

HOW TO OVERCOME ANGER FOR LIFE



Table of Contents

1. My History with Anger and How I Let Go of It, Part 1: Growing Up in a Household of Anger
2. My History with Anger and How I Let Go of It, Part 2: The Damaging Effects of Anger
3. My History with Anger and How I Let Go of It, Part 3: Healing From My Anger
4. How to Deal with Anger: Your Gentle Guide to Removing Anger for Life
5. What to Do When You Live with Angry People: 7 Gentle Tips
6. ABOUT

My History with Anger and How I Let Go of It, Part 1: Growing Up in a Household of Anger

This is part 1 of my 5-part series on how to let go of anger for life.



Anger. What a volatile and destructive emotion.

Yet, many of us seem to carry anger with us like it's a part of our identity. Many of us seem to wear anger like it's a self-enhancing booster, an accolade of superiority, and a natural part of being human (it isn't).

I used to too, until two days ago (Oct 15, 2012), when I consciously decided that I will no longer live with anger in me from now on. Where I'm conscious of it, I will no longer let anger rule my life, impact my decisions, or be a part of my emotional vocabulary. Where I'm can help it, I'll not allow anger to sit inside my heart. I will only allow emotional goodness, and only emotional goodness, to fill me moving forward. Where anger stirs up in me, I shall actively process this emotion on the spot, release it to the universe, and hope that it gets recycled into positive energy in time.

Most importantly, I shall let go of all the anger that had built up in me since I was young, and begin to live life with renewed eyes and a renewed heart.

Past Anger in My Life

Perhaps it will help if you know about my history with anger.

You see, I used to have a very intimate relationship with anger. It all started [when I was a kid](#).

Growing up in an Angry Household

My parents would argue the whole time. Thinking back about my childhood years, I vaguely recall a lot of shouting and heightened emotions hurled from one family member to another on a near daily

basis.

I recall a couple of points (when I was a kid) when I snapped and threatened to kill myself in front of my parents if they didn't stop shouting. I literally walked into the kitchen, grabbed the kitchen knife, angled it at my wrist, and told them that I was going to "end it all" if they didn't stop shouting right at that instant. I didn't mean to kill myself or even touch myself with the knife of course; it was just my last ditch effort to get them to stop yelling.

My stunt would work, but only for a short while. The arguments would begin not long after, sometimes as soon as after one to two hours. As a helpless kid watching this unfold without being able to do anything about the situation, I would feel deeply scrunched in my soul.

I didn't realize it at that time, but I grew up collecting the residual anger from my parents and their recurring arguments. When you are constantly in the face of people arguing, it doesn't matter even if you are not the subject of the arguments—the angst will eventually rub off of you. This was what happened to me.

Even though my parents mainly argued between themselves when I was a kid and they never took their anger out on me (nor my brother; it was only when I was an adolescent that my mom began hurling anger at me as well in the sense of yelling/shouting, not hitting because my parents were never physically violent), it didn't stop me from taking after their (actually more of my mom's) angry personality.

Taking After My Parents' Anger

Looking back, I could see displays of anger in me as early as in my

early adolescent years (nine to twelve).

It might sound crazy, but for a period of time when I was nine or ten, I would subconsciously sprawl notes telling my mom to go to hell, then plaster them all over the house. I seriously didn't know why I did that at that time; there would simply be something in me driving me to do it, after which I would act on that instinct. My parents would be appalled when they saw the notes, then desperately try to tear them down, after which they would either reprimand me or try to talk sense into me.

Thinking back, I could see that it was likely a subconscious expression of all the angst that had built up in me at that time.

Again during my early adolescent years, I developed the habit of cutting up my dad's and brother's clothes whenever they pissed me off or whenever I was pissed off. Again, I didn't know why I did that then. I just knew that there was a lot of anger in me and I needed to do something physical, something drastic, to get that anger out there to the world. I needed to express my anger and I needed someone, anyone, to receive my message, loud and clear.

As I grew older into my late adolescent years, at the same time when my family shifted to a new home (still in Singapore), these volatile expressions of anger stopped. One might think that this meant my childhood anger was gone and I was no longer an angry person. For a while, I thought that was the case too.

On hindsight though, I now know that that wasn't the case. My angst had never disappeared—it had merely receded into a deeper part of my subconsciousness as I developed the other parts of my identity during my teenage years. My anger was still there, right inside of me. It never went away. It merely laid dormant, ready to be triggered

anytime the right conditions were in place.

That I was (still is) a deeply angry person was something I would only realize many years later.

Awareness of the Anger in Me



My anger was mainly latent anger; meaning I wasn't an angry person at my natural state. In fact, quite the opposite—I would almost always be bright, cheery, happy, and upbeat.

My anger would only arise when things didn't go my way. Even then I would never direct my anger outward unless I was really, really frustrated. My anger was mainly kept to myself and managed within my consciousness.

Even during the times when I had lost it, I would not direct my anger

at others. I would get angry at situations and/or people yes, but I would not direct my anger at people or the person per se, unless the situation had gone completely out of control. Having grown up with anger hurled around/at me on a daily to near daily basis, I didn't want to inflict the same treatment onto someone else.

In my mind, I never thought of myself as an angry person. I simply thought my occasional anger to life's little hiccups were highly normal and simply a natural human reaction. Unfortunately, this wasn't true at all.

A Simple Conversation

About a year ago, I was chatting with a good friend (B) about a common friend of ours (C). C was a very dear friend of mine and like a little brother to me. There were some things he did where he utterly let me down and wasted my trust in him. I was just telling B how disappointed I was at C for his actions.

As B listened, he asked for my permission to share something which had been on his mind for a while. "What?" I quipped. He said that I tended to have very harsh expectations of others, and it could be quite tough to live up to them sometimes.

I thought for a while. "Don't you have expectations of other people?" I asked.

"Yeah I do," he responded. "But I don't get angry when people don't live up to them."

Ah. I thought.

"Why not?" I probed. "I mean, if someone doesn't live up to your

expectation, you would naturally be angry, wouldn't you?"

"Nope," he said. "It would just make me feel sad."

A New Seed of Thought

B's answer was mind-opening. The issue here wasn't that I had harsh expectations, but that I had harsh **reactions** to people (or situations for that matter) falling short of my expectations.

This was revealing for I had always assumed that anger would be a default emotion for situations gone awry. It didn't occur to me that my angry reaction was a reaction specific to me and not a default reaction for others.

I found it fascinating that B said that he would not react in anger, only sadness, if things fell under his expectations and/or if people failed him. And he wasn't just saying it either. When I reflected to a time when his ex-girlfriend did him wrong by a thousand miles (she had another boyfriend for the entire length of their relationship of some 4-5 years, and was even engaged to that other guy until my friend found out from a common friend), he did react in sadness, without an ounce of anger. At that time I couldn't fathom why. I thought he was a saint. *How is it possible that someone isn't angry with someone who cheated and wasted him of so many years of his life?* If it were me, I would have exploded in anger.

Observing People's Different Reactions to Situations Gone Awry

After that discussion, I began to reflect on other people's natural reactions to situations that violated their expectations. It corroborated with what my friend had tried to tell me.

While I could think of people who would react angrily to situations gone wrong, the intensity of their anger would vary. Most would never react with the same level aghast as I normally would. Some would be slightly frustrated, but even then their frustration would quickly taper thereafter.

I also observed people whose reactions to situations gone awry wouldn't even be of anger at all. Some would be disappointed. Some would be sad. Some would be apathetic. Some would be fearful. And some wouldn't even know what had hit them until it was already over (usually people who are spacey and oblivious).

For me to react in anger whenever things went against my expectations, it meant that my anger wasn't caused by situations or people, even though it might seem that way at first. If those situations or people were truly the cause of my anger, then everyone *should* rightfully react with the same intensity of anger when put in the same circumstances. However, this wasn't the case, as I had shared above.

The varying reactions of other people to situations gone awry, from varying degrees of anger to non-anger, made me realize that **my anger wasn't external; it was internal**. There was something, inside of me, creating my anger each time. Or rather, there was something in me that was constantly angry, and **the situations had merely brought the anger out of me, onto the surface**.

It made me realize that—wow—as much as I had thought that I was quite a pacifist, and that I had been working on **being a better person** filled with kindness, respect, and appreciation of other people, I was actually very much an angry person on the inside.

Part 2 of the Anger Series

Continue on to Part 2: [The Damaging Effects of Anger](#), where I share the effects of anger in my life, after being conscious of its presence.

