

## Ep #206: Healthy Anger



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Victoria Albina, NP, MPH**

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This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine Expert, and life coach, Victoria Albina. I'll show you how to get unstuck, drop the anxiety, perfectionism, and codependency so you can live from your beautiful heart. Welcome, my love; let's get started.

Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. You know, it's been coming up a lot, over on the Anchored community, as the Anchored sailors learn to feel their feelings in their bodies. Learn how to connect with and bring healing to their inner children. Process their past and present lived experiences as folks with emotional outsourcing habits; anger, rage, feeling mad. Pissed off about so many things in their lives, in their pasts.

While simultaneously believing in mind, body, and nervous system that it's not okay to feel these emotions. And way less okay to express them because of our socialization and conditioning. Especially for those of us socialized as women, generally speaking. And those of us socialized as men in emotionally outsourcing households or homes where anger was not managed in a loving way.

My beauties, my perfect tender sweet ravioli, my perfect little dumplings, we really, really need to talk about it because so many of us are just bottling up our anger. Shoving it down. Unwittingly storing it in our bodies and our nervous systems as though that would maybe make it all go away.

And we're doing that because A-number one, the only story most of us have about anger is that it's bad, and dangerous and bad. Especially for women. Especially if anger was not expressed in healthy ways by our caregivers growing up.

Also, because B-number two, most of us don't have tools for managing anger other than shoving it down and letting it then come out sideways when we least expect it.

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And C-number three, because the common advice on how to manage or experience anger, aka smashing something or screaming to “let it out,” is not actually helpful or useful to the nervous system.

Other tools are desperately needed. Which, of course, you know, the show is all about remedies. All about giving you actionable tools you can start using today. So we'll be ending with some of those remedies. And we'll be circling back in another show soon enough to give you a whole boatload more.

My darling, there is a lot, an awful lot, but needs unpacked around anger. And today, we're going to do the mile-high view on it, or this would be a 6,000-hour show.

And if you are ready to work on how you feel, manage and express your own anger and how you react and respond to other people's anger or frustration, or disapproval, I want to encourage you to join us in Anchored, my six-month program. So I can coach you on your specific individual relationship to anger. And so you can find more supportive ways of relating to this vital and protective energy and emotion.

Again, I'll be providing remedies here today; you know I always do. And you deserve to have loving space held for your own experience with anger. You deserve to get coached on it and to talk about it in a loving and safe container with others who truly get it. Who get you, who get the lived experience of growing up in emotional outsourcing, and who feel the same effects on them and their lives as adults.

This is what Anchored offers, that safer place to land. So head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/anchored](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/anchored) to learn more. Apply now to join us in the next cohort.

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So let's dive in. Especially for those of us who are raised as girls and women, who identify with having codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thinking, which we call emotional outsourcing around here. The idea of healthy anger, from the suggestion that such a thing could even exist, may be radical, to say the least.

Today, we're going to break it down. What do we mean when we talk about healthy anger? What causes us to lose touch with our birthright, to feel and express it? How can we tell the difference between healthy anger and aggression? And how can we reconnect with our healthy anger in an expansive way?

So before we dive in, we're going to do what we do at the start of every coaching call in Anchored, which is to take a little moment to settle into our bodies, to get present. And this is vital because healthy anger is embodied, meaning it lives in our bodies, and comes from our grounded sense of self. It behooves us to be present and to connect with our bodies when we talk and think about anger.

Unless you're driving or mowing the lawn or otherwise unable to, I want to invite you to close your beautiful eyes or simply lower your gaze to take a moment to get present in and with yourself. If you feel so moved, place your hands on your lower belly, and invite breath there. If it feels safe to continue to be present, take a breath in. Long, slow out. Allow yourself to arrive. Take a moment to thank yourself for being here. And when you're ready, flutter open your beautiful eyes.

Doesn't that feel so sweet, so nice to just arrive in and with you? Love it. So now that we are hopefully more grounded and present in our bodies let's talk about what we mean when we talk about healthy anger. So, to me, healthy anger is an adaptive emotion. But it's a really literally vital part of helping us to survive from one day to the next. And it shows up to let us

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know that our boundaries are being crossed or there's something going on that needs to change.

