

Raven Voices

Anger, Safety, & Healing: A Conversation with Healing Professionals

Featuring Elena Dominguez, Dr. Jake Hyde, Christina Lafferty-Neal, Arielle Neal, and Tia Norman

Elena Dominguez: My name is Elena Dominguez and I am a somatic teacher, which basically means I help people befriend their bodies, and befriend their nervous systems, and learn how to navigate different nervous system states. So I'm particularly interested in helping people to get out of kind of the chronic fight or flight state that most people get stuck in which anger is a big part of.

Christiana Lafferty-Neal: I'm Christina Lafferty Neil. I'm a licensed mental health therapist in Nashville, Tennessee. I work with adults who are experiencing high amounts of anxiety, and I learned to help them get back into their body, learn about their nervous systems, and create healthy relationships. I also do somatic and attachment-focused trauma work through EMDR.

Arielle Neal: And I'm Arielle Neal. I am a social worker and a coach. And along with Christina, we teach a course on how to get unstuck from those repeating behavior patterns that keep you from going after what you most want in life. And so we do that using a combination of the enneagram, where we're leveraging it as a tool for growth, and teaching about nervous system regulation.

Jake Hyde: My name is Dr. Jake Hyde. I am a doctor of chiropractic medicine. My main interests are in health education, but I have specialties in the functional movement of the body as well as nutrition and energy psychology.

Tia Norman: So my name is Tia Norman. And right now the way that I show up in the world and serve is through guiding people through spiritual practice and as a pastor. What I'm really, really passionate about and fascinated by is the contemplative dimension of the gospel. So contemplative spirituality, mysticism, and the practices that come along with it are really like things that I feel very intrigued by and passionate about and intentionally share with others.

What is Anger Really For?

Elena: Yeah, anger is such, such a tricky emotion, probably the most tricky emotion to befriend. And anger really is meant to help us to defend ourselves or to help empower ourselves to create boundaries. But I think because it's such a powerful surge of energy, and people are so disconnected from their body, it just feels for most people very uncomfortable. And like, what do I do with this? And how do I not basically like spew off onto people, which is how many people deal with it. They just react and do a reactive expression of that energy. And then a lot of people also push down and clamp it down.

Arielle: I think it's always helpful. I think it's like emotions, anger, being one of them as really psychological things. But that misses the fact that emotions are primarily based on like the

physiology of our body. And that we are mammals who have evolved over hundreds of millions of years. And I think that can be really helpful, particularly to the people that we work with, in a kind of de-personalizing and in a helpful way what function and purpose anger is serving for us.

Christina: Yeah, anger is this energy within us that is a protective response that gets activated in our nervous system when we are picking up or perceiving on any threat or danger to our sense of survival or our sense of connectedness and belonging. And so it is this really big, mobilizing energy that helps us get back into a sense of safety and connectedness both within ourselves, but within our communities, and in our relationships, too. So it's a really activating emotion, which can sometimes feel too overwhelming for people, but it's a very human and very normal and needed response by our body's most natural design.

Arielle: Yeah, and it really does affect our body. I mean it creates this whole chain of physiological changes, releasing stress hormones, adrenaline, all of those things to help us out. It serves a function, it's there for a reason. And when we don't allow ourselves to experience that, there is a loss there for us.

Elena: My take always on emotions is how can we understand it? What is it for? And how can we get back to really the true essence of it? The way that I see it, the view that I see it is through the nervous system. And when you have an imbalanced nervous system, which most people do, like I said, most people have a chronic fight or flight nervous system. And you can think of the nervous system like a muscle. And basically, if we have an overinflated, sympathetic, or fight or flight nervous system, the other side is like this really weak muscle that doesn't engage very easily. So what happens is people start to get angry and then fight or flight just starts to take over and you stop being able to be rational. And you just go into like a surge of energy. So I try to help people learn how to strengthen the other part of the nervous system, which is called the parasympathetic, but specifically the Vagus nerve. And the Vagus nerve acts as a braking system to that, zero to 100 thing that happens when people start to feel angry.

