typically the best way to process through fast and bring you back into a grounded state of rationale. When I feel a surge of anger I could (journal, write a letter to my anger, take a walk, use a meditation, scrub the floor, take a shower, use a grounding exercise, breathe deeply, use the Emergency Evacuation Plan, scream in bathroom, etc.)

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- 5