That there is true injustice, inequity, or inequality that doesn't feel right in your body. That isn't aligned with your values, ethics, or integrity. And that fire that comes internally with healthy anger comes from the lower belly, from the second chakra, if you will, and I most certainly will. Because why not, right? *Feminist Wellness*: all the science, all the woo; it's all welcome here.

This area of the body is a place that most people raised as girls have felt and continue to feel pressure to disassociate from, to want to make smaller, to minimize, to even hate. And that specific training to see our lower bellies as a problem matters. Because it makes us strangers or enemies with the place where our healthy anger lives in our bodies.

And this is one of the many reasons why somatic work, tapping into our bodies and connecting with our bodies, is so important. And it's such a big part of what we do in Anchored. When we start to reconnect to our bodies, to love and accept all of the parts of us, including the parts that feel anger, healthy anger, we fear it less and can tap into the wisdom that our whole bodies offer when we meet ourselves in our wholeness.

Before we are trained out of our bodily connection, young people will express healthy anger with no problem. Babies and infants will scream and cry when their needs for food, comfort, and attention are not being met. Toddlers are notorious for hitting when they don't get what they want or need.

And while I'm not here to say that it's easy for parents to deal with this anger, that we shouldn't teach kids pro-social behaviors and not to hit to express yourself. It is instructive for us, as adults, to look at little kids to see

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what anger can look like from young people who aren't so wrapped up in emotionally outsourcing behavior quite yet.

As little kids, we know how to express protective anger until we're taught not to do so. As we grow up, we're taught that our big feelings upset others and that our anger makes other people feel uncomfortable or sad or mad themselves; we're causing their feelings, right? Big sigh to that.

Many of us learn that our survival depends on keeping our cool and not letting our anger out, which is particularly true for folks living in bodies marginalized by oppressive systems, namely black folks and other people of color, trans folks, undocumented folks, on and on.

And if we're raised as girls, or living as women, this patriarchal people-pleasing training not to voice our anger can mean staying quiet when someone makes a comment about our appearance or tells a lewd joke. Telling ourselves, it's not such a big deal when someone touches us in a way that doesn't make us feel right.

It can mean talking ourselves out of our righteous anger when we find out that our male colleague, with the same time and job responsibilities and title, gets paid more than us. Or when the lion's share of the emotional and physical labor of a household gets chronically dumped on our shoulders.

Many of us learn, when we are itty-bitty, tiny ones, that allowing our bodies to move into fight, which is when our sympathetic nervous system is activated, is not safe or okay and might disrupt our primary attachment system. Meaning that if we get angry and we show our angry then our caregivers won't attune to us or connect with us. That they will eschew us, abandon us, reject us.

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So our young and brilliant selves make a deal in order to not risk having our caretakers forsake us. To keep the family system intact, we trade in our healthy anger for survival. For the relative safety of significance and connection. Even if it sucks, even if it's painful, it's what we have and know. It's a roof over our heads, food on the table.

Survival wins at a cost to our connection with self and authenticity in the world. While we might stuff it all down and turn away from what we know to be true; our instinct to fight back, that deep knowing that some lines shouldn't be crossed, our core belief that our boundaries are valid. All of that stays with us.

Even when we ignore the sensations that come when things aren't right in our environment, the felt nervous system and bodily or somatic ripples of that negation of self, never actually go away. Instead, after learning that the healthy expression of anger is not okay, that anger, which arises biologically within us, tends to turn inward when it can't be expressed outward. And can lead us to get really, really mean with ourselves.

We come to believe that our instincts, our intuition, are not right. That our nervous system responses, called biological impulses, are not correct because they are not honored or are leading to even more pain. As we're told that our mammalian desire to scream or hit or tell them they're wrong, whatever it may be, is what's actually wrong.

So what's a nervous system and an inner child to do if these stories live within you? If you can't fight or flight, then the only option is to freeze. To go into dorsal vagal in the nervous system and to shut ourselves down to ourselves, to our truth, to our bodies, to our feelings.

