

Women and Anger

One theme that consistently stands out in my work with women is their relationship with anger. Most girls are raised to be generous, quiet, and accommodating. The message, whether it is spoken or unspoken, is clear: there is no room for anger.

When women speak about their inner world in therapy, they often tell me they want to *get rid of* their anger. They see it as a personal failure: as something they should have been able to suppress. What once worked, pushing anger down or minimizing it, no longer works. And now, the anger feels overwhelming. In some cases, it has intensified into rage.

When anger is chronically suppressed, something our culture actively encourages in women, it often leads to dissociation and emotional shutdown. Dissociation, a defense mechanism, filters what is allowed into conscious awareness. When we dissociate, we push anger out, disowning it. We may build narratives to preserve our sense of self:

“I’m not angry, I’m just a calm person.”

“I’m exhausted because it’s hot and work is stressful.”

But there is a cost to disowning anger. When we disconnect from anger, we also disconnect from ourselves. Our emotional range narrows. Our sense of agency, vitality, and clarity begins to erode. Anger, when integrated, is a life force. When denied, it can become corrosive: often leaking out in unexpected ways.

For instance, a woman may feel unacknowledged or unsupported by her partner, yet tell herself it’s not a big deal. But the anger remains and might surface suddenly, perhaps directed at a child, a colleague, or even herself. For example, *A*, comes into a session looking down, clearly ashamed. When I ask her what happened, she tells me she is very embarrassed and then goes on to narrate how there was a *normal* conversation happening at a dinner table and she suddenly started yelling at her mother. As we start exploring what’s bothering her we discover that underneath the *normal* conversation were many layers of unconscious dynamics she had been trying to ignore for years. As we begin to uncover it, she begins to process and feel the anger she has felt towards her mother for years but hasn’t allowed herself to acknowledge.

The longer we hold onto these false stories: that we’re fine, that we’re not angry, that our needs don’t matter, the further we get from ourselves. And yet, these stories often serve a function. They protect us, especially when the external environment doesn’t feel safe enough to fully feel or express what’s going on inside.

Eventually, though, if we want to live more fully, we need to begin reclaiming these disowned parts of ourselves. That starts with creating the internal space to feel what once felt unbearable.

As Carl Jung wrote:

“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.”

Anger is closely connected to self-esteem. People become angry if they are overruled, dismissed, hurt or disrespected. Anger is a way of asserting one's needs and acknowledging that the person deserves to be treated better. It is not just a negative and destructive force but a protective and assertive force.

Anger, when acknowledged and worked through, is often a sign of something deeper: unmet needs, heartbreak, disappointment, despair. But it can also be a signal of growth. It can mark the beginning of a new phase.

Rather than suppress or silence your anger, you might ask: *What is it trying to tell me? What boundary has been crossed? What's been missing?*

In my work with women, I've seen that anger often leads us to a deeper place of vulnerability. And with time, reflection, and support, that vulnerability becomes a gateway to healing and transformation.

As a society, we need to build more tolerance for our own feelings, and for those of others. Listening to anger, not reacting to it blindly, but really listening, may be the very thing that moves us forward, both individually and collectively.