

"Anger is actually the most empowering emotion you have. Anger is a message from your body. When you take the time to listen to your body's message and act on it in a healthy way, you're more likely to feel safe and heard."

Jonice Webb, PhD

connecting communication and conflict resolution

EXPERIENCING EMPOWERING ANGER

Anger is an essential emotion that has a very important job. When you are in tune with how anger feels, anger can function like a red light on the dashboard that alerts of a real or perceived violation to your boundaries, values, sense of self, needs, or to safety to yourself or a loved-one.

Unfortunately, many of us were not taught emotional health skills, nor how to identify and understand our anger. Worse, we were taught to shame or fear anger due to early experiences in childhood, especially if our parents had angry outbursts because they did not have the ability to process anger in a mature, healthy way.

Without Emotional Health Skills, we can end up lost in the extremes of anger - either hidden/repressed or reactive/expressed. Both extremes are negative and destructive.

This worksheet serves to help you recognize how you deal with anger and how to identify, honor and process through anger in an empowering way.



ANGER IS AN EMOTION WITH AN IMPORTANT JOB TO ALERT AND PROTECT YOU

- 1** Anger alerts of a potential violation of your safety or a loved-one's safety
- 2** Anger alerts of a potential violation of your values (injustice)
- 3** Anger alerts of a potential violation of your boundaries
- 4** Anger alerts of a potential violation of your trust (betrayal)
- 5** Anger alerts of a potential obstacle to an important need or want
- 6** Anger alerts of an unmet need (like being 'hangry')
- 7** Anger may attempt to protect you from feeling hurt, exposed or vulnerable (processing anger may reveal inner wounds that need healing and self-forgiveness)

We only feel angry about who and what is important to us.

“One of the first signs that you're beginning to develop boundaries is a sense of resentment, frustration, or anger at the subtle and not-so-subtle violations in your life. Just as radar signals the approach of a foreign missile, your anger can alert you to boundary violations in your life.”

Henry Cloud, PhD, Boundaries

identifying ANGER IS AN ESSENTIAL EMOTION

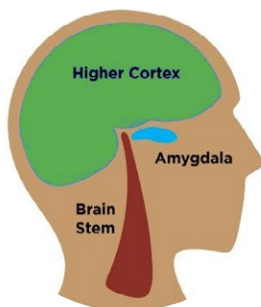
Anger is an essential, healthy emotion. Reacting to it is not healthy, unless you are literally in immediate danger. Even then, it's typically better to FLIGHT (RUN AWAY) than to fight. Learning to identify and experience through anger (rather than react or suppress it) is an imperative life skill.

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

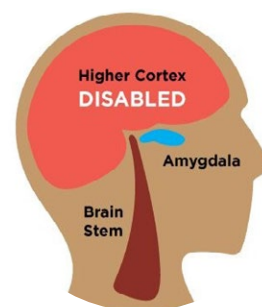
- I realize anger is an essential emotion and it's job is to protect me and make sure I'm getting my survival needs met
- I understand anger is the natural emotion when I feel violated or even ignored (love and connection is a human need)
- Saying I NEVER get angry, is actually deceiving myself and is a form of self-abandonment
- I am committed to taking 100% responsibility and learn how to identify and process my anger in a balanced way
- I will learn to ask my anger "What has potentially been violated: safety for myself or a loved-one, a boundary, value, need, etc.?"
- I will learn to CATCH my anger ASAP and use Emotional Health Skills like R.A.I.N. to process instead of REACTING to anger
- I understand that anger could be a signal of underlying hurt, fear, a violation or unmet needs
- I realize resentment is a sign that I have not identified my anger and communicated my genuine needs, wants and limits

WORKING THROUGH ANGER WITH INNER PROCESSING

Using an Emotional Health Skill like **R.A.I.N.** allows you to process through anger. Do not communicate with angry reactivity. Allow for calm, then respond later. Learning to work with anger takes PRACTICE! Anger has a RUSH OF ADRENALINE and can trigger an "amygdala hijack." This can feel overwhelming and make you want to take immediate IRRATIONAL action by yelling, throwing something, reacting irrationally, being mean, or causing destruction.



WITH AWARENESS WE CAN RECOGNIZE, VALIDATE AND PROCESS THROUGH ANGER IN ORDER TO RESTORE CALM, SAFETY AND RATIONALE (HUMAN BRAIN)
CHOOSE RESPONSES BASED ON **CALM** & WISE MIND



WITHOUT AWARENESS WE CAN END UP REACTING TO ANGER IN IRRATIONAL, AUTOMATIC, IMMEDIATE, AND EVEN DANGEROUS WAYS (LIZARD BRAIN)
REACTIONS BASED ON **PROTECTION** & SURVIVAL THREAT

"Anger is one of my favorite emotions, because when you know how to work with it, it can help you become more authentically yourself — and more able to interact authentically and honorably with others as well. Anger is a wonderful and pro-social emotion when you know how to work with it."

Karla McLaren, The Language of Emotions



EXPERIENCING & PROCESSING ANGER

- Take 100% Responsibility for Your Anger (empowered)
- Use Emergency Evacuation Plan to leave if needed

Use an Emotional Health Skill like R.A.I.N.

- Recognize, Validate and Honor Your Anger
- Allow Your Anger to Be Within, Feel it Burn Through
- Investigate and Understand Why Anger is Activated
- Nurture (self-compassion is proven to shift anger to calm)
- Once calm, take action as needed to clearly communicate your needs, wants, needed boundaries (limits), or your vision for what's needed
- Plan life changes to ensure you're living in alignment with your values, needs, wants, interests, aspirations, goals, and giving yourself time to be playful, creative and self-caring

Important Note: If you are in real immediate danger, then take immediate action for safety.