And in our minds, we make ourselves the problem and blame ourselves more and more for having human emotions, for being angry. Unwittingly gathering more evidence for the narrative that our instincts are wrong. And

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this painful, harmful pattern will continue on, ad nauseam, until we pause to recognize that feeling and expressing healthy anger is, in fact, our birthright.

Reconnecting with our sacred, healthy anger means connecting with our truth, with our trust in ourselves. And both come from anchoring ourselves in our minds, our bodies, and strengthens our ability to be at home in our minds and our bodies. To be at peace with ourselves and the world.

We need to remember that the amygdala, the fear center in the brain and the nervous system, they never forget. When your body gets activated into fight-or-flight, sympathetic, full of adrenaline, and wants to react, shutting it up just drives that incomplete desire to punch or scream.

All that energy gets driven deeper into your body. And there, it lives within you, seeking release, which can look like anxiety, fear of anger, and stress. And impacts our health, from our thyroid to our digestion to our menstruation or reproductive health.

Unreleased, unprocessed anger hurts us in deep ways. And you deserve the space to let it out, so it no longer hurts you. And from knowing that when our anger is lovingly expressed, the goal isn't to hurt anyone; it's to stop the cycles of hurt that so many of us have and continue to live in. That is when we can find peace in letting ourselves have our feeling.

And to do so, we have to understand that healthy anger is the anger born in response to injustice. And when we feel that anger and express it with love, care, compassion, and curiosity, we move the world closer and closer to justice. We support our own boundary, which is, after all, resentment prevention. In time we learn to stand up for ourselves and for those who don't have the same privileges and capacities that we do.



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What's vital to note is that this healthy anger is different from aggression, which can be mean, like, super mean. While healthy anger is direct, calm, quiet, measured, and protective. Sacred, healthy anger is embodied and is felt deep within our form as a solid state.

While aggression is a flailing outward, it strikes. While healthy anger holds still. Healthy anger is not shit-talking. It's not making someone else the villain. It's not complaining, trying to get an ally in how angry you are. It's not attacking or lashing out. It's not calling names. All of that is aggression.

And it's not what we're here for. With the caveat, of course, if you're under actual physical assault or danger, please aggress and aggress hard. Loving, sacred anger is all about telling the truth about what we see and feel in the world. The injustices in our personal lives and in the world writ large. What we are not okay with and won't stand idly by for.

When we blame, shame, guilt, or violate someone else's boundaries in an attempt to be heard, seen, validated, told we're right, told our feelings are right, we have moved from healthy anger to unhealthy anger; aggression.

You know how I'm constantly asking you your reason why for doing anything and everything? That applies here, too. Before you speak or respond, check your nervous system state. Make sure you're in ventral vagal. And then, ask yourself why you want to say whatever you want to say, and make sure you like that reason; as a loving, gentle way to run a check to see if you're coming from healthy anger or someplace else.

Let's look at an example. Let's say a family member makes an insensitive comment about how you identify in the world, for maybe the majillionth time. In this example, healthy anger might say, "We have talked about this. I'm not going through a phase. This is a part of my identity, and it's important to me. I'm feeling angry that you're not respecting me and my clear request and boundary."

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And then, having calmly made that statement, perhaps you might choose to walk away and get some space. That exchange is totally self-focused in the most healthy and helpful way. You are stating your position, explaining how you feel, and, if need be, taking space to take care of yourself and to not slip into aggression.

You are checking yourself before you wreck yourself, to quote a poet. You may have to use a stern voice for some folks to hear you. What my sister calls her “teacher voice,” and others might not like it. But when you are really moving from alignment with your heart, if you're really speaking to your own feelings, your own emotions, and the harm you are experiencing, you haven't done or said anything out of line.

You are expressing yourself from healthy anger. And it is a loving choice for you and the people in your world. Instead of turning to aggression, which we'll get to in a moment, or choking it down and building up the kind of resentment that will have you looking like Vesuvius soon enough, exploding lava all over every villager in your path.

Aggression, in contrast to healthy anger, seeks to harm the other person for our hurts. It's an emotionally immature tit-for-tat energy that says, “I'm going to harm you since you just harmed me.” Aggression is attacking. Moving towards others with our energy and feelings versus staying centered and grounded in ourselves. Which we learn how to do through somatic or body-based practices, like what we do in Anchored each and every day.

