



## THERE'S NO SHAME IN BEING AN ANGRY PERSON, ARGUES ARIEL LEVÉ. ANGER IS VALUABLE, SO WHY NOT EMBRACE IT?

There is a common misconception about anger. People, especially Brits, tend to think getting angry means losing one's temper and shouting. I've always thought of that as communicating. Real anger is never that overt. Real anger — the deep, dark, seething rage that derails lives, poisons relationships — simmers beneath the surface. It's colourless, odourless and, like the toxic gas radon, undetectable. It contaminates silently.

I've never had a problem expressing anger, providing it's about something specific. If I can tell you why I'm angry, it's not the kind of anger you should be worried about. The kind of anger to worry about has built up over the years, like plaque that can't be scraped off. It plays out, over and over, in self-defeating ways. Like not being in healthy relationships. Or feeling I don't deserve to be happy. There is an alchemy to this anger that makes it infinite. Often, it can't be

explained. It's confusing and frustrating to the people who are on the receiving end, because I have insight as to why it's there and yet am unable to change.

As I've grown older, I've become more aware of its roots. There are certain things I will never get over being angry about; the challenge is not to let the residue take over.

So it's not that I've become angrier; it's that the resentments have been there all along, gestating.

Many of my girlfriends feel a similar helplessness when it comes to their anger. They know it has increased, but these feelings get managed, not eliminated. It's never about just one thing. It's the cumulative effect of life being unfair.

Because life hasn't delivered what they expected. Because they've been knocked down and let down, and each time that happens it's harder to get up. But they do. So anger is an armour they wear to protect themselves from future

wounds. Occasionally they become haters. They blame men for having crushed their spirit. But usually that's a fleeting moment. Most don't hate; they're disappointed. They understand that to get by without being angry all the time, they've had to systematically lower their expectations.

Which might be the process of growing up. One by one, expectations get decimated, and when you're sufficiently disillusioned and have come to terms with the fact that things don't work out just because you want them to, when that process is complete, you're an adult.

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Except we don't quite accept it and continue to hold out hope.

One thing we have in common is that our anger is mainly directed within. For some there is drinking, or starving, or overeating, or taking drugs, or casual sex, or co-dependency — anything to numb the pain. Which is why, until the wound is explored and the anger is confronted, people who are driven

to self-destruct won't stray from that path. No job or man or amount of money will quell the anger. It is, as they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, "an inside job".

So why should anger be something to be afraid of? If it's not a catalyst for abusive behaviour — emotionally or physically — it can be constructive and useful.

Anger is a facet of who I am. It does not define me. I've never felt ashamed of being an angry person. I've embraced it, because anger is valuable. The angriest people I know are also the funniest. Anger focuses and spurs action; it fosters

ambition. I don't envy people who don't get angry or feel anger — I'm incredulous. How is that possible? It's one thing not to raise your voice or be rude, but not to feel angry — that's an entire symphony of emotions locked away, not being played. I went out with someone once who said: "I was never an angry person until I met you." I always took that as a compliment ■