My History with Anger and How I Let Go of It, Part 2: The Damaging Effects of Anger

This is part 2 of my 5-part series on how to let go of anger for life.



Recognizing the Presence of Anger in My Life

After realizing the anger in me (read [part 1](#) if you haven't), I began to be more conscious of anger's presence in my life.

I noticed that I would feel really ticked off whenever things didn't go my way. It could be the littlest of things, such as the bus arriving late or arriving later than I would like (which would be [immediately](#)). It could be people standing in my way (physically or metaphorically) whenever I was trying to get from point A to point B. It could be little kids in my neighborhood screaming at the top of their lungs when I was trying to get stuff done.

Whenever these situations happened, I would feel very peeved and annoyed. First, I would try to eliminate the source of the problem, such as letting my friend know that I would be late (if I was running late), blocking out undesired noise (if the issue was noise), and so

on. Next, I would shake off my angst by thinking about something positive or changing my train of thoughts.

While these actions would help, it didn't change the fact that **the angsty emotions were stirred up to begin with**. While there would be people who would be unaffected by such situations, I would be angered by them, for one reason or another.

Beyond day-to-day trivialities, I would be aggravated by people who behaved out of my expectations as well. For example, when my neighbors beat the sh*t out of their kids (to me this represented an inability to care for kids, which would stir me), causing their kids to yell and cry (which would frustrate me further). Or, when I worked with people who delivered subpar work. Or, when people tried to get something out of me in a shady manner, which I greatly abhorred since it violated my value of authenticity.

Damaging Effects of Anger: An Incident with a Friend

It didn't hit me how damaging anger could be until I saw it on someone else.

It was a good friend who totally "lost it" on me. She was angry about something which I had done and she took it to text messages to convey her anger.

The issue wasn't that she was angry as much as how she had chosen to deal with her anger. For she went livid and began berating me via text messages, adopting a highly authoritative voice, airing unkind sentiments, and egoistically criticizing my personal actions. Despite my attempts to mediate, she held a high hand

throughout the communication, and continuously shut off my efforts with mono-syllabic, terse responses.

In between her bursts of anger, it was clear that she was totally engulfed by her anger. I felt saddened, for this person whom I was communicating with was a far cry from the jovial, kind, and cheery person I had come to know and love in the past couple of years. Here, I was speaking to someone totally livid, unconscious, and unbeautiful. It felt dark. It felt cold. It felt distant.

The anger was entirely in her court, for I did not feel angry at all. All I felt was sadness. All I wanted to do was to reach out to the dear friend whom I had known in the past two years, if she even still existed in that consciousness, and reconnect with her. All I wanted to do was to restore the friendship which seemed to be breaking further and further with each passing second.

When it became evident that she had become totally consumed by her anger and there was nothing I could do to salvage the situation, I decided to stop trying. I sent a final message in peace (which received another mono-syllabic, terse response), and drew the line in my communication.

As I reeled back into my space, I felt a deep wave of sadness wash over me. Not anger, just sadness.

Then, I burst out crying.



I don't know why I had cried. Perhaps it was to release the sadness that had built up inside me in that 15 minutes. Perhaps it was helplessness from not being able to salvage the situation despite my best efforts. Perhaps it was from the knowingness that this friendship had reached the point of no return. Perhaps it was from the incomprehension of why people would want to use anger to handle their problems, or even hurl their anger at other people, when rational, conscious, discussion could be an option.

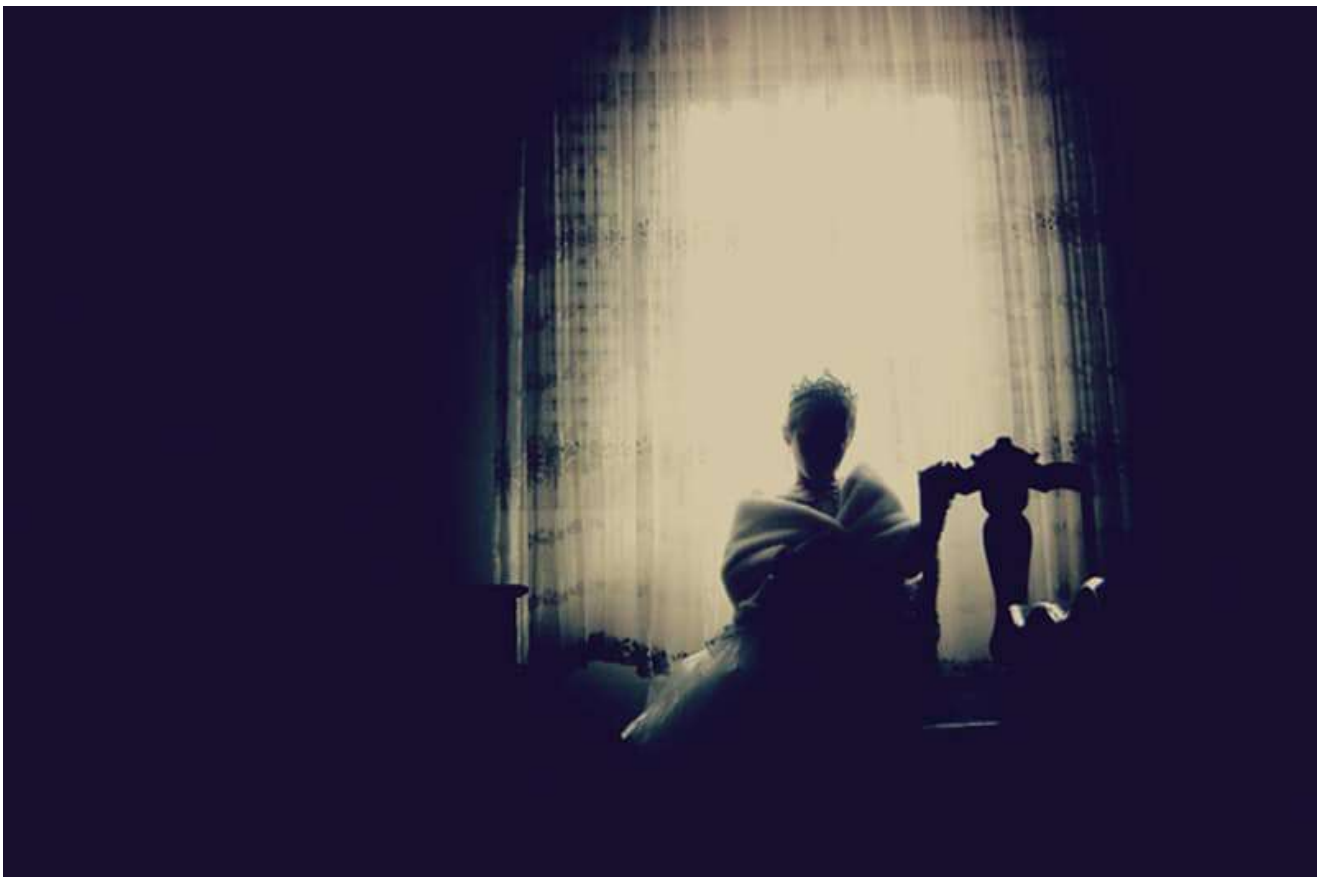
I decided that this was the last leg for this friendship, and there was nothing more I could do.

It didn't matter whether this individual's anger was justified or not. As I had mentioned, my problem wasn't that this person was angry, but how the anger was handled. I have little to no capacity in my life for reckless displays of anger, for anger has been such a dominant

theme in my life since young.

I can't choose the family I was born into, and if my family members happen to be angry people, then so be it—I shall deal with them accordingly. But **I can choose who I spend my time with**, and as much as I can help it, I would rather not spend any time with angry people (apart from my family), much less such an irately angry person, or people who have yet to learn to deal with their anger in a conscious manner.

Self-Reflection: Realizing the Damaging Effects of My Anger on Myself



While I didn't feel any ounce of anger during the "conversation," this episode made me think of the times when I was angry. My experience with anger up till that point was that I was an agent and bearer of anger. This episode with this friend was one of the first

times when I got to “witness” anger as a third party (not including my encounters with my parents or brother).

Being on the other end of the spectrum opened my eyes as to how damaging anger really is.

#1. Anger Has Damaged My Relationships

Firstly, my friend’s anger burned away the final ropes that tied our friendship together.