Christina: So yeah, I mean, we're not really taught the tools that honor that emotion or give it the space that it needs to be acknowledged or validated. And it can really be healing when you do have that experience of validation and understanding from somebody else. When you're experiencing that I see you, I hear you, you matter to me, and what you're feeling is valid, even if it's not always rational. I see you, I hear you, you matter to me. And that's valid.

Jake: So anger is useful in such that it can be energizing. So if there's some injustice in the world, some wrongdoing, anger can serve the purpose of energizing you to stand up and take some sort of action. The problem with anger comes from, like, long after the initial moments, like the awakening to a problem, or like ... the best word for it would be injustice. You waken to it, then the goal is to move on and level up in consciousness towards something like courage, where you can take more appropriate action. So the goal of anger is allowing yourself to experience and understand it in order to kind of point yourself somewhere, or just to get off the couch or something like that. Just to kind of shock yourself out of life. But then, once the energy, once like that transformation is taking place, then anger is, really no longer serving a purpose, if you want to be constructive with whatever change you're aiming to make. So then you have to move beyond that. And so the problem with anger lies within being stuck in it.

Tia: So my understanding of anger is that anger is an energy. And what it is helping us to see are the things that we're passionate about. Obviously, if we didn't care, then it wouldn't stir that feeling inside of us. And anger also points us to things that that may need our attention. So it's helping us to move our attention and showing us something that we would like to see changed either about ourselves or in the world.

How I've witnessed anger within the work that I do, and within myself, it is that emotion that can really kind of take us out of the ground of our being or our centeredness. So it almost moves us outside of ourselves, so to speak. And it's funny because I can recall times where on Sundays we'll be having a conversation and somebody will start to talk about like an experience that they had at work. And they'll even start with saying like, "I'm over it, like it's over." But then as they continue to tell the story, you can just see it like building up and then like building up, building up, and then their volume's getting louder. You know, their body language is getting more intense, and then you kind of ask a question like, "Okay, well, are we really? Like, are there some other things that we need to look at and see within this? Because it seems like right now, you're telling the story, you know, you're getting upset." So, yeah, that's kind of how I've witnessed it.

Jake: So an issue that we see a lot with anger is that, interestingly enough, the clinical research shows anger is one of the emotions that we really know, pretty definitively, can cause serious health issues, primarily, things like heart disease. If the majority of your life is operating in lower consciousness levels. So we're talking, the basics would be shame, guilt, apathy, unforgiveness, fear, things like that. So, if you're living in those consciousness states, anger can be a useful place of growth and change. But you're not supposed to stay there for very long, or things are going start to fall apart, not just your body, but ultimately, relationships, careers, finances, who knows what's going to take the brunt of that?

Tia: I think the big thing to point out is that, especially as someone who is introducing spiritual practices to community, is that I'm only able to share this in this way because I have and continue to sit with my own anger. So I am in no position to help others see if I haven't done the work, so to speak, or continue to do the work myself. So anything that I share about anger is because it has been a dear friend of mine.

The Many Faces of Anger

Jake: There are like different facets to something. So just like, if you're looking at a sculpture, especially like modern art or something contemporary, it's like, you're going get something different from it, depending on where you're standing. And it's all the same essence, but like, different point of view.

Elena: Yeah, the many different faces of anger or the way that anger shows up for us. You know, it's going to be in large part, how we were raised, how we were shown to express anger or not to express anger., and, of course, and then your own personal personality. So many people are raised that anger is bad. That anger, shouldn't be acted upon or you should figure that out in your own quiet room, go away in your room timeout. And what happens is that most people

end up just not processing that anger. And specifically, what I mean, like in the body, what I mean is not processing the stress hormones that come with that anger. So like I said, you have that flood of stress hormones going on with anger. But when you say, "Well, I can't do anything with this. And I'm just going to kind of stuff it down." What happens for people is then you basically are storing triggers, you're storing those stress hormones, which means that something small then can now set you off.

