

The 3 Faces of Anger

A simple assessment tool to help you discover your “anger style.” by Ronit Herzfeld

“Holding onto anger is like grasping onto a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else. You are the one who gets burned.” — Buddha

Anger is one of the most difficult emotions to harness, and it’s probably the most powerful force after love and fear. It is responsible for much of the destruction we see around us, both in our personal lives and in our global community.

Whether you are in touch with it or not, express it or not, the truth is that anger is a natural reaction living inside all of us. On the deepest level, it generally arises out of a feeling of fear or threat. But more often than not we are out of touch with the threat and are more in touch with some sense of feeling betrayed, disappointed, frustrated, violated, abused, hurt, controlled, neglected, or disrespected.

Typically, there are three ways in which anger gets expressed:

- directly and aggressively toward the “offending” individual;
- indirectly and passively toward the “offending” individual;
- or inwardly toward yourself (passive).

How you experience/express anger depends on your innate personality and your childhood home environment.

In order to learn how to manage your anger, you first need to identify your relationship to anger. Do you express your anger *aggressively, passive aggressively, or passively*? To find out how you express anger you need to recognize the tell tale physical and emotional signs of anger. Below is a description of the ways in which the three different types of anger get felt and expressed.

If you express your anger **directly and aggressively** you may experience the following:

| Physically: | Emotionally: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hot in the neck/face • increased and rapid heart rate • pacing • sweating, especially your palms • shaking or trembling • acting in an abusive or abrasive manner • beginning to yell, scream, or cry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resentfulness • rage • being out of control • anxiety • desire to strike out verbally or physically |

If you express it **passive aggressively** you have learned not to allow yourself to feel anger. Your anger is likely to appear as follows:

| Physically: | Emotionally: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • denial or rationalization about your behavior • getting sarcastic • an impulse to get away from the situation • rubbing your head • becoming silent or withholding • isolating • compulsive eating, spending, cleaning, or sex • revenge fantasies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • irritated • resentful • fearful • dominated • powerless • sad or depressed • guilty |

If you express your anger in a **passive and self-inflicting way**, you may experience:

| <i>Physically:</i> | <i>Emotionally:</i> |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clenching your jaws or grinding your teeth • headache • stomach ache • some form of self mutilation; biting nails and picking on the cuticles, hitting something with bare fist, banging your head, etc. • increased and rapid heart rate • dizziness • beginning to cry • compulsive eating, spending, cleaning, or sex | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-loathing • stupid • bad • sad or depressed • guilty |

Which type of expression do you fit into?

If you can't figure it out on your own, ask someone in your life to help you recognize your anger style. Once you discover your style, we have other tools to help you express anger in a constructive way.