Like I mentioned in [part 1](#), because I was brought up in an angry household and knew how bad it was to be surrounded by anger, I made sure never to lose my temper at other people, no matter what happened. However, reflecting on my life, I could think of a past incident when my anger broke apart a budding friendship I had with someone in school. I was unhappy about something and my friend was trying to appease me, only to be caught in my “fire.” Honestly I don’t even remember what I said and I didn’t really direct my anger at him either (I was angry at the situation and ranting), but I guess it was enough to make him feel upset. Unfortunately, he refused to respond to any of my messages since that incident and I decided to stop trying too after the nth outreach attempt, so we’re no longer friends. If not for that incident, we might still be in touch today. We might be closer friends than we were. I would never know.

#2. Anger Has Damaged the People I Love (Whether I Realize it or Not)

Secondly, my friend’s anger had caused me—at the very least, someone she used to care about—much sadness.

While I have never asked the people whom I had lost my temper at before whether I had hurt them with my anger, I think it goes without saying that I probably did. From my mom to my dad to my brother to sporadic friends and acquaintances here and there, these people had probably felt saddened, at one point or another, by the words which I had said or things which I had done during my moments of anger.

As much as I might have been angry during those momentarily outbursts, I never want to cause hurt to someone else. It brings me much pain to know that I had probably caused anguish to someone else at some point in his/her life, because of a moment of anger.

#3. Anger Has Damaged Myself

Thirdly, throughout the whole “conversation,” it was evident that my friend was utterly consumed by her rage. That livid, out-of-control, and unconscious individual sending those rage-filled text messages? I had no idea who that was. I had never seen her before.

I felt so bad for her. I could see her burning in her own flames and fraying her heart, body, mind, and soul in the process. And the worst thing? She probably didn't even know she was doing that to herself.

Reflecting that onto myself, I realized that this was precisely what had been happening to me all this while. The fits of anger whenever things went awry, the unhappiness toward people who had let me down before, and the dormant anger from past events... I was being burned by my anger all this while.

No wonder my dentist once asked me if I clenched my jaw a lot (I didn't realize it). No wonder my facial muscles would sometimes feel tired toward the end of the day (from all the pressure on my brows

and forehead). No wonder I would feel scrunched up in my heart whenever something violated my expectations. I had been hurting myself all this while with my anger, without even realizing it.

And those were just the physical side effects. Can you imagine the spiritual implications? The wear and tear my soul had undergone? The fraying of my soul? Or the mental implications, such as self-inflicted mental pain? All these had been unnecessary.

Other Damaging Effects of Anger

The 3 damaging effects I listed were not the only shortfalls of anger.

Another, more serious, implication of anger would be its far-reaching effects on innocent, third-party recipients who had nothing to do with it. Consider that my parents' anger resulted in my brother and I becoming such angry people. Consider kids who grow up with deep mental issues due to anger issues in their households. Consider that I have many past coaching clients and course participants whose emotional issues and/or personal problems can be traced to a certain angry upbringing from their past. Consider that there are probably many more individuals out there, impacted by others' anger, who live their lives as slaves to their anger without ever knowing so.

On a personal productivity and well-being level, I observed that I would frequently get thrown off-track by little irks and annoyances, such as being irritated with my neighbor's kids' incessant yelling and screaming, babies' crying, people who impose, and people with a low comprehension ability. These feelings of irritation would never last long, probably for one minute or two; sometimes stretching to five to ten minutes.

Realizing a Third Path (No Anger, No Avoidance)

I had never thought of these irks to be issues in the past, as I thought they were normal and part of life.

However, what if they aren't normal? I had already discovered (as shared in [part 1](#)) that my anger to life's little hiccups was *not* a "normal" occurrence.

*What if being annoyed, being irked, and being angry are *not* normal, *not* necessary and *not* part and parcel of life? What if I have been so easily irritable and annoyed all this while because of latent anger issues and because I have simply *not* learned to deal with life's little hiccups in an angerless manner?*

What if anger doesn't have to be the way? What if I could learn to deal with life's issues and unexpected circumstances without anger? What if I don't even have to be angry to begin with? Wouldn't that be truly beautiful?

As I questioned myself, suddenly I got an aha moment. I realized that it *is* possible to have a life void of anger, and the possibility lies in my hands, for *I* am the one responsible for *my* anger.

I realized that if I am to create or contribute to an angerless world, and if I am to become an angerless person, I have to start with myself first.

Part 3 of the Anger Series

Continue on to Part 3, where I share the six steps I'm taking to let go of my latent anger and turn into an "angerless" person.

My History with Anger and How I Let Go of It, Part 3: Healing From My Anger

*This is **part 3** of my **5-part series** on how to let go of anger for life.*



How I Am Currently Working Through My Anger

While I have made the decision to let go of anger, anger resolution is a process, rather than a binary event, for we are talking about anger that was built up since childhood.

The following 6 steps are how I'm dissolving my anger permanently. You may find them useful for your situation as well.

1. Being Conscious of My Anger

After my friend [brought my anger to my awareness](#) a year ago, I began working on being conscious of my anger.

While I used to be 100% unconscious of times when I was angry (I would think that my ticked reactions were "normal" or that I wasn't angry when I really was), I'm now aware of the times when I'm angry. I'm also aware of moments where I'm not angry yet but I can feel anger about to stir—an awareness which I find invaluable. Additionally, I'm also aware of specific things that tick me, i.e., my anger triggers.

Having developed consciousness of my anger, this then leads to Step 2.

2. Understanding the Source of the Anger

After realizing that [my anger has never been external; it is internal](#), I focus on understanding [the true source of my anger](#) every time I get angry, rather than seek for a solution in the external world (which had never resolved my anger anyway).

I do that by using the [root cause exercise](#), where I keep asking

myself "Why am I angry? Why does this make me angry? Why? Why? Why?" to get down to the bottom of my anger.

Example: Irritation from Kids' Screams or Cries

For as long as I could remember (up until I began healing this issue), I would be ticked whenever I heard kids screaming (at the top of their lungs) or crying. Such screams and cries are very frequent occurrences in my neighborhood.

Whenever I heard them, it would feel like a siren went off in my head. I would feel like ripping a piece of paper to shreds or hitting someone with an object. I wouldn't be able to do anything constructive because I would be so intensely annoyed by the screams. I would feel incapacitated.

I used to deal with this annoyance by (a) shutting out the noise, (b) changing to a quieter environment, or (c) blasting music to block out the screams. The methods would work to varying degrees, but were merely short-term measures. As soon I heard the screams or cries again, I would feel frustrated all over again.

After realizing that [anger isn't external but internal](#), I then took a different tack—I dug into myself to understand why I would always be so pissed off by the screams and cries of kids and babies.

Root Cause #1: Anger at My Helplessness

(Blue = Answers from my subconsciousness.)

- "Why am I angry?"
 - *I'm angry because these kids just keep crying over and over!*

- "Why am I angry with them crying? What's wrong with that?"
 - *I hate the fact that they are so helpless. They can't do anything.*
 - *They are good-for-nothings.*
- "Is it their fault that they are helpless? They are just babies and kids!"
 - *I know... I just can't stand helplessness.*
- "What is the real problem here?"
 - *Seeing their helplessness **reminds me of my helplessness**. It reminds me of how I used to be helpless as a child, trapped in the middle of my parents' arguments. It reminds me of how I continue to be helpless today, surrounding the state of my family and the animosity my family members have towards each other.*

I felt a "thud" in my heart when I heard that from my subconsciousness. I had been reacting in anger all this while to *my* own helplessness. I had been so pissed off at the kids' cries and screams because they reminded me of *my own helplessness* in my past and in my present life.

Root Cause #2: Childhood Resentment of My Parents

Here is another set of answers I got from doing the exercise in another setting.

- "Why am I angry?"
 - *Because the kids are really freaking noisy! Why are they screaming at the top of their lungs like that?*

- "Why am I angry at that? They are kids—of course they are going to scream without restraint."
 - *Because they are disrupting my peace and quiet!*
- "Why is it so important to have my peace and quiet?"
 - *Because I was never able to get my peace and quiet when I was young. All I want is just some privacy and quiet time with myself today, as an adult. Can't I get that?*
- "...What am I really angry at here?"
 - ***I'm angry at my parents for taking away my peace and quiet when I was young. I'm angry at them for taking away my childhood from me.***

Wow, I had thought. It was finally starting to make sense. I had been so angry at noise disruptions all this while, since I could remember, because my head was still filled with the yellings and shoutings of my parents from when I was young. That was why even the slightest noise would irk me. This was why my ears would be so sensitive to even the littlest of sounds.

