



EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Maggie:

Hello everyone, today we're going to talk about healthy anger, and I am so delighted to have my friend and colleague Karen Anderson here to share her thoughts on healthy anger because we're going to go deep today. And I know so many of my clients struggle with anger its an emotion that comes up so often in coaching. And I really wanted to have a deep dive conversation about different ways to look at anger. And so many people think the only thing to do with anger is to get rid of it. And today we're going to talk about how fully felt anger can be so healthy and so important. And there's more than one way to look at and experience anger. So before we dive in, I want to introduce Karen.

Maggie:

She is a master certified life coach. She is an author. She wrote one of my favorite books, which is *Difficult Mothers, Adult Daughters, A Guide For Separation, Liberation and Inspiration*. This is literally the book that I assigned to my coaching clients for homework, whenever issues with their mothers come up during coaching. And she has a new book called *Overcoming Creative Anxiety* that just came out. We will link to her site in the show notes with all her books. So you can definitely check those out after you listen. Definitely want to check those out. They are amazing. And Karen and I have been friends and colleagues for almost 10 years now. So I am so delighted to welcome her to the show and to have a conversation with her about anger which I think is going to help so many people. So welcome.

Karen:

Thank you, Maggie, so happy to be with you.

Maggie:





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

That's awesome. So let's talk a little bit about the role of healthy anger in a person's life. Like one of the things that you said, so you wrote a post that like lit me up and I was like, Karen, we have talked about this. The whole world needs to know about healthy anger. And so one of the things that you said was that anger has moments where it's appropriate, where it's valid, where it's necessary, where it's healthy, let's talk about what are some of those moments when it's valid, necessary, and healthy to share about that.

Karen:

Well, our boundaries get crossed. Right? Something happens that triggers, right? It triggers that like, wait a minute, this is wrong. Right. Our personal morals. And you know, when something pops up and is in opposition or doesn't support that, anger happens.

Maggie:

Yeah. And I think one of the ways I like to explain emotions is I like to compare them to colors. So imagine if we had red and purple and green and blue, and we have happiness and sadness and anger and disgust and joy and delight, and you would never say, Oh no, no more purple. I just, I never see purple again. Right. I'm out. Right. It would sound so ridiculous. But we do that with emotions, right? We do that with, Oh no, you know, this person gets angry too often, or this person is just always angry or I don't like it when I'm angry. So I never want to be angry. Again, we have these thoughts that are like, it should be eliminated. And whenever I see that, I say, well, what would you do about purple or green?

Karen:

Or like in life coach language, right? We're always asking people, what are you making it mean that you know, we often also make our emotions mean something. Yes. Anger means something





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

we don't like.

Maggie:

And what I think is really interesting is on a personal level, we often feel like anger should not be here. It shouldn't be part of the equation, but at a societal level, most of the most important progress that humanity has made, if we go down to the core of what inspired that progress to occur, anger was at the base of what inspired, you know, people to create a revolution or things to change, right? Like at the societal level, we can immediately see a usefulness for anger that we somehow, when we take it to our personal life, they go, no, but that doesn't apply here. What are your thoughts about that?

Karen:

Well, I totally agree. And I think that anger, whether it's on a societal level or internally is an indication that something needs to change or I'm going to examine this, is this something maybe I need to take a look at? And you know, you said that like it's at the core. And I, I don't know if I don't think I made this up. I heard it somewhere, but I love it. And it's that anger is necessary and it's a great spark for change, but we might not want to use it for longterm fuel.

Maggie:

Love it. The spark, but not the fuel,

Karen:

Like of course it will revisit right. But I think where people when they get weird about anger or when they're saying, I shouldn't be this way, it's that chronic anger that's just like running their lives. Yeah. Right. And they're not fully aware and they're just walking around angry all the time.





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

I think that's when people are like, gosh, maybe there is an alternative or I would like to change this. But anger in and of itself isn't bad.

