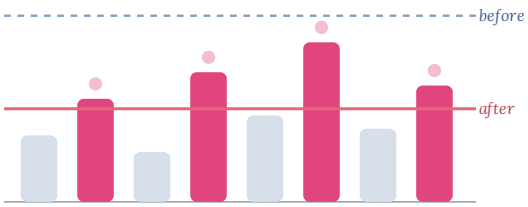
Trauma and Anger

Understanding why anger can follow trauma, and what it may be telling you

Anger is one of the most common reactions after trauma, and one of the least discussed. It can feel frightening, shameful or unlike you, yet it usually makes sense: it is often linked to what happened, to a nervous system still braced for danger, and to things that matter to you. The aim here is not to get rid of anger, but to understand it, so you can respond to it rather than be driven by it.

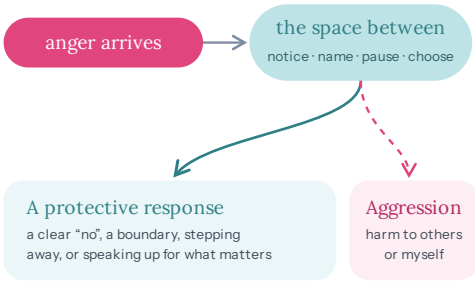
A LOWERED ALARM THRESHOLD

the same everyday stressors, before and after trauma



everyday stressors →
in "survival mode", smaller things can set off the alarm

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT



the space can grow with practice and support

01 Why anger can appear after trauma

six common threads, often woven together

A response to violation

When something wrong or unfair has happened, anger is a natural response. It registers that a line was crossed: a boundary, a sense of justice, or trust.

Anger as protection

Under threat, anger mobilises energy to defend. It can also cover more vulnerable feelings, such as fear, shame or grief, that may feel harder to bear (Greenberg, 2004).

Irritability and high alert

After trauma, the body can stay primed for danger, so anger may arrive faster and stronger (Chemtob et al., 1997). Irritability is a recognised feature of post-traumatic stress (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Anger that arrives later

Anger may surface weeks, months or years later, once there is enough safety to feel it, or as it becomes clear that what happened was not your fault.

Feeling is not acting

Anger is an emotion; aggression is a behaviour. You can feel anger fully, without acting on it in ways that harm you or anyone else.

What it may be saying

Anger often points to something that matters: safety, fairness, respect, being heard, or grief for what was lost.

Anger after trauma often makes sense. It can be honoured as *information*, without being followed as an *instruction*.

02 Questions to consider

go at your own pace; skip anything that feels too much

When did I last notice anger?
where I was, and what I felt in my body

Which threads might be part of it?

○ violation ○ protection ○ high alert ○ arriving later ○ not sure yet

What might it be protecting me from feeling?

What would honouring it look like, safely?

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What is my anger telling me matters?

○ safety ○ fairness ○ respect ○ being heard ○ what was lost

WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

Anger is consistently linked with post-traumatic stress across many kinds of trauma (Orth & Wieland, 2006). The idea of a "survival mode", in which the body stays primed for danger, comes largely from clinical work with combat veterans (Chemtob et al., 1997). Much of it is correlational, so not every finding fits every person.

If anger is leading to harm, or you feel unsafe, please reach out for support.

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