I wasn't really angry at the kids for "taking away my peace and quiet". I was really reacting from my childhood anger at my parents for taking away my peace and quiet when I was a child. This was why my reaction to the screams of kids would be so violent—I was displaying compounded anger from since young.

Root Cause #3: Anger at My Lack of Consideration for Others

And finally, the last set of answers:

- "Why am I angry?"
 - *Because these kids are being so inconsiderate. They are just screaming around without considering others' need for privacy!*
- "Why am I angry about that?"
 - *Because inconsiderate people have no regard for other people.*
 - *They are among the worst kind of people to be around.*
- "Why am I angry about that?"
 - *Because **it reminds me of how I can be very inconsiderate of others' needs.** It's something I hate about myself. I wish to be more mindful of others needs and never hurt or implicate other people because of my callousness or insensitivity.*

Rounding Up

Ah, ah, and ah. As it turned out, I was never really angry at the kids or the babies. My anger at them was an expression of my latent anger toward myself, my parents, and my past.

No wonder I would react so violently whenever there was a kid screaming or crying. It wasn't the kid's screaming or crying I was reacting to per se. It was my past and my inner issues that I was reacting to.

(Read more about the relationship between our annoyances with ourselves and our annoyances at others in Day 22: Mirror an Annoyance of [Be a Better Me in 30 Days Program](#).)

So nowadays, every time I experience a hint of anger, I would do this self-questioning exercise. Each time, I would get a new dash of insight. Sometimes, I would get a huge revelation. Each of them would reflect an inner wound that had not been healed yet. I would

then work on healing these wounds, as per Step 3.

3. Healing My Inner Wounds

If I want to permanently resolve my anger (read: no longer feel anger), I need to heal my inner wounds, one at a time. Otherwise, I would be infuriated each time I'm exposed to my anger triggers. I would be looped in an angry cycle.

Healing my inner wounds means processing the issues hidden underneath each feeling of anger. That means examining each issue, one by one, examining my beliefs, questioning them, challenging them, then forming new empowering beliefs in their place.

Example: My Repressed Anger with My Parents

One of my inner wounds, which I shared under Root Cause #2 under Step 2 above, was that I resented my parents for my emotionally violent childhood. It was not an active feeling of resentment, but a passive one. The person who felt the resentment was my childhood self.

However, if I were to review my life in totality and clarify my feelings toward my parents, am I really angry at them? No, I'm not. I am more than grateful to my parents for everything they have done for me. I am grateful to them for the love they have shown for me, the (silent) support they have given me, and their non-oppressive presence in my life. I'm grateful to them for bringing me into this world. I'm grateful to them for being strong, sturdy, pillars of my life.

My parents' incessant arguments since young... that is just the way it is. It's unfortunate that they had to argue. It's unfortunate that they

still argue every here and there (but then again, one can see this as a normalcy in some married couples' lives). It's unfortunate that they have such fundamental differences with each other. It's unfortunate that my household carries an air of disharmony at times.

But... so what? I have my parents with me. I have my dad. I have my mom. I have my family under the same roof. I have the opportunity to improve my relationships with each of them. I have the chance to right past wrongs with them. I have the chance to love them and express my love to them today.

Some people don't even get that opportunity, whether because their parents have passed on or because they don't even know who their parents are. Who am I to b*tch and complain?

Realizing that the past was the way it was and my parents really dealt with their differences the best way they could, the best way they knew how (by trashing out their grievances with each other), helped me to let go of my anger. For my parents never had any ill intentions toward me when they were arguing, be it with each other or with me. They also never intended to make me an angry person. I just grew up angry because I picked on their angry energy.

Now, whose fault is that? Nobody's. It just simply was the way it was.

Having resolved this inner wound, I no longer get irked by my past anger triggers linked with parental resentment (e.g., babies crying, kids screaming). That's because my past anger to those triggers was merely a reflection of my childhood resentment at my parents. Now that I have "cleaned out" that resentment, I no longer have any anger to release surrounding it.

My Other Inner Wounds

As for my other inner wounds, it's about working through them one by one, in the same manner I have worked through my repressed anger at my parents. How do I know that I have completely "cleaned out" a wound? When I no longer react in anger to the anger trigger (see Step 1) associated with that wound (see Step 2), i.e., a state of neutrality.

(For more about how to achieve this state of neutrality, read Day 22: Mirror an Annoyance of [Be a Better Me in 30 Days Program](#).)

4. Releasing My Anger

While I work on healing my latent anger (via Steps 2 and 3), I make sure that I don't accumulate new anger.

Meaning, if I'm ever in situations where I feel infuriated, I will release this anger to the universe right away.

Irritation from being stuck in traffic jams? Unhappy with sloppily done work which didn't meet my expectations? Annoyances with people who impose their worldviews on me? Irked by people who are slow pokes and stand in my way? I simply imagine opening a hatch in my heart and releasing my negative energy out into the universe, for it to be recycled into positive energy.

5. Recognizing No One Owes Me Anything

Some of my past anger would be anger at people who behaved me in an unjust manner.

"This person shouldn't have said that to me," I would think. Or, "That

person shouldn't have behaved so rudely toward me." I would harbor anger toward those people and expect an apology or two before I would consider rekindling the friendship or re-establishing contact.

However... after realizing that anger at other people solves nothing, and that the person I damage the most when I'm angry is myself and not anybody else (as I shared in [part 2](#)), it got me thinking about how I should immediately work on releasing anger that I was holding toward others, as there was nothing to gain from fuming by myself.

As I pondered for a way to release that anger, I suddenly came to a realization that—hey—there is actually nothing, no reason, no basis, for me to be angry with those people, or anyone in this world for that matter. Why? Because no one owes me anything. Everyone has his/her right to do whatever he/she pleases, and there is no reason why I should expect him/her to behave otherwise.

Meaning, if so-and-so person rebukes me rudely, there is nothing for me to feel angry about because it's not like he/she has a responsibility to be polite to me. If so-and-so person does me wrong, sure it wouldn't feel pleasant at all for me, but there is nothing for me to feel angry about because it's not like he/she has a responsibility to do me right.

So does that mean that I should let people treat me poorly? No, not at all.

It simply means that (a) instead of fuming at random people for one or two petty incidents, I should stop being angry at them and just move on with my life, and (b) I should learn from those encounters and not let them happen again.

So if the original problem was that X person rebuked me, I should

learn to stand up for myself the next time that happens. Or if the problem was that Y person did me wrong, then I should be more mindful with him/her the next time, and not let him/her back in until that trust is regained. These actions are way more constructive than sitting around, fuming to myself about said individuals and expecting them to apologize, when they don't owe me any apologies.

6. No Longer Angry at Myself

The last part of the equation is to stop being angry at myself.

I've observed that much of my anger is usually anger at myself for letting certain "atrocities" happen to me.

For example, let's say I'm angry at a random Y person for being **rude** to me. While on the surface it may appear that I'm angry with Y, I'm actually really angry at myself for allowing someone to be rude to me. I would feel that I have failed myself, because I have not properly shielded myself from the negative agents of the world. I have not done a good job of protecting myself.

However, is it my fault then? Is it my fault that I had "allowed" Y, or anyone for that matter, to be rude to me?

No, it isn't. I have simply done the best that I could in that incident. That Y was rude to me, and perhaps hurt me in one way or another, was just an unfortunate outcome. Even if I didn't stand up for myself during the incident, it would be because of one reason or another, each of which would have its own justification, like not wanting to hurt Y's feelings and not wanting to be inappropriate in my conduct. Each reason would be justified in its own right.

Rather than hold myself responsible for what had happened and be

angry at myself when I had been acting in my best interests, I should work on forgiving myself instead. Whatever it was that I did or didn't do, I had simply been doing what was best for the situation. There is nothing to be angry about because I had done the best that I could have done in that situation. There was no other way it could have panned out.

Funnily, when I forgive myself about something, I stop feeling angry at the other things and/or people in question. My anger at them have merely been been projections of my anger toward myself all along.

For those with [Be a Better Me in 30 Days Program](#), Day 25: Forgive Someone shares more details on how to stop being angry at yourself and steps to do so.