Tia: I think that it's important to note that there is a big difference between expressing anger, and experiencing anger. A lot of what we learn about expressing anger is like, it must be disruptive, and it must erupt. And, like we don't realize that we can choose how to express our anger, which then, to me, is the invitation to experience it. And experiencing it is allowing ourselves to be with the emotion fully, to welcome it, to notice how we feel, and in doing that, we put ourselves in a position to make decisions and to discern how we want to respond to the anger. So expressing anger could almost be, when done unconsciously, yes, it could be hurtful and it could be dangerous if it's taking us to the idea that we need revenge. Well, then we're just all beating each other up and everybody's always angry. So we're just keeping the energy in this perpetual cycle.

But if we can bring some awareness to our experience of anger, then we're able to make decisions that give a more holistic kind of perspective of, "Okay, well, I'm angry. What is it that I need to do?" Do I need to punch somebody in the face? The answer may be yes, I don't know. But you know, you're able to kind of look at it from these different perspectives. And usually when we do that, and we make decisions that are grounded from that place, even if they are hard decisions, and even if, you know, bad is subjective in this, so to speak, because even if it's unpleasant, or doesn't feel well, we can trust that, we have done our best to move consciously through the experience. So if we can look at it as instead of being good or bad, and just look at it as information, like I'm angry, and this is information that I have. And so what do I want to do now that I have this information?

Christina: Being able to understand your own nervous system and your instincts and how they are protective and in favor of you doing well and surviving, and having the relationships that you desire and this relationship to yourself that you desire is so needed. You know, a lot of times when you're taught to ignore these emotions or aren't given the space to fully express that or feel validated in them, quite literally, it shows up as a fight response, it's fight energy. Our body tenses up, we become shaky, you might become really warm, your heartbeats going to start going really fast. and what's happening is your sympathetic nervous system is getting activated, which is from the base of your brain to the middle of your back, and that sends mobilizing energy into your extremities. So you probably likely to tense up, maybe hold your breath, tighten your jaw, your brow becomes furrowed. So there's lots of signals that go on in your body., but the smallest things of you know being witnessed to yourself having safe witnesses to be there with you, creating a felt sense of safety and connection, your own body through compassionate, self-holding, or containing exercises. Or even being able to slow your breathing down all the way down into your belly and expanding and making room for that, saying I welcome you, all parts of me belong here, right now, I can handle this, and I'm listening to you. It's like huge work, we're just not taught this stuff. And even into adulthood, it's totally possible to learn this stuff little by little over time. But it can be contained, it can be held, and it will not

kick, you know, with more safe experiences with that your body learns that this will not overwhelm you, this will not harm you. It's safe to express and there are people who do want to support you in that.

Tia: Something that has been helpful to me is ... I use that the description of like, being outside of myself or pulling myself off-center or allowing myself to be moved off-center. So that too kind of evaluate where we are on this under this broad umbrella of anger. I find it helpful to return to myself. And so like literally, where is this feeling showing up in my body? So if we were to ask a question like, where does rage live in your body? Or where does resentment live in your body? Like for me, resentment often starts in my head. Like I just keep playing this story over and over again about what was done and what should have happened. And so it just starts to kind of ruminate in my head. So spiritual practices help because it helps us have that awareness and then engage with ways to let the energy pass, which doesn't mean that you push your feeling away. You befriend it, it's a way to welcome it as a way to let it go, which is very counter-intuitive.

Arielle: I feel like resentment has physiologically or emotionally a bit of a less charged feeling than anger. And I kind of tend to think of resentment as if anger has gone unexpressed. So if you didn't give yourself that opportunity to feel those feelings of anger, it can morph into a kind of a lower grade feeling of resentment. Resentment really tends to carry that clue of some unfairness or injustice has happened. And I think it is a great clue when you notice that you are feeling resentment, it can help you to prompt a question of what has gone unexpressed. And maybe that is that you haven't expressed a need, or you haven't clearly communicated the boundaries of a relationship, or a way that someone has hurt you or offended you, or any number of things. So I think resentment is a really good one to kind of clue into, in terms of not staying in that. If you stay in resentment for a really long time, it can lead ... It really takes away your agency as a person, because you're not accepting or showing up for the invitation to do something about the situation. And maybe that something is you can actually change the situation. Sometimes that's not the case and the something that you need to do is to remove yourself from the situation or adjust your relationship to the situation. Any of those things can help to relieve resentment.