Maggie:

Yes. Anger in and of itself. Doesn't have to be bad? And I like to think about it like a knife. Like a knife, we can use it to carve a bowl, right? To create something with massive limitless usefulness, or we can use it to destroy. Right. We can use it to cut something down or cut something off. We can use it to create or to cut. And I think anger is similar in that way. It's very powerful like a knife is, but when we use anger as just a signpost, right. It's just like a flag. Oh, Hey, turn here. Great danger ahead. Right. When we're able to look at anger and say, Hey, why am I so angry was one of my values violated? Did something happen here that I need to do something about? Right. So I have an episode we'll link to it on this episode called The Anger Scale. And what happened with the anger scale is one of my clients was feeling angry all the time. And when we started analyzing why she was feeling angry all the time, what we found was, and I found this, that I then sort of tested it on all my other clients. And what I found is this is a lot of us experienced anger, like an on and off switch.

Maggie:

Like we either are, or we aren't. And we're equally as angry if the peanut butter jar is open versus if, you know, you've offended me to my core and my values. It's just one Thermonuclear situation here. And so the anger scale was to say, Hey, what if we put it on a scale of one to 10? And if it's like lower than a six, maybe it's not that important. Right? And so the thing about the anger scale that always sort of is jarring to make clients. It's like, well, what do I do if it's lower than a six? And the answer is nothing, don't do anything, right? You don't need to ask them every moment of anger. If it's higher than a six, Then we get curious and we question and we





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

say, well, what happened? How am I feeling? What's going on? What do I need to do? Do I need to create a boundary around this issue? That kind of thing. When you think about anger, and I know that you are one of my favorite experts on boundaries overall in life, and you often say anger signals you to create a boundary. It's a signal. Yes. Tell me about how you use that. Anger. You turn it into the spark, right? That then becomes, okay. I need to set a boundary here. Tell me a little bit about the thought process or some of the questions that you ask yourself or that you ask your clients when you see, Oh, wait, this is an opportunity to create a boundary.

Karen:

Yeah. So, you know, again, I'm really a proponent of understanding first, the sensations. So do you notice the sensations and you know, for you, I mean, I suspect that everybody kind of has similar sensations, but you don't, you don't know. Right. So get to know, first of all, what those sensations are and when you start to feel them, right. You notice the sensation, you ask yourself, okay, what just happened? What's going on? Like you just said, what's going on here. Yeah. And then so many of us think that we need to act immediately. Right? Like we feel that surge, usually there's an urge associated with it and we want to act. And I don't think it's necessarily wrong to act in the moment.

Karen:

But one of my favorite questions to sort of always have in the back of my mind is how can I like and respect myself. But like, I've talked with clients who are like, but how do you like, think of all of that it the moment, like you're triggered and how do you then like, well, first I'm feeling the sensations and then I'm, you know. But it's A practice. Yes. You're not going to do it perfectly the first time. Right. You may blow up, you may scream. You may stamp your feet. You may punch the wall. And like, then you've got like, once you're being aware, once you're aware that this is





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

your process that you tend to punch the wall or stamp your feet. Don't try to stop yourself the first time, but like notice, okay, this is what I do. Yes. And don't beat yourself up at that point. Yes. Don't say, Oh my God, I failed the anger test. Right. Like, just be like, Oh, This is what I do.

Maggie:

I love that You said that because it's like, we would never say I failed purple. You know, we would never say that. Right. But we do that with emotions where like, oh, I did it wrong. I should have done it differently. As opposed to it was just here. And I experienced it, how I experienced it in the moment.

Karen:

Yeah. And so then right then it's now I know. Yes. And now, so next time I'm going to work on something else. Right. Feel the anger. I'm going to always be reminding myself, how do I like and respect myself and maybe it's going to, I'm not going to punch the wall next time. I'm going to take a deep breath. Yeah. Maybe I'll just say, Hey, you know what? That wasn't acceptable. Yeah. Right. And then I'll take a step back. I'll regroup and I'll decide, okay, in this particular situation, what kind of boundary do I want to have? If this happens again, or it happens with somebody else. Right.

Karen:

Or whatever. and then as we know, right, the boundary, the healthiest, best boundaries are the ones where we are not judging the other person, just deciding, Hey, you know what? I don't want to be around people smoking. I mean, I, I wrote this funny thing about, you know, you know, say your with, and it's always with a mother. Right. Because she smokes and yells and talks about politics. Right? Like those things in of themselves aren't bad. But if you don't like being around





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

people, talking about politics, smoking and yelling, you can leave, right? Like it doesn't have like, it's fine. And they like it to be together and they're friends and they're doing all that great. And so, you know, it's when we take the moral, like that sort of moral judgment about the other person's behavior and just say Like, you know what, okay, this isn't my jam.