Moving Forward & Part 4 of the Anger Series

I'm currently working toward becoming an "angerless" person. I believe it is possible to achieve a state of neutrality in life, even toward the seemingly most "outrageous" things. As and where needed (very rare), I do display anger. But this anger is consciously anger to achieve a certain outcome, and it is anger that is merely projected and not felt or worn in my heart. It is not unconscious anger, which is what 99.99% of people experience. Addressing unconscious anger is what this entire series has been about.

Many of you have left comments sharing your experiences with anger. Thank you so much for all your open sharing. :) In this part, I've shared my personal steps on how I am addressing my anger which I hope you will take heed to apply in your life. I hope you have found my examples helpful in healing from your anger.

In the next part you will find a guide, with 5 timeless steps, on what

you can do to let go of your anger. If you are interested in removing anger from your life, you will find this guide instrumentally useful.

How to Deal with Anger: Your Gentle Guide to Removing Anger for Life

This is part 4 of my 5-part series on how to let go of anger for life.



How to Deal with Anger: A Gentle Guide

Most people would think of anger as an emotion that's part and parcel of life. That, hey, it is normal to feel angry once in a while. And that it is okay to be angry when things don't go your way.

I beg to differ though. Having [grown up in a household of anger](#), and having experienced life as [a highly angry person](#), I have come to realize that [anger *doesn't have to be part of life*](#). While there is nothing wrong with being angry (after all, there is no right or wrong emotion), anger *doesn't* have to be an option. Just as you choose to be angry, you [can choose](#) not to be angry. And you *can* resolve problems just the same, if not better, *without anger being in the picture*. At all.

In today's guide, I'll teach you conscious methods on how to deal with anger, such that you will become an angerless person. This

guide is not about anger “management” or anger “control”, which are short-term solutions. This guide is about *permanent* anger *resolution*, because long-term solutions, not quick fixes, should be our aim in life.

Step 1: Recognize When You Are Angry



Contrary to what most might think, anger *isn't* just limited to moments when you lose your cool and fly into a rage. Anger starts the moment you harbor negative emotions about something or someone. As you feel more and more unhappy, your anger compounds... Eventually you snap when your anger hits a certain threshold and you can't hold it in any longer.

For example, before I resolved my anger issues, I would be easily irked and frustrated. I would rarely fly into a rage, unless I was at home and dealing with my family members, who had anger issues of

their own and with whom I had compounded grievances against. I thought I wouldn't be considered an angry person since I would hardly lose my temper at others.

However, I was wrong. As I unraveled my anger issues in the past year, I realized I was quite an intensely angry person. I realized that irk and frustration *are* forms of anger. They are just *lesser* forms of anger. They are, in fact, the inducting states of anger.

This means if you often feel irked or frustrated, there is actually an angry soul in you waiting to be unleashed. You are no different than a ticking time bomb waiting to go off any minute. All it takes are (a) the right stimulus and (b) sufficient irk to be compounded before you fly into a rage at someone or something.

Here's an **anger index** I've created to help you gain consciousness of your anger. Can you recognize the different anger states?

1. Level 0: Angerless. A state of no anger. Zen. Peace. Calmness.
2. Level 1: Irk. The beginning level of anger. Here, you feel slight feelings of annoyance, but they are repressible. (Very volatile people skip this level and jump straight to Levels 3, 4, or 5.)
3. Level 2: Frustration. The mid-point between slight annoyance and actual anger (Level 3). You are frustrated and it shows. It's harder to deny your frustration compared to Level 1.
4. Level 3: Anger. Your frustration has built up to the point where you feel actual anger. Not only that, your frustration is so much that it's now manifesting physiologically. You can feel your heart beating faster and your body warming up.
5. Level 4: Infuriated. A heightened state of anger. You are well pissed off at this point. While you feel mad, you have not *fully* lost

1. it... yet. You are still lucid and able to control your actions... not for long, though. One more stimulus, and you are ready to snap.
2. Level 5: Rage. You have totally lost it! You see red and nothing can stop you from lashing out at others. This is the state where you say and do things which you normally wouldn't, in a fit of anger.

What levels do you hover around on a usual day? How often do you enter each level? What is the highest level you have hit before?

Regardless of your answer for each question, you should endeavor to reach Level 0, because that is your natural state of being. None of us are born with anger in our souls. The only reason we even have irk, frustration, anger, or rage in our system is because of (a) past, unprocessed anger that is stuck in our souls, and (b) faulty paradigms of thinking. It's about (a) processing those unprocessed anger through Steps 2 to 4, and (b) correcting those faulty paradigms through Step 5.

Step 2: Know Your Anger Triggers

Do you know your anger triggers? What makes you angry? What ticks you off? What can you *not* stand?

For the next two minutes, make a list of things that (a) irk or frustrate you (e.g., late public transport, bad customer service, negative people, or inconsiderate people), (b) infuriates you to no end (e.g., injustice to the weak, **molesters** / rapists, or hypocrites), and (c) instantly pisses you off (e.g., screeching of chalk against a blackboard).

Now, for the rest of today, observe your reaction to everything that

happens. Whenever you observe yourself feeling irked or angry, note the trigger and add it onto your list. Spot as many anger triggers as you can.

My Experience Uncovering My Anger Triggers

When I did this exercise, I did it over the span of a week. I uncovered many triggers which I was previously unconscious of. Majority were day-to-day occurrences which I never gave much thought to. Things like unsolicited phone calls, [running late for appointments](#), delayed public transport, and noise disturbances. I wouldn't be overtly angry, but those events would most definitely irk me to some degree.

Beyond day-to-day occurrences, I also identified deeper anger triggers. I realized I had little tolerance for insincere and/or unauthentic people. I would be heavily repulsed by people who were unauthentic in communication and/or approach personal relationships with a hidden agenda. I also had a disdain for lazy people; people who skive and take the easy way out in life. As a person with excellence as my top value, I could not stand that.

Doing the list was eye-opening. It made me recognize trends to things which would make me angry—usually of things which impeded my agenda or went against my core values (excellence, passion, courage, truth, and authenticity). It helped me to anticipate situations which would set me off, hence pre-empting anger situations so I could deal with them consciously.

Step 3: Drill into Your Anger Triggers

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.” ~ Carl Gustav Jung

After creating your anger triggers list, drill into each anger trigger to uncover its root cause.

Using the **digging exercise** to find out why your anger triggers make you angry. For each trigger, ask yourself “Why does this make me angry?”. Pen down the answer and repeat the question until you reach an aha moment (surrounding your anger). This would be the **root cause** of your anger (at least for that particular trigger).

For example, say after doing Step 2, you realize your anger triggers are (a) talking to rude people, and (b) seeing old people being mistreated. Let’s drill into them one at a time.

Example #1: Talking to Rude People

- “Why does talking to rude people make me angry?”
 - *Because they are obnoxious.*
- “Why does that make me angry?”
 - *Because they are being disrespectful.*
- “Why does that make me angry?”
 - *Because it makes me feel unvalued, unworthy.*
- “Why does that make me feel angry?”
 - ***Because it reminds me of the time when I was a child, when the kids in school were disrespectful to me. They did not pay any attention to me and even mocked me for being by myself. I felt like a worthless fool at that time.***

Here, you find out that your anger to rude people is linked to your childhood when you were rudely treated by your schoolmates. This is the underlying driver for your anger in this case.

Example #2: Seeing Old People Being Mistreated

- “Why does seeing old people being mistreated make me angry?”
 - *Because it is an act of atrocity.*

- “Why is it an act of atrocity?”
 - *Because old people are weak. They should be protected, not mistreated.*

- “Why does seeing them mistreated make me angry?”
 - *Because it reminds me of helpless people who should be protected but aren't.*

- “Why does that make me angry?”
 - ***Because there have been times when I was helpless but no one protected me.***

Here, you found out that your anger with people mistreating old people is linked to times when you did not receive help even though you needed it. This is the real reason why you are angry at old people being mistreated (above and beyond the other reasons you uncovered).

For more on how your anger triggers are interrelated with your inner self and your past, read Day 22: Mirror an Annoyance of [Be a Better Me in 30 Days Program](#). It comes with an exercise which will help you release your external annoyances from within.

Anger Triggers and Past Events

As you drill into each anger trigger, you may wind up tracing it to a **past event**, as we did in the two examples above.

If so, it suggests that you still hold resentment and anger over that past event. This resentment and anger was never properly processed, which is why you continue to feel angry over related situations today, even though that original event is long over. This brings us to the next step, which is...

