

Anger Management

I wouldn't call it a great movie but the movie 'Anger Management' released in 2003, starring Adam Sander and Jack Nicholson, did highlight an aspect of anger that is often overlooked and ignored, that of inappropriately not feeling or expressing anger. I can totally relate to this.

I spent many years believing I was patient and tolerant as a person, and that I was naturally even tempered, and well in charge of my emotions. I did not get angry. I did not feel angry. I felt composed most of the time. If I did not feel composed I squashed the feeling response until I did. I grew up with little emotional response to things that occurred around me, and my judgement of myself was that this was good. As an approach it kept me safe, and I now know that is what it was all about, feeling safe. By stifling my experience and expression of emotion I was able to control my external response to people and situations. I looked calm and did not take any sudden action, or cause any ripples with those around me. In fact I had layers of protection that ensured I kept myself to myself.

I had a four-year-old part or role that ran away and hid, feeling unwanted and inadequate. I had a seven-year-old part that looked after the 4-year-old part, keeping him safe and hidden, and could be quite comforting. He

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Abstract

Building on the movie "Anger Management", this article explores some ways feelings (including anger) may be suppressed and the importance of truly connecting with and authentically expressing the feelings.

Keywords

Anger, childhood patterns, protective mechanisms, survive (fear-based) reactions

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How angry do you get? How do you manage your expression of anger?

was very vigilant to danger and emotionally shut-down. I could cope better as a 7-year-old if I did not show my emotions. The 11-year-old part of me was even more protective, even more emotionally shut-down, keeping both the 4 and 7 year old parts safe, with less of the caring component. At 17 I developed another role within myself that was a response to anger and physical danger. It would use anger and urgency to silence any part of me that wanted to speak out or be noticed. Anger was buried very deep within me under all these layers.

For more than 15 years I have been developing awareness of each of these roles within me, understanding the events at the time that encouraged these roles to develop, addressing the threats and fears that these various roles were created in response to, and learning to express myself more immediately and authentically, sometimes with anger. I now know that anger was a strong part of my life, but feeling unable to express it, I directed it at myself. That was damaging on many levels. Unexpressed anger is problematic and needs to be worked through so full, authentic expression is possible.

For more information related to themes in this article, refer to chapter 6 (Deciphering Your Internal State) of: Harrison, S. G. (2012). [*Appreciate the Fog: Embrace Change with Power and Purpose*](#). Auckland, New Zealand: Xlibris Corporation.

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