



# Debbie Smith Therapy

## Chartered Counselling Psychologist

### Anger

Anger is a basic emotion that has allowed us to survive as a species. When a baby screams because it is hungry, too cold or too hot, it is displaying its raw anger. Anger is the emotion of not having our needs met. We are programmed with the ability to express our anger from birth — and then it gets complicated.

Although it is a healthy, normal emotion it is probably also the most complex. It can be a creative force for change or to right an injustice. Societies and families hold different views on how it can be used, and by whom. But if its poorly managed anger can be destructive, and can turn to aggression.

In the opposite instance, if anger cannot be expressed appropriately it can lead to physical problems, depression and anxiety and can cause relationships to wither. Anger, like all the emotions, involves physiological and chemical changes in the body. Heart rates and adrenalin levels are affected as the body experiences anger. For some people these surges can become addictive and destructive. There is a fine line between acknowledging anger and venting it until it is out of control.

Symptoms of anger problems;

- Explosive outbursts which cannot be controlled
- Domestic violence and controlling behaviour
- Rages when driving
- Depression or anxiety may indicate introverted anger
- Alcohol or drug dependence may cover an anger problem

### Causes

There are many reasons why people are unable to control their anger. Often it is a family pattern that has never been questioned. In some families, women are not allowed to express anger. In others, being angry is unacceptable and a sign of failure for all. Tiredness, stress, pain and hormonal imbalances can all contribute to the problem. For men, it can be low self-esteem or fear of failure.

We all have 'hooks' or triggers for our anger. For example, it could be a person pushing in front of a queue or the feeling that you are being ignored. Understanding what these hooks are, and re-examining our thoughts around them, can be among the first steps to managing anger.

Seeing Deborah for counselling can help by making you examine the hooks for your anger. By understanding the anger, by reassessing some of the unhelpful beliefs, and by understanding how anger affects your close relationships, you can begin to take responsibility for your own arousal of anger. As a result it is possible to resolve the issues causing it, and finally feel more in control.