REACTIVE/EXPRESSING ANGER

- Blaming others for your anger (renders you powerless over your own anger and processing)
- Grappling to get power back from others, causing more frustration (the real power over your anger is within)
- Angry outbursts at yourself or at others
- Reactivity, yelling, fighting, abusing
- Passive aggressive comments and behaviors
- Destroying things, throwing things, etc.
- Gaslighting, blaming, lying, ridiculing, mean criticizing
- Complaining, shaming, criticizing
- Stonewalling (intentional ignoring to punish)

WITHOUT THE SKILLS TO PROCESS ANGER, WE TEND TO SHIFT BACK AND FORTH SUPPRESSING AND REACTING



HIDDEN/SUPPRESSING OR REPRESSING ANGER

- Shaming your own feelings of anger as if it is 'bad'
- Self-medicating your anger with depressants, substances
- Internalizing your anger and directing it only at yourself
- Seething resentment and silent treatments
- Placating, People-Pleasing, (forcing connection can temporarily suppress anger, but like an addiction you must keep placating to keep anger suppressed)
- Not having boundaries, violating your values or safety needs
- Causes you to deny your needs (especially in relationships)
- Unmet needs cause more anger, self-anger and resentment
- Depressing or denying anger long-term causes depression, chronic inflammation, reduced immune function, and serious medical conditions like high blood pressure

"We can't selectively numb emotion. Numb the dark and you numb the light. When we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions."

Brene Brown, PhD

"Your feelings are your responsibility and you must own them and see them as yours so you can begin to find an answer to whatever issue they are pointing to. Anger is like a fire that shoots up within your heart, letting you know there's a potential violation or problem to confront."

Henry Cloud, PhD, Boundaries

understanding YOUR EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH ANGER

Were you shown to EXPRESS or SUPPRESS anger? Or were you taught how to process your emotions by EXPERIENCING AND PROCESSING them? Knowing how to process through your emotions, especially anger, is an incredibly EMPOWERING life skill. In fact, it will change your life, your relationships and most importantly it will change your relationship with yourself. Instead of being scared of your inner world of emotions, including anger, you will be empowered by it, feel self-trust and self-confidence.

EXAMPLES OF EARLY EXPERIENCES AND HOW THEY SHOW UP IN ADULTHOOD

HIDDEN/REPPRESSED ANGER

Tom grew up with parents who acted very nice but they didn't talk about feelings. If he or his siblings got mad or said anything 'not nice' they were immediately scolded and told to stop and be quiet. Anger was shamed. Tom grew up feeling guilty so he repressed it without even knowing it. Repressing anger blocks you from noticing your own needs, needed boundaries and more.

Tom's wife, Lisa, unintentionally took advantage of Tom's easy-going nature. She splurged and spent all his savings. She thought Tom was fine with it, since he never said anything. While Lisa lived on spending sprees, Tom sank deeper into compliance, resentment and depression.



Tom is an example of someone who learned to repress anger. He feels shame for feeling angry! He 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 and even self-hate and depression.

REACTIVE/EXPRESSED ANGER

The impact of 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. This caused major issues in her relationships. Her reactivity 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. Without Emotional Health Skills and Self-Leadership over her own Emotional Mind, anger eventually boils over into reactivity. Angie needed to learn that anger is a constructive tool when it is recognized, honored, and understood. Anger reveals real issues and has important information for us: what we need to feel safe, appreciated, and loved.

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

Growing up in my family, I remember anger was...

punished (if I felt angry or if I tried to tell my parent(s) about feeling angry they would punish me or tell me anger is bad)

terrifying for the most part (I remember feeling scared when my parents were angry because it would be in outbursts)

something only adults are entitled to feel and express (children were not allowed to be angry)

loud and disruptive, usually involved yelling

viewed as tough and powerful

violent and destructive (I can recall at least 3 events of violence or destruction)

viewed as weak and out-of-control

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

communicated in a calm, constructive manner - I learned that we are all 100% responsible for processing our own anger

My mother expressed her anger by (denying it, silent treatment, yelling, slapping, scolding, slamming doors, ranting, blaming)

My father expressed his anger by (denying it, silent treatment, yelling, slapping, scolding, slamming doors, ranting, blaming)

As a child, what did I do when I felt angry (hid, ignored it, yelled, cried, clammed-up, temper tantrums, acted-out, lied, raged)

My parents responded to my anger by (yelling at me, shaming, sending me to my room, told to stop complaining, sat with me calmly and showed me how to understand my own angry feelings so I could learn to ask for what I needed in a calm way, etc.)

As a child, I believed anger was (bad, would make things worse, destructive, too much to handle, shameful, evil, or did I learn that anger is an essential emotion to take 100% personal responsibility for in order to process through in a healthy way)

How has your family's expression or denial of anger affected your current expression or suppression of anger? (my parents were rageaholics, now I can't seem to actually feel my anger, anger terrifies me, I feel guilty when I feel angry, I try to hold it in, I blame others for it, etc.)?

How do you tend to deal with your anger now as an adult?

When someone gets angry with you, how do you deal with it? (Examples: I try to make them happy and be compliant. I feel weak or small. I shut-down. I defend or explain myself. I one-up and go into attack mode by criticizing them. I tell them to calm down)

Given what you've learned, describe your thoughts on anger. Also, 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.)

Using the R.A.I.N. practice is an ideal way to process through and understand your anger so you can take corrective action, set boundaries, or make changes in your life. Much of the time, you will realize that you won't need to take any action besides validating and honoring your anger so it processes through in a healthy, cleansing way. The R.A.I.N. practice is on the Emotional Health Skills page (save this worksheet before clicking on the link): <https://www.creatingyourbalance.com/emotions>