And again, I think this comes back to like, what is the function or what is the action that's being asked of us. Any of these emotions ... we're brilliantly designed beings and incredibly, it's just astounding. That's something that I'm always amazed at, and so they don't happen for no reason. And when we can actually take whatever the action is that we're being invited to pay attention to, then the situation can correct. And that may not be explicitly like, you know, the world in our lives become this ideal magical place. But it gives us back some of that agency that otherwise can really morph into those more shut down feelings of depression, or apathy, and things like that.

Elena: Now, the opposite then would be over-expressing anger, overly, and this is more of the rage phase of anger. And, so when somebody starts to feel that sensation, that rising sensation, that heat, that heart pressure, then instead of pushing it down and stuffing it down, they start to yell or hit or punch a wall or do something even worse and more damaging. Right. And so we can see why people are afraid of or think that anger is bad. But this is an extreme of anger. It's

not an honest, balanced anger, so this is the other extreme. And with that, unfortunately, what happens for a lot of people is they actually get addicted to the sensation of anger and rage, and they get addicted to those hormones that get pumped out with that. And so there's this feeling of empowerment. There's this feeling of release. And so then we have what's called rageaholic, or some lesser version of that even. And it's just an imbalanced version of anger. It's somebody who doesn't have what I was talking about that vagal brake or that parasympathetic nervous system to pump the brakes and say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, we don't need to fly off the handle for this situation."

Jake: Emotions like anger, in their essence, in their purest forms, are teachers of life. They are supposed to teach you something about yourself, how the world works, how to better behave, how to make better choices moving forward. And that's true for the really low conscious ones like guilt. Like, if you're feeling guilty, it's like, great, what did you learn? Maybe this behavior wasn't the best thing for me or for my community or family. And then the goal is to not feel guilty. The goal is to move on in gratitude for lessons learned. Anger works the same way. It's like the goal is not to feel angry. The goal is to learn something and then move on in gratitude for understanding something more about yourself.

Elena: Not expressing anger isn't the solution. Because all that's going to do is basically build resentments is kind of the psychological phrase for it. But in the body, it's building stress, and it's building the potential for you to get angry at ridiculous things or irrational things. And so many of us have had that experience of your whole body, experiencing anger, that uplifting energy, that heat, that heart racing type of feeling. But your mind being like, "Oh, why am I, you know, this is kind of a stupid reason for me to get mad at. Why am I doing this?" So it's this huge disconnect between the mind and the body.

Christina: If you've had experiences where I have spoken up, I have tried to practice a boundary or communicate a boundary. I've asked for what I've needed or stated an opinion and I got shut down or dismissed in some way, it might become a learned behavior to stay quiet, to stay small, or agreeable, more palatable, to play nice, and not show these big feelings that might make other people uncomfortable. And when you are working to like keep the peace externally that can cause a war inside. And so if you go all day long with these unexpressed emotions in your body at the end of the day, that can really rise to the surface and create some resentment around the people around you.

Arielle: Maybe to the extent, I'm just thinking of some of the other words that we use like contempt. Contempt feels like an extreme, it's like a loathing. It's a very visceral feeling towards something. So if we think of, you know, we have anger, anger unexpressed goes into resentment at a certain point, and resentment unexpressed can kind of go back into this really charged contempt of just, complete ... You can see, I'm struggling even for the language of this. So this is something that as a whole our society could use more practice with.

Christina: It can feel really hard to contain or hard to express. So it can come out as rage, maybe a lower tone of that can be bitterness, just being really short and snippy with people. But I think the best ally that we can have for expressing and holding and containing our anger in a really healthy way is to have ... to be witness to it. So honoring that and naming that in ourselves, and

also having safe people around us who witnessed that with us and are willing to get uncomfortable.