Maggie:

Right. It doesn't make you wrong. It doesn't make me wrong. I'm just not into that. Right. I love that so much. I think that's so easy to forget. And I always give extreme examples Cause then people really get it. Cause I, a lot of people in marriages think they have to like what their partner likes. I'm going to tell people, you know, I can watch Oprah for five hours. I don't expect my husband to want to do that. It makes total sense. Right. It's like, Oh, but he should talk about politics or he should smoke or he should not smoke or whatever for five hours straight. Oh, why, why can't we just see? Right. My husband's a gamer and I'm like, he likes to game for five hours. I have no interest in doing that. I don't love him any less. Right. So it's sometimes when we also take it out of the thing that our person whoever's, we're angry at, at the moment. Right. And we just say, Oh, what if it's okay if I'm just not into this, if this is not my hobby or if this is not my interest, but if that's fine and it doesn't make them wrong for loving that thing.

Karen:

And you know, I think too, like what, like, I, I had a situation this morning, actually as I was driving home. My hubby is retired, newly retired. And so we're going to the gym together and we're coming home from the gym and we were listening to the radio. They were talking on the radio about something. I won't say the specifics. And I said to my husband, I said, you know what, I need to be angry right now. So just hold on a second. And I said, okay, now I'm better. Like, yeah. So it's just like give yourself permission to be angry. And it's okay to like, be petty about it





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Sometimes. The difference was that I was choosing it on purpose. Yes. And I wasn't like hurting anybody with it.

Maggie:

Yes. You know action, That almost like if we want to think about an internal action or external action, you action that with yourself to feel it and allow it to be there and to process it in the sense of like, Oh, it's here. Okay. I'm going to feel it. And then it probably dissipated pretty quickly once you let it be there, which is what any emotion always does. I also compare them besides colors, I also like to think about waves and the ocean. We can see an emotion, like a wave in the ocean. Its purpose is to flow through us. That is what waves do they flow. Its purpose is not to stay. And if you even think about how water gets poisoned, it becomes toxic when it's still water, because its purpose is to flow. It's literally the same thing with any emotion is that its purpose is to flow. And when we try to push it away or push it down or like do anything that stops the flow in any direction, that's when it becomes toxic and something that we have to figure out.

Karen:

and you know, like the idea of me needing to scream in that moment. That was also a decision. That's an action I took. And it was intentional. Yeah. Right. So like, I think where we get into trouble is when it's all unintentional and we're like you know, it's all like speaking with, with water, like overflowing on to everybody else and flooding everybody else.

Maggie:

Yes. I love that so much because especially with your example with your husband, how many of us have done this? I for sure have done this where we getting angry about something totally unrelated to our relationship. Now we're angry and now he's there. So we're going to be angry,





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

not at him, but with him, as opposed to, Hey, I'm angry right now. Here's what I'm going to do about it. Oh, but I'm totally fine with you. We're good. Right. I think that alone will change so many marriages when people listen to that.

Karen:

Speaking of that, you know, long, long time ago before I knew anything about life coaching and I married, my husband, we're at 23 years, September 6th. And you know, like at first I was like, I guess I was associating, associating it with a PMS kind of thing. But you know, I, I would tell him, I'm like, you know, I'm just prickly right now. I just need to be prickly. This is not About you, but I need to be growly a little bit. Yeah. Which he learned very quickly like, okay, that's fine. That's part of it. And like he's told me over the years that he just really appreciated that, that awareness I had.

Maggie:

I love that example. I actually do something similar and I, because I like naming things as you know, I call it the microscopic truth. It's a Tiny, tiny truth. It's a little one it's microscopic, but it's really important. It's really valuable. So, back when I used to work in HR, sometimes I'd come home and I, you know, had to lay off people or do something that was just really not delightful that day. And I'd come home and I'd say, Hey, you know, just so you know, I'm a little stressed right now. I'm usually a very enthusiastic person. So immediately, if I'm not my normal sort of level of enthusiasm, people will say what's wrong. What's going on?