Step 4: Let Go of the Anger

“Choose Love. Surrender the desire to hurt.” ~ Sanaya Roman

Having uncovered the root cause of your anger trigger, it's now time to let the anger go.

The first step is to identify the grievances you still feel over that episode.

For example, let's say your friend broke a promise to you a year ago and you remain resentful about it today. Why? What are your grievances about that episode?

Perhaps you are angry that she did not live up to what she had promised. Perhaps you are angry that she did not fulfill the expectations you had of her. Perhaps you are angry that she is not the person you thought she was. Perhaps, just perhaps, the real reason you are upset with her is because you thought both of you

shared a special bond and you wish she had placed more importance in the friendship to remember and honor that promise.

Then, work through those grievances, one at a time.

If you are angry with your friend for not living up to your expectations, ask yourself: Why do you have such expectations of her? Why are you evaluating her by those expectations? Is she a bad person or a bad friend just because she didn't conform to your expectations? Are you being fair to her by measuring her against those expectations?

If you are angry with your friend for not valuing you enough as a friend to live up to the promise, ask yourself: Is it true that she did not, does not, [value you as a friend](#)? Or was that just your conclusion? How do you think she truly views the friendship?

Challenge your assumptions and beliefs as you work through your grievances. Most grievances are the result of faulty thinking or simply missing the bigger picture. If you can uncover the missing link, you will no sooner be liberated of your unhappiness.

Here's a related article about letting go: [Is It Possible To Let Go of Unhappy Past Forever?](#)

(Be sure to also check out Day 25: Forgive Someone of [Be a Better Me in 30 Days Program](#). It's about letting go of anger in the context of self-forgiveness, including a step-by-step exercise on how you can go about doing it.)

[Step 5: Stop Generating New Anger \(by Letting Go of Attachments\)](#)

As you process the “old” anger from your past, make a pact not to create new anger in your consciousness.

This means if you ever come across incidents or people which violate your expectations, don't be angry. Accept that things aren't the way you want them to be, at least at this moment. Embrace the disparity between reality and what you want. Then, focus on finding, or even creating, solutions.

Example: Making the Decision to Stop Being Angry at Unauthentic People

I used to get very angry at **unauthentic** people. For example, people who say something but do something else. People who approach relationships with ulterior motives. People who do not live up to promises. People who do not make an effort to maintain friendships. I would not lose my anger at these people, but I would resent them and cut them out of my life.

The reason of this pet peeve was because of an unpleasant history I had with someone back in primary school. This person, a good friend then, would be sweet and saccharine when around me. However, she would turn on me and badmouth me when my back was turned. I only knew about her antics through common friends. The incident left a mark in my consciousness and made me resent unauthentic people. (In retrospect, it was ridiculous junior school drama and is not even something I care about today.)

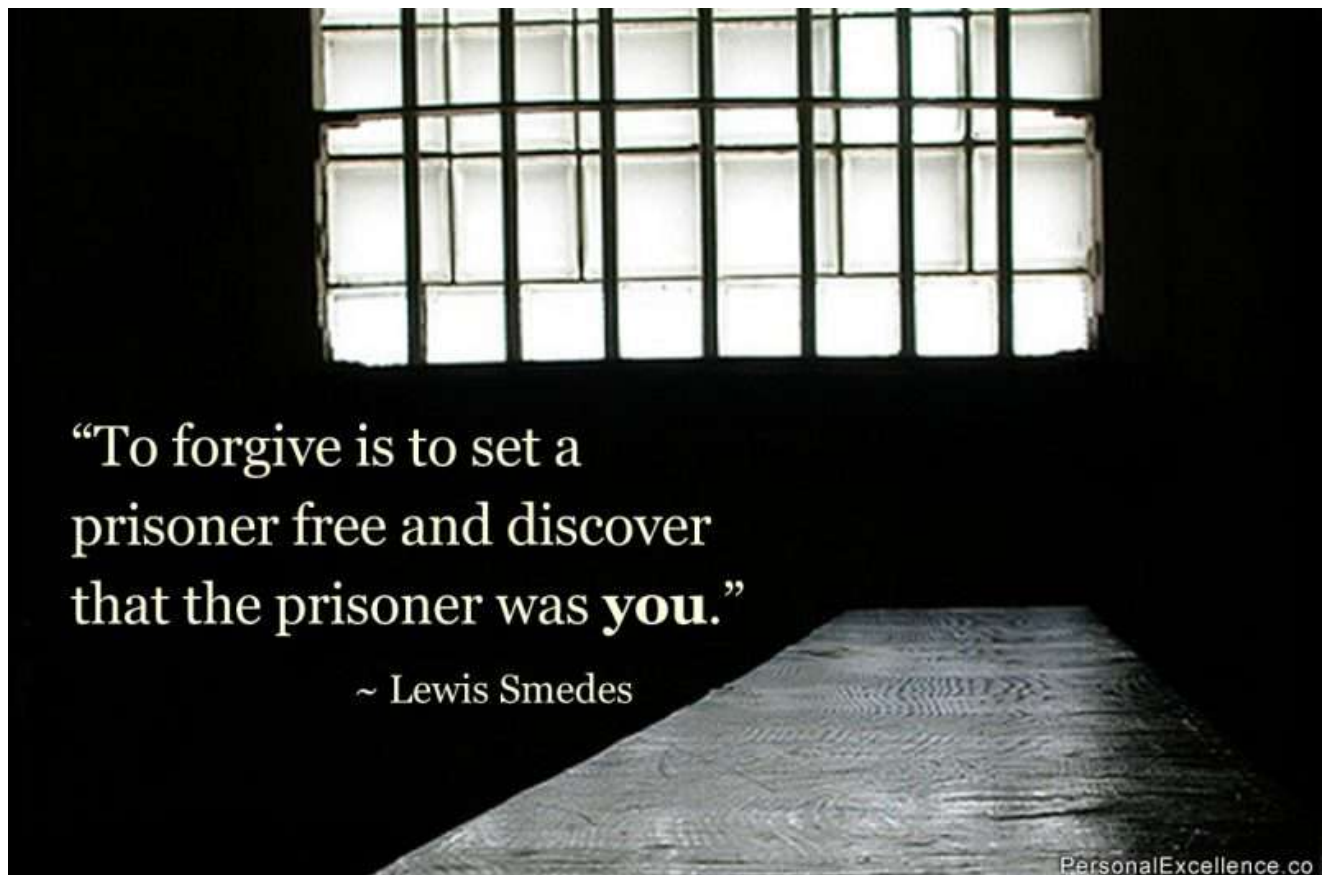
However, after doing **Day 12: Forgive yourself** in the **Kindness Challenge**, and making the **conscious decision** to forgive unauthentic people I encountered before, I realized that I might have been missing something all this while. I realized that perhaps I had

misunderstood the people whom I perceived as unauthentic—that perhaps they were simply being them and not trying to oust me. I realized that perhaps it was their right to be whoever they wanted to be—even if it meant being unauthentic—and I had no right to judge or put them down just for that side of their character.

So I decided to stop being angry at said unauthentic people. I decided to stop bearing grievances against them. I decided to remove the biased lens I had used to perceive these “unauthentic” and to give them a fair chance at making an impression.

Interestingly, as I released my anger at these people, I felt lighter.

Happier. Released. Almost as if... the only person I had been trapping all this while (of feeling resentful towards the unauthentic people) was myself, not the unauthentic people.



It made me realize that the only person I had been hurting the whole

time was actually myself. I thought I was protecting myself and I thought I was “punishing” those “unethical” people by resenting them, but really, I was just hurting myself.