Jake: I think contempt might come more from anger towards self. You don't like yourself, and you act in a way to try and level the playing field. Like contempt seems to be the most poisonous to me. It's like I don't like myself, I don't want you to like yourself, either. I'm going to treat you with contempt. And that's why I think anger can be helpful in building a relationship, like a romantic relationship where you're growing me angry, and still, like loving to the best of your ability. Contempt is, to me, super unloving. And contempt is trying... Well, is an attempt to get someone to feel shameful, to feel less than.

Arielle: Many times in our culture, we are taught to prioritize the comfort of others, over our own comfort. So when we don't express our anger, it's because we don't want to ruffle anyone's feathers or upset the situation or things like that. And that's absolutely something that many of us learn to do at a young age. What I would highlight, I guess, is that there's still going to be, a bad effect or a consequence of that anger, when it's not expressed, it's just probably going to be internalized for us. And so that can even turn into chronic illness or inflammation. Again, going back to the physiology of this, this shows up, certainly, and you know, how common chronic illness is in America.

Elena: Yeah, definitely, I mean, it's all connected. So when you have a lack of health, everything's going to be involved. Because the body is really just a mirror for our mind and vice versa. We're just constantly mirroring ourselves. And the more connected we are, the more integrated we are, the healthier we are. So with anger, specifically, it's really like I said, it really affects the heart. And the stress hormones are just really taxing on the heart. And so heart disease is hugely connected to anger. So hypertension, these types of things that basically are taxing the heart is something that you see with anger, with chronic anger, like chronic rage, but also the chronic resentments. So the people who might even say, "Well, I'm not an angry person, I don't get angry," also have hypertension. And what is that, you know, well, actually, you think you don't have anger, but if you're a human being on this planet, you do have anger and it's affecting all of our hearts and if we don't have a way to healthily express it, it's going to definitely impact the physical body.

Arielle: And I think there's also a distinction to make between feeling or expressing anger versus acting or behaving on that anger. And so say saying that anger is okay and it's healthy to experience does not mean that you need to go rage against another human being or hurt another human being, that's not excusable. Often, that will happen in some sideways way, if you don't allow yourself to express the anger and feel those feelings in your body. Allow yourself to do that, whether it is just with yourself or with someone who is safe. That is going to help you to not later down the line kind of blow up or act in a way that isn't aligned with how you want to move through the world at a later date.

Christina: Or shut down completely and become checked out and in doubt possibly depressed or kind of separated from reality, which is another form of survival mode. Which if you've lived in that place for a long time, and that shut down collapsed, survival mode, this is where chronic illness can come in because our vagus nerve and our vital organs start to constrict and reserve

energy. And essentially, like other mammals in the wild, it's our version of rolling over and playing dead because the world is too overwhelming, it's too much. I need to ride this threat out in order to survive. And so that can be really hard on the body if you don't have the tools or the awareness to get back into your safe and social engagement system.

Honest Anger

Elena: Yeah, so I, what I talk about is honest anger, or what I call honest anger. And what we're trying to get to, like I said, there's resentment, and then there's rage, and then there's a middle ground. And where you want to get to is basically has a lot to do with, like I said, balancing the nervous system. Both rage and resentment, or just a lot of stress-energy, or a lot of anger energy, however it's expressed or not expressed, comes mostly from the idea that you're not safe and that you need to protect yourself. And kind of walking around, always thinking that... you may be thinking in your head or just feeling in your body, that you need to be a certain way or whatever. So this is kind of our mind trap in our society.

And so until people look at the fact that, okay, I'm just carrying around stress all the time. Until we look at that, we just basically have unconscious fear all the time, which just makes extra anger. So that's one thing to do is to take a look at how may you be creating extra anger in your life that doesn't even really need to be there. And so often going through what are the little things that kind of cause flare-up anger for you. For a lot of people, it'll be driving, or conversations with people and just kind of deconstructing those things. "Am I safe? Am I safe, when someone cuts me off or say, someone's driving too slow? Am I safe and how can I remind my body that this actually isn't a situation where I need to fight anyone?" Because that's what those stress hormones are literally meant to help you fight someone. So this is an internal conversation that you have to start to have. And you start to say, Okay, how can I come down off of that ledge a little bit and just start to think about my life a little bit differently.

