



# **The Fire Beneath: A Woman's Guide to Healing Anger and Reclaiming Power**

By Justyna Atkinson

**Flight of the Phoenix Holistic Therapy**



**Copyright © 2025 Flight of the Phoenix Holistic Therapy**

All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the author.

This book is intended for educational and informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical, psychological, or therapeutic advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of a qualified professional with any questions you may have regarding your health or well-being.

For permission requests, please contact:

justyna@flightofthephoenix.net

<https://flightofthephoenix.net>

This is a personal and reflective work. While it includes references to research and authors such as Dr. Harriet Lerner and her book *The Dance of Anger*, these are included to enrich and support the lived experiences I share. The intention is not to replicate or claim their work, but to recognise its relevance to what I've personally uncovered in my healing. I encourage readers to explore those original works for deeper insight.



## Table of Contents

Introduction: Why This Book Exists .....	4
Chapter 1: My Story — What My Anger Was Trying to Say .....	5
Chapter 2: My Truth About Anger .....	5
Chapter 3: What Anger Might Be Telling You .....	6
Chapter 4: Real Tools for Real Anger .....	7
Closing Words: Let the Fire Lead You Home .....	8
Affirmation .....	9



## Introduction: Why This Book Exists

This book doesn't claim to have all the answers — it's not a formula or a fix. It's a reflection of my own journey as a woman and a trauma survivor. A journey where anger was often buried, misunderstood, or feared by others and by me.

I grew up in a world where being “nice” mattered more than being honest. Where you learnt to smile through betrayal and keep helping even when your soul was exhausted? And where emotions like sadness, rage, and fear were seen as problems to be hidden, especially if you were a woman.

This book isn't here to shame anger or tell you what it should look like. It's here to explore what it's been for me — and maybe, what it might be for you too. My hope is that by sharing my story, the tools that helped me, and the truths I'm still unpacking, you'll feel a little less alone in yours.

Over time, I discovered that others had written about these truths, too. Dr. Harriet Lerner's *The Dance of Anger* became one of the books that helped me name what I already knew. She writes, “*Anger is a signal, and one worth listening to.*” That quote, and many others, affirmed what I had always sensed: my anger wasn't wrong — it was wise.



## **Chapter 1: My Story — What My Anger Was Trying to Say**

I grew up watching my mother rage — not in rare outbursts, but as a constant undercurrent. Her anger filled every room. It was loud. Scary. Unpredictable. And I judged her for it. But deep down, I also absorbed it. I didn't realise it at the time, but her rage was rooted in something deeper — fear, grief, exhaustion, unmet needs. She was drowning, and no one ever taught her how to ask for help.

I didn't just carry my own anger. I carried hers. And my grandmother's. And the silent fury of so many women who were never allowed to speak. I learnt early on that being angry made you “too much.” Dramatic. Exaggerating. Unprofessional. Unladylike. Just like her.

So I made myself small. I became the reliable one. The agreeable one. The fixer. Always trying to prove I was enough. But it was never enough. The more I gave, the more people took.

And eventually, the anger I buried started to boil over. It would hit me like a wave: hot cheeks, shaky hands, fast breath, a voice I didn't recognise. Then came the guilt. Then shame. And then I'd push it back down — until the next time.

In my younger adult years, my way of coping was alcohol — to take the edge off. Society approves of that. It's easy, cheap, and strokes the ego. It wasn't about the party, but rather a way of coping. To feel brave. To speak up. To get through another day of pretending I was okay when I wasn't.

But over the years, experiences, better choices and personal healing slowly, something shifted. I started listening. To my body. To the anger. To the stories underneath it.

It wasn't just rage — it was a voice saying:

- I'm not safe.
- I'm tired of being let down.
- I'm heartbroken from giving so much and receiving so little.
- I'm done performing and people-pleasing just to feel worthy.



My anger wasn't the problem. The problem was that no one ever taught me how to say no. How to protect myself. How to trust that my feelings were valid.