Anger in Life

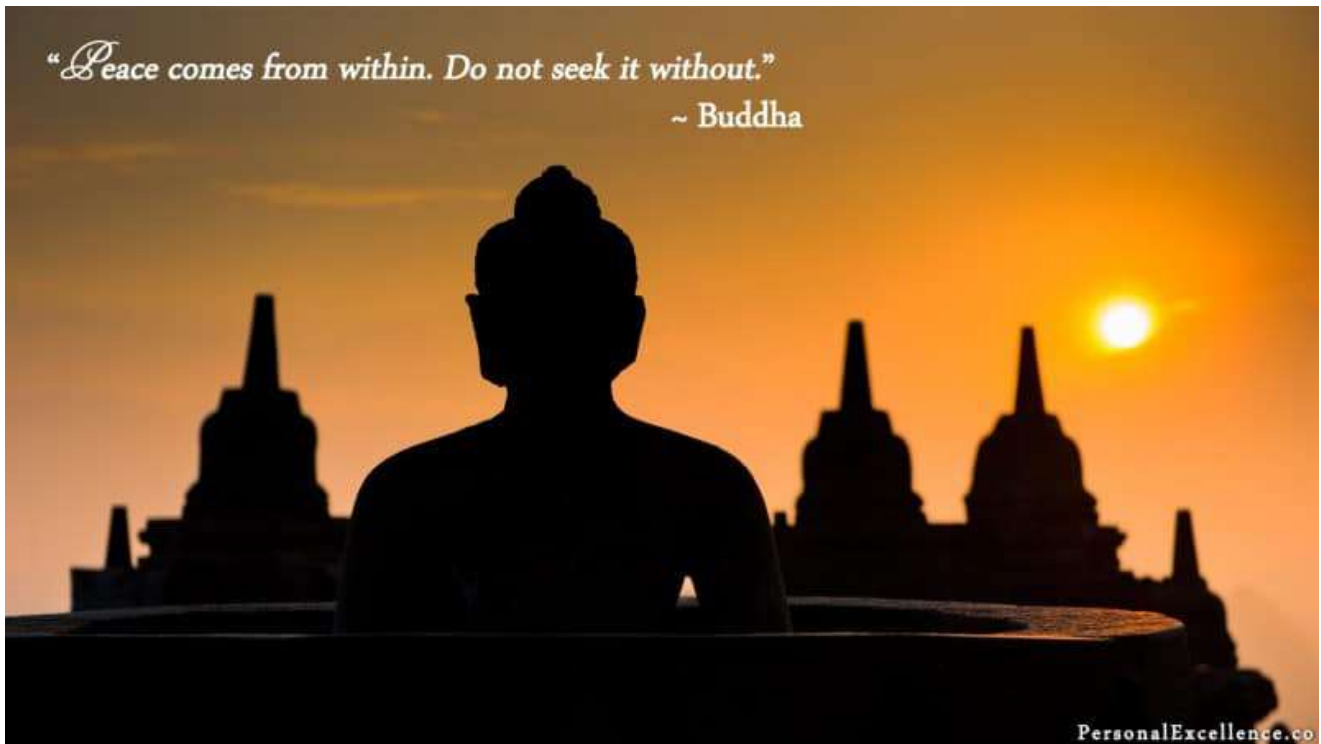
The same goes to everything else that we tend to get angry about. We may think that we are justified in feeling the anger (and we probably are), but the point is that the anger isn't necessary to begin with. That there is a third path (beyond being angry and ignoring our anger) which involves no anger at all.

When you are angry, you are like a mad man wearing a straitjacket that is laced with kerosene and set on fire. You flap around trying to hurt others with the flames of your jacket (and you probably do end up hurting one or two people in the process), but really, the person you end up hurting the most is yourself.

To permanently remove anger from your life, you have to make the conscious decision to stop being angry (as you work through your past anger). This means letting go of attachments. This means not expecting people to conform to expectations. This means being okay when things don't match your expectations. This also means learning to embrace life's little quirks and idiosyncrasies.

"Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without."

~ Buddha



PersonalExcellence.co

Roll with the punches. Step out into the sun. Learn to laugh at yourself. And learn to dance in the rain.

I made the decision a month ago [to stop being angry](#) (which then sparked this series), and I'm happier than I've ever been. How about you? Are you ready to join me in living an angerless life? I'll be here waiting.

After much demand, I've written a part 5 on how to deal with angry family members. Proceed to the next page.

What to Do When You Live with Angry People: 7 Gentle Tips

This is the last part of my 5-part series on how to let go of anger for life.



Last year, I wrote about being brought up in an angry household in my [how to overcome anger series](#). While I have addressed much of

my anger on a personal level, I continue to live in that same angry household today, comprising my mom, dad, and my brother.

My mother used to be the most volatile of the family; it has since switched to my brother with the mellowing of my parents following old age. Just last Sunday, he went into a rage because I had mistakenly threw out his protein powder (I thought it was my raw protein powder which is due to expire next month). When I tried to remedy the situation by offering to pay, he refused to respond and fumed in silence, leaving me with nothing to do but to exit the situation.

It's not easy living with angry people. Every other day, my family members can be heard shouting at or arguing with one another in our living room. My boyfriend (now-husband) got a taste of the angry environment I have been living in when my mom and brother erupted in anger at me over the protein powder issue. He was in my room with me when it unfolded; my mom violently knocked on my bedroom door and demanded that I get out right away to clarify on the issue while my brother shouted at me irately upon seeing me, his face filled with absolute rage. While I did not ask my boyfriend how he felt, he was definitely taken aback by how volatile and abrasive my family can be.

I'm turning 29 in a week's time, which means that I've been living with angry people for almost three decades. I'll be honest — there have been times when I wished that I was not living with my family. I mean, who enjoys returning to a home where people are shouting all the time? I know I don't. I know I prefer being in a harmonious environment where people are happy and showing love to each other all the time.

(Update in 2015: *I'm now 31 and I'm glad to share that over the years, my relationship with my family has improved so much that all of us now communicate openly and are able to have normal conversations, even having family "outings" in the form of get-together dinners. If you've read [my series on my relationship with my parents](#) before, you'd know that this was something simply unthinkable in the past.*

I'd say this is a collective effort by everyone in the family. I guess when you grow older, it becomes obvious that family and relationships are important, and if you don't treasure your loved ones today, you may never have the chance to do so in the future. I'm sure we don't want to wait till our loved ones' funerals before we mourn and start declaring how much we love them and how we wish we appreciated them more when they were alive, do we? More on improving relationship with your parents: [How to Improve Your Relationship With Your Parents \(series\)](#))

However, the fact is my parents and my brother are my family and they will always be. Over the years, I have learned to handle their anger; in fact, lately I have been successfully furthering our relationships in spite of our anger issues.

If you are living with angry family members — be it your dad, mom, brother, sister, in-laws, or even children — here are 7 helpful tips to handle them. Note these tips will apply to dealing with angry people in general too, not just family members.

1. Pick your battles

Perhaps your family members pick a fight over the littlest of things. Perhaps they are [overwhelmingly rude](#) even when you have done

nothing wrong.

Pick your battles — choose the disputes you want to engage in. You don't want to spend your days embroiled in anger with your family members because it will be a waste of your time and energy. Also, by picking your battles, they will take you more seriously when you do make yourself heard in an argument.

For example, I don't engage in fights with my dad/mom/brother normally. My parents like to nip at me for not closing my bedroom windows or not locking the metal gate of my home before I leave the house, and I stay out of these arguments because they are trivialities. I merely make a mental note to do these acts next time so that they would stop nagging at me.

However, I do take a stance when the topic of contestation is about something I'm passionate about. There was a period, several years in fact, when my brother insulted my diet choice (at that time I was a vegetarian). After years of turning a deaf ear to his insults, I finally told him off one day because he crossed the line in his insults. I told him that he was being incredibly disrespectful and pointed out that just like I had never imposed my dietary beliefs onto him nor criticized his diet, I would expect the same courtesy to be extended to me too. Surprised by my response because I rarely lose my top in the household, he never broached the topic surrounding my diet again.

Read: [How to Choose Your Battles and Win the Big War](#)

2. Pick opportune times to talk to them

Catch your family members at the right moment when they are not

irritable or pre-occupied. People tend to be short-tempered when they are busy with other things. By avoiding them during these moments, you can avoid unnecessary conflicts. On the other hand, identify times when they are receptive, and then catch them during these times so you can elicit the best responses.

For example, I have learned not to approach my mom when she gets back home from work every day. Why? Because that is when she is busy with household chores (like cooking and laundry) and is highly irritable. To speak to her during this time would mean having my head bitten off.

On the other hand, my mom becomes much calmer after she completes her to-dos and winds down for the day, since she is not weighed down by the pressure of having to complete housework by a certain time. This makes it the most opportune time to speak with her. Whenever I speak to her during this time, she is much more responsive, positive, and even helpful.

3. Shield yourself from their anger



Shielding is a simple technique to protect you from negative energy; I use it whenever I want to protect myself from low-consciousness and negative individuals. I have used it before when with my family members and the shield keeps me safe from their volatile outbursts.

Here are two exercises to create a shield; either exercise will work perfectly.