Christina: And part of doing that to get out unstuck out of that shutdown collapse mode. And to begin, mobilizing back into your life and back into your body is that you do have to move through that sympathetic part of your nervous system where you might feel some anger, you might feel some grief. And for some people, they don't have the skills to process that or hold that or the support for that. It can feel like too, too much too soon again, and they go right back into shutdown collapse mode.

Elena: Anger, once it starts tends to be this zero to 100 thing that happens to people. And they don't even have the chance to say, "Am I safe?" because their body just says I'm not safe. They cut me off. I'm like, you know, and they start to go off the handle. So you know, so the expression goes. So I work with people to help develop the vagal brake. So the vagus nerve is the longest cranial nerve that just winds through our throat, our heart, and all of our organs, that is really there to help us relax. And when we engage it to engage a sense of safety, engage a sense of groundedness, and this is something that we really aren't taught how to engage this nerve. Actually, in our society, we're actually ... a lot of things are away from it. So one of the things is a lot of like cuddling or snuggling when you're little and then also, when you're big. Slow eating, so relaxing and eating slowly. In our culture, it's like, get food and eat while I'm driving. So we're doing the opposite most of the time. Just gentle, peaceful conversation with

people where there's no one-upmanship going on, that's very important for the vagus nerve and humming and singing. So this is where we can look back to a lot of ancient cultures, and traditions, and religions where there's so much humming and chanting and singing. And what they're doing is toning their vagus nerve, and creating a place of internal safety and internal refuge.

Christina: If you've got or lived experiences or memories that are held in the middle part of your brain that says, if you speak up, or if you ask for what you need, or if you're uncomfortable, and you state that, and you have a history where somebody has minimized that, maybe made you feel embarrassed for it not believed you when you said that or said, that doesn't make sense, that's irrational, just calm down, just go over it. Go take a break, go walk. You know, that can separate you from your instincts, which can say that it's not safe to trust that, I know what I feel, I don't know what's best, this is going to be too ... I don't know. It can create this feeling of like, I'm out of control, or I'm untethered here, and I don't have the space, to hold this. And that can feel unsafe. But I think a lot of the work I'm doing this is learning the difference between uncomfortable and unsafe and distinguishing, if my smoke alarm is going off in the home of my body, is this really like fight or flight danger happening here? Do I need to get out? Or is this really just a knock at the door and an invitation to listen to what's going on inside? So people talk about anger can be like this expression, or like a secondary emotion to other things going on below the surface, like feeling hurt, lonely, sad, going through grief, shame, guilt.

And I think on some level, that's true, it can be a secondary or more easily ... an expression that's easier to show because it keeps people at distance maybe helps keep you safe from your most vulnerable parts. But I also think it's a proper emotion in and of itself that because we're just complex people. Right. And we can hold multitudes of things at once. And so I think you can hold, both grief and anger at the same time. And usually, the two actually go hand in hand. I'm feeling sad or hurt about something. I'm angry that that happened. And again, that's an invitation to repair and restore the situation and your relationships. These are good feelings, where they're needed emotions, it's part of our human experience, they will not harm you if you learn how to properly engage with them.

Tia: I don't know, what, when or where, or why we made this agreement that the full spectrum of our emotions are not holy. Our anger is holy, our grief is holy. And so to only want to accept the pleasant and the good, is just living into half of the gospel. It's not living fully. Maybe you can relate to this, like when we want to push our anger away, so to speak. So saying like recognizing that we're angry and having this awareness like I'm angry, and I don't want to be angry, so I'm not going to feel anger. Well, then we get angry about being angry. It's like is just piling on. So you have to ask, like, well, how well is that working for you? You know, you're just piling anger on top of anger. So it is that counterintuitive practice of saying, okay, instead of pushing this thing away, what if I just welcome it? What would it be like, mentally, physiologically, for my heart, like, what would it be like to just sit with this anger and to just say, name it and welcome the anger. And what the experience of that often is, yes, it can be very uncomfortable and eventually it will begin to kind of dissipate. So that doesn't mean that you're angry and then you sit down to meditate about your anger, and then it just disappears like magic. No, this is why it's called the practice. And so yeah, the pushing away, to move toward a

feeling that we don't genuinely feel at the time, only just buries, what we feel, and eventually, what we bury is going to come to the surface.