When we are in aggression, we don't address the real issue. We don't process our feelings or give our nervous system the chance to tap into sympathetic fight for just enough to work through it in a restorative way. Instead, we attack others and ourselves. We might call that family member a mean name, raise our voices, scream at the top of our lungs, or even feel moved to hit them or break something or act out of our integrity.

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That is aggression talking. And we see this in the media and movies and, for many of us, in our households of origin. This can look like projecting onto others, name-calling, insulting, blaming, shaming, shutting down, blocking feelings, fearing feelings, violence, abuse, control, passive aggression, stonewalling, silent treatment, screaming, breaking things, and on and on.

And when this is what was modeled, this is what we come to believe is right and normal, what adults do, and it continues to harm us and our relationships. It keeps us in lockstep with emotional outsourcing because we are co-dependent on the other person and their reaction. Their response to our big feelings.

Instead of knowing and remembering that we can manage our emotions within our bodies, we can honor our inner children, and we can regulate our nervous systems, so we never have to react from sympathetic, from fight-or-flight. Instead, we can give that energetic within us the space it needs to be released and can come back into conversation and relating from ventral vagal, safe and social, for all of us.

Thankfully, my beauties, we are not locked into these responses just because we've had them in the past, just because they were the blueprint we were given in childhood. We can make the effort and put in the work to question our aggressive habits and can start to strengthen our connection to our healthy anger instead. So how do we shift all of this?

Well, first, we need to see it. We need to be our own witness; to step into mindfulness and awareness. And so I'll invite you to put pen to paper and to ask yourself, where are you repressing? Denying? Or self-abandoning? Like we talked about in Episodes 163 and 164. Where in your body are you holding tension? Not letting yourself feel your feelings in your body? Are you living from the neck up, like we talk about so much on the show?

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What energy arises in your body when you feel anger? And what do you do with it? Recognizing the places where you are hurt, your wounding, the parts of you that have been shut down or hidden away, the ways you're not living in your full truth, is the number one place to start.

When we acknowledge those hurts through thought work, somatic work, meditation, breath work, reflection, and loving community, we start to understand ourselves and our reactions more instead of getting into that painful cycle of wondering what's wrong with us when we lash out.

Instead, we can pause. Breathe and bring in the three C's; compassion, curiosity, and care. We can remember what we learned way back in Episodes 113 and 133. Of course, you did. And, of course, they did. And can say, "Of course, I yell at other drivers in traffic. That's what my dad always did in the car because he didn't know how to communicate his anger towards his co-parent in a healthy way.

So instead, he bottled it all up inside himself, and it came out sideways." Because a nervous system will always seek energetic resolution, that's what they do. So, "Of course, I do that. And I'm not going to beat myself up for it. Instead, I'm going to take responsibility for the fact that I'm an adult. And I have so many more skills and tools to support myself and regulate my nervous system. I don't want to scream and yell. I can learn to do things differently."

And so we get to do the work to increase or widen what the literature calls the "window of tolerance" in our nervous system, which I prefer to call our "window of capacity" or our "window of bodily dignity." Which is our ability to name, map, and manage our nervous system state.

To regulate ourselves so that we can expand and grow our capacity, our ability, to tune into and experience all of our feelings. And specifically, anger. Without feeling overwhelmed by it. Becoming aware of it instead and

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experiencing it with befriending energy before it turns into the sort of aggression that harms us and those around it.

Because anger truly is our friend. It's that little flag on the plain that's saying, "Hey babe, something's not right here." And we get to begin to see it as that. As the clarion call, that change needs made. That something's not right instead of something to fear or push away.

With that said, it is natural and normal for anger to evoke fear or worry within us, particularly as emotional outsourcers. Because remember, the way we define codependent thinking here is chronically and habitually sourcing our sense of self-worth and validation from everyone and everything outside of ourselves instead of from within.

And so, if we express anger, and people don't like it, then they won't like us. And that strikes deep fear into our tenderoni hearts until we do the work for it not to. We can also fear that our anger will overtake or overcome us and that it will cause harm. Know that that, too, is normal.