Method #1: Energy Ball

1. Close your eyes and meditate for a few minutes. This will help you clear your mind as you create your shield. Read: [How to Meditate In 5 Simple Steps](#)
1. Visualize a small energy ball forming inside of your chest. This energy ball is filled with extremely powerful essence that has the ability to ward off and protect you from any negative or abrasive entity.

1. Now, visualize this energy ball expanding to envelope you. First it grows to the size of the fist. Then, it expands to the size of a basketball. And then, it expands to twice of that size. As it grows in size, its outer layer becomes thicker and harder, as if its an impenetrable shield.
2. Within a few minutes, the bubble has now expanded to surround your entire body. It now circles you as a powerful defense tool. Your shield formation is now complete.

Method #2: Drawing

1. Close your eyes and meditate for a few minutes. Read: [How to Meditate In 5 Simple Steps](#)
2. Concentrate on your finger tip. Imagine there is an incredibly powerful essence oozing from finger tip. This essence has the ability to repel any negative energy.
3. Now, with the essence from your finger tip, draw a large circle around your entire physical body. Visualize the essence locking into position around your body as your shield.
4. Once you are done, bask in the fortitude of your newly-minted shield. Your shield formation is now complete.

With your shield, you are safe from any negative energy. In the event someone hurls anger at you, visualize this anger bouncing off the surface of your shield and right back at the sender.

Your shield can last for a day or several days if you have generated a strong shield. Simply repeat any of the two shield-creation exercises above if you feel your shield strength is waning.

4. Understand why they are angry

No matter how irate your father/mother/sibling/in-law/child may be, there is a reason behind his/her anger. This reason may or may not have anything to do with you. Either way it doesn't matter as the intention of knowing the reason is not to finger point or to fault the person. By knowing why your family member is angry, it will help you understand him/her better, which will help you (a) avoid similar conflicts in the future and even (b) cultivate a better relationship with him/her.

For example, when I reflected on why my mom would be so irritable whenever she gets back home from work, I realized that it is because she is trying to get housework done by a certain timeline. In her mind, she associates housework with being a good wife/mom. By not completing housework within her desired time, she probably links it to her failing in her role as a wife/mom. This would explain why she would be so irate when I spoke to her after her work in the past — she probably felt I was getting in her way of being a good wife/mom.

Another example — when I reflected on why my brother was so pissed at me for throwing out his protein powder, I realized it was because the protein powder probably represents many things to him — living healthier, being fitter, and looking good. Me throwing the powder out sent a huge jolt in his consciousness; in his mind, he probably felt that someone was threatening his goal of wanting to be healthier/fitter/more physically attractive, which then sent him in a huge rage. Factoring in the fact that both of us used to be mired with [twisted relationships with food](#) due to the way our parents raise us around food, I can absolutely understand why he got so angry.

Understanding the source of their anger has helped me to manage

our relationships better. For example, now that I know my mom values her role as a wife/mom, I give her the space to live up to her responsibilities in that domain. I eat in where possible so she gets to cook for me (something she enjoys). I honor her position as a mom by being more respectful to her vs. snapping or ignoring her whenever she nags at me. As for my brother, now I know better than to throw things out in the house without checking with my parents/brother, even if I may think that they are mine.

5. Show them love; Speak in their language of love

In part two of [my parent series](#), I mentioned that my parents was resistant to my early attempts to improve our relationship. In the one time I tried to hug my mom a few years ago, she asked me what the heck I was doing and pushed me away. When I tried to further my communication with my dad and mom, my mom would snap back while my dad would give lackluster responses.

Seeing my actions unrequited disheartened me and made me hold back from improving our relationship. I subsequently continued to communicate with them in the same abrasive manner as in the past, since I felt that it didn't matter whether I tried to be nice to them or not.

However, lately I have been observing my boyfriend's interactions with my family. He is incredibly respectful to my mom and dad; in return they take to him very kindly. Having him around is like wedging a thick rubber cushion between knives; the knives are me and my family members, while he is the rubber ball. His presence has introduced a layer of softness in my family for sure.

When I reflected on why my parents have been receptive to his gestures of love but not mine, I realize it's because I wasn't speaking to my parents in their language of love before. Hugging and communication are my languages of love but they aren't my parents'. On the other hand, my parents—who grew up under older Asian values—probably interpret love from a child as the child greeting his/her parents, the child inviting his/her parents to eat during meal times (a customary Asian practice), a child supporting his/her parents upon reaching adulthood (which I'm already doing), and so on.

So, I began to show love to my parents in ways they can understand. Instead of being irritable and defensive when they speak to me (which I used to do due to abrasive experiences compounded since young), I now listen to them with openness, or at least more openness than before. While I normally do not greet my parents (it's simply not a habit in my household), now I greet them when I see them and ask them to eat during meal times.

My parents are definitely receiving this change with open arms. I can feel more positive energy in the family nowadays; my dad has been smiling more often while my mom has been more chatty than usual.

6. Use their anger to reflect on yourself



For years, I thought that my mom was a volatile character with erratic anger outbursts. Whenever she got back home from work, she would be irritable, ready to snap at anyone who gets in her way. When I tried to start a conversation with her to know her better, she would react defensively, asking me why I'm so nosy or asking so many questions. When I tried to hug her before, **she pushed me away** instead of returning my hug as a loving mom would to her daughter.

For a long while, I couldn't understand what her deal was. *Why is she so volatile? Why is she so unreasonable, irritable, and unapproachable? What is wrong with her?* I would ask myself.

However, I know that our relationships are mirrors to our souls. As Thomas Sprat puts it, "What you dislike in another take care to correct in yourself." As much as my mom may be erratically angry, I know that it's a reflection of erratic anger on my part towards her.

So I reflected on my behavior towards her. I realized that just as I have been saddened by how volatile she has been to me as my mom, she is probably saddened by how volatile I have been to her as a daughter. I would often snap at her when she tries to speak to me — ironically because she catches me at the inopportune times when I'm busy with work and need to concentrate. I would also react defensively whenever she cautions me about something out of good intentions, because I feel she is being naggy. I would also raise my voice or even shout angrily at her for no reason sometimes, because that's simply the way we have been communicating with each other all these years.

Rather than wish that she can stop acting in anger, I realized that I need to first stop acting in anger myself. Her anger towards me is merely a mirror of my anger towards her.

So now, I think twice before losing my cool in the family. When my mom speaks to me, I respond to her as who she is at that point in time, rather than react based on compounded emotions from the past (read: anger). When she (or anyone in the family for that matter) speaks to me angrily, I think about the times when I have been unreasonable and angry towards her, which then makes it easy for me to empathize.

7. Help them work through their anger

For the most conscious of individuals--help your family members to work through their anger. Bear in mind that this isn't easy and is only for those of you who are conscious enough to look past personal grievances and remain grounded in the face of volatile emotions.

There was once when my mom went irate when I tried to speak to

her. Knowing that this anger had nothing to do with me because I was merely trying to [strike up a casual conversation](#), I asked calmly, "Why are you so angry?" She paused, for she was not aware that she had been shouting at me. She then became calmer, probably because she realized she was being out of line for losing her temper at me when I was doing nothing wrong.

There are times when I call my mom to update her on my dinner plans for the day, only to hear her shouting on the other end of the phone for reasons unrelated to me. Whenever that happens, I simply say, "Can you please calm down? I'm not trying to attack you; I'm only trying to tell you something." Again, my response would take her by surprise because she is totally unconscious that she was irate, after which she becomes calmer and starts listening to what I have to say.

Simple steps to help someone work through his/her anger include bringing his/her anger to his/her awareness (like what I did with my mom in the 2 examples above), taking them to anger management classes, buying anger management materials for them, talking through their issues with them, and in an indirect way--extending love to them as per tip #5.

Be sure to ground and shield yourself when being around angry people. As you open yourself up by helping them, you want to make sure that you don't get affected by their abrasive energy.

Final Words

This is the final part of my anger series. I started by sharing [my personal history with anger](#) (parts one and two) and [how I overcame anger](#) (part three). Then, I shared a guide on [how you can remove](#)

[anger for life](#) (part four). Last but not least, I wrote a guide on [how to deal with angry family members](#), which is the article you are reading now.

I hope you have found this series helpful; I have truly written it from my heart and soul. Please pass this series along to someone who may find it helpful; nothing gratifies me more than having my work reach out to more people out there. Thank you and I look forward to reading what you have to share. :)