Jake: The funny thing about not letting go is you can say it's like unforgiveness. If you are angry towards past experiences, you can argue there's unforgiveness there. And the dysfunction there because our mind thinks somehow justice is being served, like the scales are being balanced. Because now, it's like they did wrong and now I'm going to have this feeling towards them. And the reality of that is, unresolved anger is, because we know we've already established in this conversation, there is a toxic nature to it. So unresolved anger is allowing somebody who's hurt you in the past, to continue hurting you in the present. And that's ultimately a type of unforgiveness towards self, because, if you loved yourself, if you wanted the best for yourself, you would feel that anger was serving to harm you, not help you.

Anger can be a good transition point, from say apathy or shame to courage and ultimately like higher conscious states like love. In that situation, it can go poorly, it can go really well and you see a lot like the giant societal changes that have happened maybe it started at the transition of the anger initially into appropriate action and ultimately love.

Tia: There is this idea that we held on to, that God is somewhere judging us, and so if we were to experience our anger then we are putting ourselves in that position to be judged. So I think it's a combination of that, and I also think it's a combination of the fact that we just like to be comfortable. We want things to feel good, be easy, everything is at the touch of a screen, the click of a button and to experience anger fully, it's not fun. Like it's not fun and it's not a place that many people want to go so that the work required of it also has a little bit of fear around it. So it's important to point out that what we feel is not who we are. Just because you feel angry, it doesn't mean that you are anger, that you're an angry person. Now, of course, we all know those people are just seen like matter of world and grumpy all the time. But, it's really important when we're discussing these and when we are discussing spirituality and God to know that our identity is not grounded in the emotion that we feel. That is just an emotion that we're feeling.

Jake: When someone is operating out of anger, you really have to think like inner child mentality. So a kid on a playground throwing sand. So this is a kid, who has unmet needs, unmet desires, who is hurt, he's wounded and feels too scared and they are lashing out, unawares to try and resolve something and get attention. And you don't want to tolerate poor behaviors, but also you have to understand the poor behavior are coming from a place of woundedness and hurt. And so it's helpful to get clients or people you love to kind of see that their anger that they are holding on to it, they are acting out of, isn't who they are, it's what they are experiencing, but it's not them.

Elena: And you can literally just say I want to just practice feeling and expressing anger, because it's something that's hard for me. And you can do that even without words. So, I usually teach people how to express the energy of anger first. And so I have people sit across from each other and just hold hands. It's a really simple exercise you can just hold hands with a loved one or friend and then one person practices being a receiver, and one person is the person practicing expressing anger. And so holding hands, that person expressing anger tunes into the sensation

of anger that goes on around the solar plexus, the chest, the throat, usually for people, the jaw a little bit, and arms, and feeling that and letting it kind of move through. And whether that, you know, you might feel that in the breath a little bit or there is a little bit of squeezing the hands and facial expressions and so just doing that and knowing that the person across from you is just a safe receiver. And so you go through this experience and what always happens is the people then we come down from that and we take a breath and we just ground and then they say, "Wow, that was so releasing, from me, I felt like such a wave and I felt like thank you so much for being there to just not judge me, and to just receive that I have anger." And the other person is like, "Wow, thank you for expressing anger." Usually, they go into it a little like, nervous, when they come out of it really impressed and in awe of the energy of anger. That's actually not a bad thing. It actually, when we can come to an honest expression and learn how to, like I said, titrate ourselves. So learn to express a little bit at a time until we're able to stay in a balanced nervous system and express anger.

Arielle: And when we don't give ourselves and people in our lives, the ability to express that anger, we're also... It's an incredible disservice, because, we are not given the chance for that type of connection that relies on being able to express all those things both if you are the one who is experiencing anger, or you are the person who's being invited, and to actually observe and witness that experience for someone else.

Elena: And especially with couples, it becomes actually a huge intimacy thing is like wow, there you are. There is that person that I love, that's your energy and it's really, totally, a connecting piece.