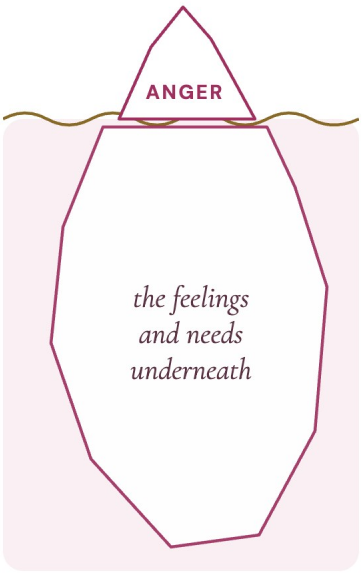
What's Underneath Anger

Anger is a messenger, not a character flaw. It shows up fast to protect us when something feels threatening, unfair or too much, and it usually sits on top of feelings and needs we haven't had room to notice yet.



ABOVE THE SURFACE · WHAT OTHERS SEE

- snapping
- yelling
- sarcasm
- slamming doors
- shutting down
- leaving the room
- sharp texts

BELOW THE SURFACE · WHAT'S OFTEN UNDERNEATH

Hurt "That landed hard."	**Fear** "Something bad is coming."	**Shame** "I messed up again."
Powerless "Nothing I do matters."	**Unseen** "No one gets it."	**Exhausted** "I have nothing left."
Overwhelmed "Too much, too fast."	**Grief** "This isn't how it should go."	**Injustice** "That's not fair."

Anger also points to a need:

safety · respect · fairness · rest · autonomy · predictability · connection · being understood

WHY IT CAN HIT HARDER FOR NEURODIVERGENT BRAINS

Common hidden contributors

Sensory overload
Noise, light, tags, crowds. The body reads it as threat first.

Executive function strain
Too many steps, lost items, broken focus.

Transitions & surprises
Sudden changes, being pulled out of hyperfocus.

Rejection sensitivity
Criticism can feel physically painful. Anger becomes armor.

Masking fatigue
Holding it together all day, then it spills at home.

Missed body signals
Not noticing hunger, thirst or tiredness until it's urgent.

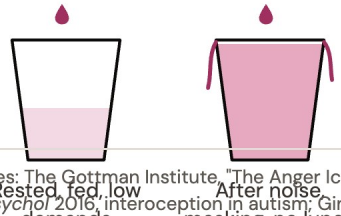
Fast escalation
Going from 2 to 10 with little warning in between.

Justice sensitivity
Strong reactions to unfairness or broken rules.

Being misunderstood
Explaining again, or hearing you're "too much."

Low reserves
Poor sleep, hormones, illness or a hard week.

SAME TRIGGER, DIFFERENT CUP



ND nervous systems often start closer to full. A small trigger isn't the whole story; **it's the last drop in a full cup.** Emptying the cup (rest, food, quiet) matters as much as managing the moment.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- **Body:** hot face, clenched jaw or fists, tight chest, buzzing, restlessness
- **Thoughts:** "always," "never," "they did that on purpose," replaying it
- **Actions:** short answers, sighing, pacing, going quiet, wanting out

You don't have to get rid of anger. You can make room for it, listen to it, and choose what you do next.

Sources: The Gottman Institute, "The Anger Iceberg"; Shaw et al., *Am J Psychiatry* 2014, emotional dysregulation in ADHD; Garfinkel et al., *Biol Psychol* 2016, interoception in autism; Ginapp et al. 2023 on rejection sensitivity (widely described, not a formal diagnosis).
Educational only, not therapy or medical advice.

Mapping My Anger

Pick one recent moment when anger showed up. Go slowly and get curious. There are no wrong answers.

Name / date _____

THE MOMENT

What happened? Where was I, and who was there?

_____

_____

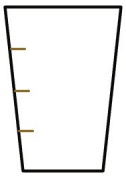
_____

Above the surface: what did I say or do?

_____

_____

HOW FULL WAS MY CUP?



Shade it in

Before it happened, I was...

- ☐ hungry or thirsty
- ☐ tired
- ☐ overstimulated
- ☐ masking a lot
- ☐ rushed or late
- ☐ in pain or sick
- ☐ already stressed
- ☐ lonely or left out

Other: _____

BELOW THE SURFACE · WHAT WAS UNDERNEATH?

Circle all that fit, or add your own

hurt · afraid · ashamed · embarrassed · powerless · unseen · exhausted · overwhelmed · disappointed · grieving · lonely · treated unfairly · _____

The need underneath:

safety · respect · fairness · rest · autonomy · predictability · connection · to be understood

WHICH ND CONTRIBUTORS WERE IN PLAY?

- ☐ sensory overload
- ☐ executive function
- ☐ a transition
- ☐ rejection sensitivity
- ☐ masking fatigue
- ☐ missed body signals
- ☐ fast escalation
- ☐ justice sensitivity
- ☐ being misunderstood
- ☐ low reserves

Early warning signs I noticed (body, thoughts, actions): _____

SAY WHAT'S UNDERNEATH

Try it as an I-statement:

WHEN I _____

I THINK _____

I FEEL _____

I NEED _____

I WILL _____

"When I" = what I saw, heard or sensed, not what they "made" me feel.

NEXT TIME

When I'm angry, who do I want to be? What matters to me here?

_____

_____

One way to empty my cup earlier:

_____

One thing I can try in the moment:

_____

Ideas: step out, dim the input, eat or drink something, move your body, name it ("I'm noticing anger").