Maggie:

So I would tell them, Hey, you know, I'm just whatever happened. And, and he would know, right? So he wouldn't spend half an hour worrying if it was him, what did he do wrong? Or what did he





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

say or whatever it was? And over the years, I just sort of did this similar to you, sort of, it was consciously, but it wasn't sort of like an intentional thing that I was doing. Later I analyzed it. And then I named, and I was like, Oh, this is really useful so I should teach people to do this too. But Years later after me doing this so often, he started, when he would come home, he'd say, Hey, just, you know, the day was intense. You know, if I'm not, my normal self has nothing to do with you. And it just brings so much relief.

Maggie:

And what I love about mentioning this in the context of healthy anger is the idea that we can process anger in a variety of ways. And we can minimize the effects that our anger has on other people. Totally. By, like you said, feeling the sensations, understanding or looking at what is happening with us, what is going on with us, being aware that it might affect another person, especially the person that we're closest to, and how we want to show up for that. And I always think about anything that has a trigger is like, how do we minimize it on the front end? So it happens less if that's possible, sometimes it isn't. And then how do we manage it better on the backend once it has happened?

Karen:

You know, it's interesting. I was just, I was thinking about, again, my subject matter of difficult mother-daughter relationships, and I was thinking, it just popped into my head about how angry I used to be at my mother all the time. And the difference between like, what was that healthy or not, and why? And I remember, I, I don't know why this image just popped into my head, but I remember a day, you know, gosh, probably 10 years ago or so, where I was like rip-snorthing angry. And I went outside and I was like throwing rocks. I was so pissed at my mother. And I'm like, I'm recognizing that, like, I'm like that wasn't healthy. I know that you're, you're like, yeah, like





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

we're talking about the healthy expression of like it being conscious.

Maggie:

Right. And we want to know what unhealthy looks like. Totally. Yeah.

Karen:

And you know, I remember like thinking that my anger was justified and I'm not here to like say, Oh, I shouldn't have been angry or whatever. I mean, it is, you know, whatever it was happening, I was pissed, but it was a pattern. It was part of an overall pattern of believing that I was at her mercy. Right. The thought that was creating that anger was not like a helpful thought. It was a thought that was keeping me stuck and thinking that I was at her mercy. And so like this white-hot rage, that was like one of my favorite expressions of like white-hot was, the reason I was feeling, it was not from like the, like a healthy trigger sort of. It was, it was unhealthy thoughts about myself and about her.

Maggie:

Yeah. I love The idea. And I think it's so important that in order to talk about healthy anger, we must talk about what unhealthy anger looks like. And my feeling is that unhealthy anger, like any other unhealthy thing in our life, is it a problem? Is it disconnecting you from people? What is the effect that it's having? Right?

Karen:

The reason why I can see that now is because I thought that the throwing of the rocks meant that I was dealing with it in a healthy way. Cause I wasn't screaming and yelling at her. Right. I'm like not engaging with her and hurting her. But I was hurting myself.





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Maggie:

My thought, looking at it now as coaches that we both are, I would say is if I was going to go back to that moment when you're throwing the rock, I'd say, okay, that's cool. You're processing it on the backend, it needs to be released. It's like a valve release it. That's good. Yup. Let's look at the front end. Let's get to the root cause. Right. That's how you find out, Oh, it's actually a thought about myself and about her and my expectations. And let's go to the root cause of where it spawned from what inspired it. Let's work through some of that.

Karen:

Exactly. Yeah. I mean, and that's like when I did start coaching, I mean, I don't know if I've ever told you. I think I probably would have, but it was in the training in particularly the master coach training. Yeah. That's when it all came up.

Maggie:

Yeah. Then you saw it All right. And so thinking about there are so many things I want to talk, talk to you about we're just going to have to have you back, but okay. Today, thinking about when all of that came up, what was one thing that helped you when it all came? One of the things that I have seen, I have experienced it for myself. I see it in my science is anger can feel very overwhelming. Like when you're delighted, you don't necessarily feel worried that you might be overwhelmed or consumed by delight. Right. It's not something we cry over, but when we're angry, we feel like there's this possibility like anger could consume us. Yes. That fear of being consumed or overwhelmed by the anger. How do you manage that? Like how do you manage it? How do you think people should manage it? What are your thoughts about that?

Karen:





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Well, again, I think that it is identifying like for me, what felt so all-consuming about that was a belief that it was never going to change. I'm at the mercy of it. She is out to get me. I mean, I, yeah, I had this belief right. That she was out to get me. Like, all she could do is like send me an email. And my immediate response was she's out to get me like, unconsciously. and whether, you know, whether she was out to get me or not, isn't the issue. She might have been, she might have actually been like, Ooh, I can't wait to piss her off. But it doesn't matter. It's my belief about it. Right. But, what was the question?

