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Abstract

This article defines and describes seven types of anger: natural, adapted, responsive, rebellious, racket, Pig Parent, and Parent anger. The disowned aspects of the self behind some of these forms of angers are explored, and interventions for treating inappropriate or pathological anger are presented. This article describes different types of anger expressed by individuals in different ego states. The discounted aspects of the self sometimes associated with these forms of anger, and practical interventions for managing and expressing anger and/or the disowned self.

Natural Anger (healthy)

The most primitive type of anger is biological or natural anger. It is expressed by the Natural Child when the individual feels invaded or abandoned, whether as an infant, an older child, or an adult. This organismic response is a reaction to pain, for example, when one is accidentally stuck with a pin or stepped on. The body reacts without thinking: Pain experienced, angry response expressed. This anger is also a reaction to something being taken away, such as a breast from a hungry baby, some object of value that is stolen from an older child, or a mate or loved one that an adult loses. This angry response is natural, healthy, and part of the survival instinct.

Adaptations and Anger

Infants and toddlers, birth to six years old, react strongly with angry tantrums as they define themselves and are socialized by parents or caretakers. How the environment reacts to this natural anger affects the child's decisions about the value, validity, and effectiveness of this natural body response. Children may adapt by developing socially appropriate but effective ways of expressing their anger. On the other hand, if the response to their anger is punishment or isolation, they may learn to discount these body reactions. Individuals who have done the latter often say as adults, "I'm never angry," or "We never argue." The disowned self in this type of person usually involves a third degree issue. Someone who discounts anger at this level—that is, by not feeling or reacting to it—is operating from a severe "I'm not OK" (my body doesn't matter, I don't matter) or a "You're not OK" position (no use in reacting either, nothing will change, or things will get worse).

Treatment for this type of pathology is usually long and slow; it needs to build from a trusting therapeutic relationship to memory release and body work. Adult survivors of childhood abuse often disown their rage and dissociate instead. Between the natural angry feelings and the discounted, dissociated self lie great painful memories in the mind, heart, and body. Much has been written in the literature describing and beating these conditions.

Three additional types of adaptation can develop in response to the appropriate or inappropriate socializing of natural anger. In transaction analysis, we call these adapted anger, rebellious anger, or Pig Parent anger.

Adapted Anger

Adapted anger is natural anger that is interrupted by thinking or fear before it is expressed. It can be healthy and appropriate, as in responsive anger, when anger is interrupted by thinking and then expressed in ways that are socially appropriate but still effective in setting boundaries and making contact with others. Or it can be overadapted based on fear of repercussions that might arise from expressing anger. This latter form of overadapted anger can take many behavioral forms, such as being overly "sweet" or "caretaking" in hopes of not making others angry, which for the person is scary. With this form of adaptation, the energy produced by the natural anger is turned inward, often causing headaches, ulcers, depression, and more serious physical ailments. Outwardly it is expressed through passive behaviors such as withdrawal, incapacitation, or violence, Schlemiel games, and controlling Victim positions: "I'm so sorry I wrecked the car," "I forgot to mail the IRS forms," or "My affair wasn't intended to hurt you."

The discounted self in unhealthy, adapted anger is, of course, the healthy natural self, the real self that can make contact with others, set boundaries, and promote self-preservation. There is a great reservoir of energy that gets discounted by the adaptation. True and honest relationships are almost impossible for this type of person, and authentic contact with others is rare.

Responsive Anger (healthy)

Healthy adapted anger, or responsive anger, on the other hand, can be very effective in setting boundaries and making contact when others are intruding or alienating themselves. This is also a learned process that requires awareness of the natural, spontaneous reactions in oneself, thinking about them, and letting others know about them through clear statements: "I am angry at you because you accepted an invitation for me without checking with me," or "I get very angry when you ignore me." This type of adapted and responsive anger is essential in caring relationships.

People who do not care anymore do not confront.



OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.

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