The work here is to bring ourselves back to wholeness. To remind ourselves that it's natural to fear anger. It does not mean that something has gone wrong, but rather that we're humans feeling a feeling. It doesn't mean we're wrong or bad, inherently broken or out of control. And while we might feel that way, we might feel out of control in a given moment; aah, what that anger really means is that we need more skills.

We need to take a moment to ground, to regulate our nervous systems back to ventral vagal, before we go all sympathetic, fight-or-flight Hulk on the people we love and strangers on the bus, too. It also is a reminder for us to take a look at our lives and to ask, where am I not attending to me? We'll be getting into that on another episode about anger soon enough because it's a really vital question.

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I want you to know that if you start working on really feeling and sharing your healthy anger, when you start to make this change towards living a more emotionally authentic life, some people won't like it. I say this about people-pleasing all the time, when we stop people-pleasing, people will not be pleased.

The amazing psychologist Harriet Lerner calls this “change back demands.” People will want you to be how you always were. To not be an autonomous human. And it can sound like, “You're not who you used to be. You're not being nice. You're hurting us with your feelings. You're being mean. So change back to being a doormat I can walk all over.”

In some situations, others will feel hurt to hear how you feel, especially if they aren't used to talking about or feeling their own emotions. Or they aren't used to having nuanced conversations about feelings. And that can sound like, “You can't possibly be mad at us. We're your family. We did the best we could.”

And the reminder here is that other people are indeed welcome to their thoughts and feelings, as you are welcome to yours. They are welcome to believe that they know what your role is. That's all okay. Others get to think and feel what they think and feel. And you get to work to broaden your window of bodily dignity, to say, “I believe in me, my worth, my authenticity. My birthright to own who I am and what matters to me.”

And stating, “I am angry. It's vital to my growth, to my expansion. So here is my truth, with gentleness, compassion, and care for all involved towards the best and highest good.” Healing happens when we come home to ourselves. I want to close this out with another quote from the goddess who is Harriet Lerner. She goes on to say, “Anger is a tool for change when it challenges us to become more of an expert on the self and less of an expert on others.” So good.

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Healing happens when we come home to ourselves. And we learn how to anchor ourselves in ourselves. To learn how to trust ourselves. To have our own backs and to show up for ourselves, both internally and in the world, day by day, minute by minute. So tune into all of you, including your healthy anger.

Let it have a voice and show it the respect it deserves. It's there to keep you safe. And I want to invite you to truly thank it for that. If you're struggling to give voice to your healthy anger... If you find yourself in aggression more than you'd like to... If you want support to finally step into being the version of you, you know is within you. Just hidden away under harmful conditioning, socialization, and the codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing that you were taught as a kiddo...

I want to invite you to join us in Anchored. The next group is filling up fast. If you've been listening to the show, coming to my webinars, my workshops. If you've been enjoying and growing from everything I teach, I want to invite you to come work with me. To get my one-on-one support and the loving care of this beloved community of folks who truly get it. Who truly understand you and where you're coming from because we're all coming from the same place.

So you can start to regulate your nervous system. To live not just from the neck up but fully embodied in your human experience. If you're ready to ditch the old habits, the old anxiety, and the old stress and to live with joy, passion, peace, and love for yourself and others, anchored is what you've been waiting for.

It's the culmination of my 20+ years in health and wellness and my own experience overcoming my own emotional outsourcing. And I'm so excited to share it with you. [VictoriaAlbina.com/anchored](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/anchored) is where you can learn more and can apply now. Take a moment, and fill out the form; why not? It's free. It takes like six minutes.

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And the questions are really thought-provoking. I hear that a lot. I really learned a lot about myself when I filled out the form; do it. And then, my team will be in touch and might just offer you a call with me where I can coach you, tell you more about the program, and connect heart-to-heart the way we do.

Alright, my beauty. Speaking of let's do what we do, let's do what we do. A gentle hand on your heart, should you feel so moved. And remember, you are safe. You are held. You are loved. And, when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty. I'll talk to you soon.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance, so you can live life with intention, without the anxiety, overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive, intimate group-coaching program. So, head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/masterclass](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there; it's gonna be a good one!