Maggie:

It was like when you have that fear of being consumed by anger.

Karen:

Yes. I think that the point though, it is finding out what is the belief that's causing this and that like if it is something as like, it felt all-consuming to me at the time was this belief like etched in stone, that this is the dynamic and that there's no way out of it. And I will forever be enraged. Right. Like, yes, I can distract myself from that and go off and like do other things or whatever. But it's like always there under the surface and like any little thing that happens. Yeah. Right. Boom There it is. It's interesting because I'm realizing that I think some people are afraid to be angry and I don't think I was afraid to be angry. Right. Yeah. You know? And so I think there's that distinction, Are you afraid to be angry? I wasn't afraid to be angry. So speaking of interruptions and stuff and noises. So like, is it, is it that you're afraid to feel it and you're stuffing it and you're afraid that if I start to feel it, then I'm going to be overwhelmed by it. Yeah. Right. Or like, in my case, as I said, I actually, one of the most powerful moments of coaching for me was when I said, I want to be angry at her.





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Maggie:

Why was that powerful for you?

Karen:

Because it was the first time I acknowledged that she wasn't making me. I wanted to be angry.

Maggie:

Yeah. That's so good. And I think, for people listening to this podcast. Obviously, a lot of people have challenges with their moms and so they'll be listening and they'll be looking at it through that lens. And if they're having challenges with their partners in a marriage, it's like, oh, I'm choosing to be angry. Maybe I like my reasons, maybe I like why I'm angry and that's okay. But just knowing that I'm choosing to be angry, allows you to then decide how often do you want to make this choice?

Karen:

And I didn't like my reasons once I uncovered them.

Maggie:

Right. Right. And then it takes a minute. It's okay. That it takes a minute to figure that out too. Yeah. I think that's really important. One of the things that you teach that I love and I want to talk about is the difference between immature anger and mature anger. So I'm going to say it first and then we can talk a little bit about it. But, Karen teaches that immature anger. You can recognize it by manipulation, resentment, shame, often passive-aggressive. There's a blame or an oppressive nature to it. It feels almost forceful. And when you're feeling anger, accompanied by any of these things, it's an immature anger. And when you have a mature anger, it will be





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

accompanied by things like assertiveness, boundaries, access to your own inner fierceness, clarity, will, decision, things like that. So walk us through a little bit about why, first of all, why is it useful to know the difference between immature and mature anger? I have lots of thoughts about it, but I want to hear from your point of view,

Karen:

I mean, it's so funny because like it's like part of is like, well, who wants to be that manipulating, you know, person? We don't want to be that person. Right. Yeah. You know, knowing that there's a distinction and I think it helps them say, Oh, your anger is okay. And not that it's only okay if it's this way, but that the maturity of your will and justice issues and making those changes that we want to see in the world that sometimes require that spark and protectiveness. Yeah. I love the example. I've been doing a lot of studying and training around our nervous system and understanding that, I mean, as we all, you know, we've heard, when our nervous systems perceive a threat we have a number of responses. Fight is one of them. Right. And so that's mature, right? Like a healthy nervous system sometimes chooses to fight. Yes. Right. It's what keeps us alive in certain contexts.

Karen:

Sometimes we flee or run away. Yes. Those are the two that are on the sympathetic side of the nervous system. That's when the nervous system gathers its strength. It's the foot on the gas. It's the inhale, it's the blood flow. We're getting ready to like take action. Right. Right. There's on the parasympathetic side when we perceive a threat, we also might freeze or fawn, which I know if you've heard of that. Yes. or people-pleasing? Yes. I'm making sure that everybody's okay. And the parasympathetic response is that foot on the brake. It's the exhale. It's the collapse. It's I mean, literally our bodies release all that stuff. Yeah. And so what I think is fascinating about





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

anger is that, especially for women, we learn over time that it's not safe or that it doesn't, we're not going to be able to use it effectively.

Karen:

Right. For a number of reasons. Sometimes it's literally because we're smaller and weaker, but it's also because we've, we've learned that it's not appropriate for women or for girls.

