

Published based on [Honest Anger](#)

# Honest Anger



A few years ago, I invited a counselor friend of mine, Susi Harbour, to come to our ladies' retreat and administer a personality test to our ladies. I had already taken it once and thought it would be fun and useful for the ladies of our church to know more about themselves and how they ticked. Susi suggested adding an anger inventory to the activity. "Okay, sure," I said. I suppose I didn't quite get the purpose of the whole thing, but I figured it'd be interesting.

As I sat at the table with other Christian women leaders, I was surprised that they were such fire balls! They apparently had lots of anger! I, on the other hand, scored "anger avoidance" as my style of dealing with anger. I didn't really think that was such a bad thing. I mean, after all, I was a godly woman. I was extremely patient. I almost never spoke sharply to anyone and had lots of grace for others. Well, as it turns out, I had a lot to learn about how to deal with my anger and what healthy anger was.

Just a short time later, my world crashed. I was drawn into a whirlwind of pain, gossip, betrayal, fear, threats, and just plain lack of people skills and Christian love, and my anger style kicked into overdrive!

A couple of months later, I sat with a counselor who gently poked and prodded and tried to help me express my anger. He encouraged me to throw something or raise my voice or whatever might be an appropriate expression of my anger. I could not do it. I was unable. Tears streamed down my face, but I couldn't say anything.

Months later, my unexpressed anger had turned inward and led me deep into depression and suicidal thoughts. It literally took me more than a year to begin to express my anger and much longer than that to really accept my feelings. It is still somewhat of a challenge for me to learn to recognize anger, act on it, and let it go in healthy appropriate ways.

I have since begun to understand that I had adopted this anger style from my earliest days. There are many anger styles or ways that people handle their anger, from hidden styles to explosive styles to chronic styles.

My style, anger avoidance, represents people who are partly or mostly unaware/unaccepting of their anger. Explosive styles represent those who periodically demonstrate their anger and aggression through dramatic outbursts, and chronic styles are used by people who have developed long-term anger patterns that keep them angry, bitter, and resentful (*Letting Go of Anger* by Ronald Potter-Efron).

I have learned that my anger is a signal that is worth listening. Many women have learned, just as I had, to silence their anger, deny it, or express it in ways that leaves them helpless and powerless. I now know that the things we bury alive inside us, whether anger, resentment, fear, or any or an entire range of emotions, never die but are still actively affecting how we act, think, feel, and react to life.

What does God think about our anger?

Here are some thoughts for your consideration (some of which comes from Pierre Wolff's thoughts):

1. 1. God is a God of communication. He speaks. He invites us to speak with Him.
2. 2. Without communication, we cannot have a real relationship with anyone.
3. 3. Indifference and neutrality kill communication and relationship and makes us feel that we do not exist and that people do not care.
4. 4. Anger is a form of communication.
5. 5. If we don't deal properly with our anger, it will consume us- not the person with whom we are angry.
6. 6. Undealt with anger, hatred, bitterness, and unforgiveness make it impossible for us to see clearly (Matthew 7).
7. 7. It can be helpful to appropriately express anger to the one who caused it. Doing so can bring healing. At times, this is inappropriate or impossible. God is able to heal our hearts. The more intimate the relationship, the greater the need/possibility for a real conversation about the hurt.
8. 8. To express strong negative feelings (appropriately) to another person, demonstrates our faith that the relationship can endure the truth of who I am and how I truly feel because my feelings of hurt (the root of most anger) are there because I care about the person who hurt me.
9. 9. We must be led by God for the timing, the place, the tone of our voice, and the intelligent expression of our heart as we express our anger. It is usually a good idea to pray a while before we react.
10. 10. An honest encounter, even a fiery one, with the person we are angry with is more healing than talking to a hundred people who don't really understand and who can't totally put themselves into our place.
11. 11. God invites us into this kind of honest relationship with Him. His Word gives us the examples of Job, David, and Jesus himself, who express honest questions, complaints, and negative emotions to God. Pierre Wolff, in his little book *May I Hate God?* (written for those in pain, struck by tragedy, etc.), says that "The main question in my prayer life is not whether I am right or wrong, whether my words are good or bad. It is simply whether I love my Father enough to tell him everything in my heart, whether I believe in the immensity of a love which can understand and welcome any expression of my sorrow."

Honest anger can deepen your spiritual life. It can be a key to intimacy and freedom with God and others.

How honest are you with yourself? With your spouse? Your friends? God?

I'd love to hear your thoughts on your anger style and any questions you might have!

You can also find this article published on [Honest Anger](#), and on the tag pages [Anger](#), [anger styles](#), [communication](#), [David](#), [denial](#), [emotions](#), [Jesus](#), [Job](#), [Letting Go of Anger](#), [Matthew 7](#), [Pierre Wolff](#), [Relationships](#), [Ronald Potter-Efron](#).