Dr. Lerner suggests that while we're not entirely responsible for the programming we received in childhood, we are responsible for understanding and addressing its impact as adults. Her book emphasises the importance of taking personal responsibility for our emotional reactions and learning to manage anger constructively. I carry that responsibility now. And I'm learning to honour it.

## **Chapter 2: My Truth About Anger**

From what I've lived and observed, anger isn't just an emotion — it's a signal. A response to pain, injustice, and being pushed past your edge. I've come to see it as something sacred. But that's not what I was taught, and maybe you weren't either.

As women, we're taught to fear anger. To feel guilty for it. We're told that being angry makes us ungrateful, difficult, too emotional, or hard to love. We grow up learning to be the peacekeepers, the fixers, the quiet ones — even when we're screaming inside.

But the truth is, anger can protect. It can motivate. It can clarify.

Lerner explains that many women fall into roles of overfunctioning — doing too much, carrying others, fixing what isn't theirs. She also identifies how others underfunction — disconnecting from their own needs and voice. I've played both roles, and I'm still learning to notice when I fall back into them — meeting myself with more self-awareness and compassion each time I do. As she says, "Anger is a tool for change when it challenges us to become more of our true self."

Yes, anger can be destructive when we suppress it, ignore it, or explode. But when we feel it without fear and listen to what it asks of us, it becomes a compass pointing us home.



## **Chapter 3: What Anger Might Be Telling You**

This is what I've discovered underneath my own anger — and what I hear from other women. You might find different things beneath yours, or you might relate to some of this too.

- Fear that was never comforted
- Wounds from childhood that were never fully seen or acknowledged
- Boundaries that were crossed on multiple occasions
- Burnout from being the strong, reliable nurturer
- Emotional abandonment
- The ache of not being treated with dignity

These things don't make you weak. They make you human. Anger is just the flare. What's underneath it is what really needs our attention.

Dr. Lerner encourages us to ask: Where is this anger truly directed? Who holds the power in this dynamic? And most importantly: what change are we asking for? She reminds us that the change process begins with us.

## **Chapter 4: Real Tools for Real Anger**

These are the practices that helped me come back to myself. Use what resonates. Leave what doesn't. There's no perfect way to heal — only your way.

### **Journaling**

- What is my anger protecting?
- What do I need right now?
- What did I learn about anger growing up?

### **Breathwork**

- Box breathing: Inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4
- 4-7-8 breathing: Inhale 4, hold 7, exhale 8

### **Mindfulness & Meditation**



- Body scans
- Naming where anger lives in the body
- Guided meditations on emotional regulation

#### Movement

- Yoga, martial arts, dancing, or shaking

#### Creative Expression

- Paint your anger
- Write poetry
- Play music

#### Boundaries

- Notice what feels draining
- Practice saying "no" even if it feels uncomfortable
- Affirm your right to space and rest

#### Support

- Join groups
- Work with a trauma-informed practitioner
- Talk to people who truly listen

Lerner teaches us to use anger not as a weapon, but as a wake-up call — not to control others, but to return to ourselves and reconnect with the freedom that has always been ours.

## **Closing Words: Let the Fire Lead You Home**

Anger isn't a flaw. It's a voice. A fierce, sacred part of you that still believes in your worth. It's not here to destroy — it's here to protect, to awaken, to guide.

So let it lead you. Back to your voice. Back to your truth. Back to your wholeness.





## **Affirmation**

Today, I choose to believe that I am a woman of depth, grace and truth.  
I rise from my past with wisdom and purpose.  
I trust my voice, speak with clarity and honour my emotions as sacred.  
I no longer shrink. I no longer silence.  
I am whole. I am powerful. I am free.

### **Let's stay connected:**

- Website: <https://flightofthephoenix.net/>
- Email: [justyna@flightofthephoenix.net](mailto:justyna@flightofthephoenix.net)
- Explore more from me: <https://flightofthephoenix.net/links>

**Thank you for reading.**

Let us heal, grow, thrive and inspire each other.

With love and strength,

Justyna