Maggie:

Yeah isn't that Fascinating? Because the opposite for men is like anger is the one emotion that they're allowed to feel like in our modern society. Right. That it's like, Oh, men can feel anger. That's fine. Yeah. And it's so interesting for women they go, Oh, she's angry.

Karen:

And so one of the greatest analogies or examples that I love and this to me exemplifies mature anger is, imagine a bear mama bear in the forest or mama cheetah or lion or whatever. Right. Hanging out in the forest or in the jungle or wherever she is. And she's maybe she's just had lunch and she's relaxing a little bit and her cubs are maybe there and they're playing or whatever. And she's not over there, like thinking, are the cubs okay? Do I need to talk on the cubs? She's not worried. She's just in her parasympathetic response, like healthy. Now let's say something happens, right. The cubs get into some sort of trouble or somebody comes or, you know, they're acting in a way she doesn't like. Right.

Karen:

Boom, fierceness activated. Right. And she takes the action and she's not taking it personally. And she's not saying it's not fair that they do this. At that moment, She activates her fierce anger





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

and he's not full-on anger, but it's, what's fascinating to me is understanding the emotional cues of that sympathetic response. Yes. Right. So like you start to notice maybe a slight annoyance, maybe it starts to get into frustration and then it's anger. And then before, you know what it's full-on rage. Right. And the same, there's a sort of the same set of cues for the parasympathetic side where you might notice a little bit of confusion moving into like overwhelm and hopelessness and helplessness and shame is in there. And, you know, and to that sort of like full-on collapse. So, the, the point though of that mature anger is that it's in the moment. It's taken care of business. It's not all like judgemental.

Maggie:

Yes, that's so good. I used to love the West Wing. And the West Wing had an episode about a proportional response. So if a country is attacked in a certain way, there are certain rules about what's the proportional response. So it's like, if you hit our army base, we hit your navy base. Right. We don't and like bomb a hospital, right. That's not a proportional response. And I think listening to you explain that beautiful example with a bear is like, she has a proportional response at every step of the game. She hears a noise. She checks on the cubs. They're still okay. Nothing happens.

Maggie:

So then she sees a light maybe, and then she's like, Oh, now I need to cover them or hold them or move them to another place. At every stage, it's a proportional response to the level of factual danger, only on the facts, not in any story, Oh, you're ruining my afternoon in the woods. How dare you? And I've been planning this afternoon by the river for a month. And none of that, which we all do, but she is just like danger response, danger response, factual only, and only what's necessary for that moment, that not five years from now. Just in the moment. So we can





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

see when we're having a mature anger response, we're like that wise bear, the wise bear that is just reacting to the facts of what's happening in a way that's keeping her family safe, you know, the way is keeping her safe right. When we, imagine the bear says, now I'm going to knock down all the trees, there will be no trees for you.

Maggie:

That's the immature anger when it's not a proportional response. Right. And I think that's just useful for us to just know, right. Just to have that awareness, even when we have those moments. And I certainly have those moments. I remember a couple of weeks ago, I didn't know what was happening that I walked into the kitchen and I told my husband, I am not the bigger person right now. I know I'm not being the bigger person. And that's all right. Yeah. I love that so much. So immature anger, mature Anger. One of the things you mentioned is that a lot of women have shame around experiencing anger at all. And it's so fascinating. Right? I always think it's like the two ends of the spectrum. If we feel too comfortable feeling our anger, we want to question it. And if we feel massively uncomfortable feeling anger, we want to question it. We just want to question it, which is a, Hey, what's going on. Yeah, what's here. What's happening. Right.

Karen:

But yeah. So like that idea that we, girls shouldn't feel anger, it's not appropriate. It's not ladylike right. Then we, maybe we learned some constructive ways, but we also learn not so constructive ways and the shame. My goodness shame has been like my biggest teacher. That's so powerful. Shame is like the thing. And I, you know, sometimes just like with anger. I used to make shame means something about me. Like even more. Yeah. But I think a lot of times we feel the shame, not just because we don't think we should feel the anger, but because any sort of response or





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

any sort of thing that we do, then we regret it. Yes. Right. Because we haven't figured out that mature response.

Maggie:

Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about the relationship between processing healthy anger and having a boundary, a healthy boundary. So I love Renee Brown's very simple definition that a boundary is just what's okay and what's not okay in my presence. One of my favorite definitions, because anytime you can say it in one sentence I'm down. But how would you describe, especially in relationships, whether it's with a mother, in my case, on The Marriage Life Coach Podcast, in a marriage, how would you explain, like, how do I know the boundary was violated? Is anger, usually the clue. Are there other clues that we should look out for and do you have a different definition for boundary or do you use similar to Renee's? How do you define one?

Karen:

Boundary is, you know, it's interesting. I'm definitely a student of Renee's, life coach school student. And I also did a program with a woman named Randy Buckley. I don't know if you know, Randy, who has a program called Healthy Boundaries For Kind People, and I'm certified in her process. And so it's sort of like, I've got all these wonderful metaphors and I think it's like different in certain times.

Maggie:

I love you saying that that boundary is different in different situations. I know a lot of people don't realize that.

Karen:





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Because like, for example, there was a group of women that I was involved with. It was a writers group. And in fact, the woman who wrote the New York Times article that I was interviewed in.

Maggie:

Pause. Okay. We have to tell all the listeners and we'll link to it in the show notes. So Karen very graciously planned this interview and we're doing it obviously, but Karen has just been featured as a subject matter expert in the New York Times, the New York Times. And we're absolutely like everyone and Karen-land is celebrating this massively and it's so amazing. So she was telling the story very sort of matter of factly, but let's take a moment to say congratulations on that.

Karen:

Thank you. Yeah. So I've been in this writer's group for several years now and I noticed that I didn't want to, and I was having a little, so much anxiety around this. They wanted to meet in person twice a year. And I just was getting to a point in my life where I didn't want to be doing that much traveling. I love these women. It had nothing to do with anger.

Maggie:

This is a great example. Yeah. Where you could just have something you don't want to do and it's okay to not want to do it.

Karen:

But, but I didn't, I made it mean that there was something wrong with me. It's almost like, well shame and like all this stuff and anxiety. but it was funny because I was talking, to the woman who wrote the article. And I was saying that so many times that we have boundaries with people we hate. But oftentimes we have the best boundaries are the ones with the people that





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

we love. And we have them because we love them. Not because we hate them.

Maggie:

Yes. So good. Yes.

Karen:

So like it's, you know, sometimes it is, you've noticed the anger, in that case, I think I started to notice anxiety. Right, right. I don't want to travel that much. Right. And what's that going to mean? Am I going to be kicked out of the group and like all this stuff?

Maggie:

It's so interesting. When you said that I flashed before my eyes, that we don't set boundaries very often to not disappoint other people. And then we get angry when they violate that boundary. And so there's anger on some side of the equation at some point very often. Not always, but very often because it's like, wait, we should have just set the boundary, to begin with.

Karen:

Right. And I mean, it's so funny because I mean, it was, it was that whole scenario. I'll never forget. We had our first retreat and it was at that first retreat when somebody is like, we should do this twice a year. And I literally, my whole body was like argh, and I ignored it. And then started to have, like, I went to the next one and I was a mess the entire time because it was this unspoken, I don't want this. Right. And I was miserable. And I was not a person that people wanted to be around.

Maggie:





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

And that takes a lot of emotional maturity to be able to say no, from a place of love. Right.

Karen:

I can say this because I'm a human being. Yeah. Like even though I was a master certified life coach. Yeah. I wasn't being that person.

Maggie:

I love that You said that because I've been in several interviews and this has been like a recurring theme that we talk about a lot in the show. It's like, we are human and we never stopped being human just because we have the tools to do the thing. Right. Does it mean that sometimes it will have to apply them in a different way? Or we have to think about how they, how do we use them in this context or, or sometimes like that day that I told my husband, I forget what it was about, but it wasn't with him. It was just like, I was just like, Oh, this situation happened. And I was just going to sit in it. That's what I want to do. Right. And like allowing our humanity. Sometimes I think we get into self-development thinking there is some zenith that we will arrive at that will be like the zen mountain where nothing will ever touch us again. Right. And we'll never be angry again and all those things. And I just want to be the person who's like in your ear right now saying there is no zenith, there is no mountain. I just want you to know what to do when you get angry. And to know that you have choices. Right.

Karen:

And you're gonna Screw it up. Yeah. You know, sometimes it's going to be a shit show. And it was like, that whole scenario was a big shit show for me. And I learned, and I grew and you know, so to your point, yeah. Boundaries being crossed doesn't always show up as anger. Right.





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Maggie:

And it doesn't always show up as immediate anger. Very often. If anyone listening is seething about anything, if there's any seething going on, let's check. Is there a boundary that hasn't been set or a standard, like something that I'm not available for, that I am available for.

Karen:

Or anxiety too, sometimes anxiety. Like, like if I think about it Like anxiety might be an indication that yeah, there's a boundary that either has been crossed that you didn't know, or that you need to have one or, yeah.

Maggie:

And I think one of the most important things with anger is like, looking at it, even spending the time, listening to a show like this, just thinking about the last time you were angry or the things that, that have made you angry in the past, just the willingness to be present with it automatically will help you process it better. Because I think one of the things that we do, even when we're in a situation where we feel it often and we feel very comfortable feeling it, we feel it. But we don't question it. Yes. Right. So just that, like, I know one of the things I like to do on the show is saying, okay, listen today and apply it tomorrow. It's like, what are you going to apply tomorrow? Tomorrow you're just going to start noticing, do you resist getting angry? Are you very comfortable with getting angry? Just notice that step one. And then from there, you can question, why am I resisting it? Why does this feel so comfortable and familiar? Do I want to keep that or not?

Karen:

Yeah. Is this immature mature?





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Maggie:

Is there anything that you want to add? I think this was just so good.

Karen:

Yeah. No, I mean, we went, we covered it all.

Maggie:

I love it. So awesome. Okay. So one of the things I started doing whenever I have guests on the show is I pull out The Questions For Couples Journal and I ask a random question and neither of us knows what it's going to be. I just opened the book to a random page. So I thought this was fun. I just opened the book. And the question is when you were a child, what would make you jump out of bed excited for the day?

Karen:

Wow. Gosh, I haven't thought about that in a long time. If I was visiting my dad and it was Saturday morning. It would be just the idea that we were probably going to be going to the carwash.

Maggie:

Oh, I love good carwash. I love that. We have that in common.

Karen:

We also go to McDonald's farm, which was like little, like a place where they had animals, little rides and stuff. And that always was like jumping out of bed. Yay.





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

Maggie:

I love it so much. I had the weirdest thing come up with that question. I just, when I read it, I thought if it was Saturday, there used to be a show called Solid Gold. And they had the Solid Gold dancers and it was on at five and they would have whatever the top 10 songs were in the country at the time. But then they would dance to them with these like beautiful at the time I thought they were beautiful. I don't know if I think they're beautiful now, but as a kid, I thought they're beautiful costumes. They're amazing dances. It's Saturday. There's Solid Gold today. That would be so exciting. There you go.

Karen:

Yeah, I remember Solid Gold. And I'm 10 years older than you are so, obviously not a kid.

Maggie:

So funny. Karen, how can people connect with you? Find you tell us, where do we go online to see you?

Karen:

Well, my website is, I know you're going to link to it, KCLAnderson.com. And I hang out mostly on Facebook on my personal page. If you want to friend me on Facebook, that's where I hang out online. Mostly I'm not, I do Instagram, but it's just not my, it doesn't come easily. and naturally to me, for some reason.

Maggie:

Beautiful. So friend Karen on Facebook, message her, tell her you heard her on the podcast and want to be her friend. That'll be fine. And her website, we will link to in the show notes. I want





EPISODE 35: HEALTHY ANGER WITH KAREN ANDERSON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/35](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/35)

to say the name for her book again. We'll also link to it, but it's called *Difficult Mothers, Adult Daughters, A Guide For Separation, Liberation and Inspiration*. And I think it's the premier book on planet earth. If you're struggling with your mom, this book will help you. And I think that's just, it's simple. It's super easy to follow. I'm a big fan of doability. I don't like things that are a thousand pages. And that's one of the things I love about this book is it's really, if you're struggling with your mom, definitely get Karen's book, and we'll link to it in the show notes. Thank you so so much for being here.

Karen:

It's just like so much fun to talk about anger!

Maggie:

I know, right? But I think we make anger fun, that's what we do. That's what life coaches do. So to everyone listening. Thank you so much for being here. I want to finish this episode with a little reminder that every emotion is welcome here. Every emotion is here to serve you even anger when you slow down and listen to the message that emotion has for you, you can move forward so powerfully in your life. Thank you for listening. I will be back next week with more loving guidance to help you have a better marriage.

