

Childhood Sexual Abuse &

ANGER



THE KAVANAGH SISTERS

Childhood Sexual Abuse and ANGER



Published by Joyce, June and Paula Kavanagh
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“Every day we have plenty of opportunities to get angry, stressed or offended. But what you’re doing when you indulge these negative emotions is giving something outside yourself power over your happiness. You can choose to not let little things upset you.

Joel Osteen

WELCOME

'The greatest remedy for anger is delay.'

Thomas Paine

According to Collins English Dictionary Anger is the strong emotion that you feel when you think that someone has behaved in an unfair, cruel, or unacceptable way.

Anger can also be described as a natural emotion that causes a set of reactions that can be either viewed as positive or negative. Anger can also be a secondary response or a substitute emotion to cover up feelings of sadness, loneliness, pain or fear.

We can get angry if we feel hungry, tired, cold, hot, irritated, frustrated or if we are reacting to perceived criticism, other people's opinions or actions that we may not agree with.

Anger is a completely normal emotion and can be a positive or negative driving force in your life. However, if you express your anger in a passive or volatile manner you can be perceived as intimidating, threatening or even frightening to others.

It is important that you are aware of how your anger is triggered and how to deescalate the situation before it becomes a problem for you or those around you. Those who suffer with anger problems can have problems with developing or maintaining friendships, partnerships or even employment.

Below are the ten most common types of anger that might help you identify the type/s that are most familiar and possibly driving your thoughts and behaviours.

Assertive anger -

is said to be a positive way to express rather than repress your emotions. You can use this anger to drive change and overcome your fear of confrontation. It is usually driven when you feel an injustice has occurred.

Behavioural anger –

is usually expressed physically and with aggression and can be very unpredictable. Those that experience this type of anger say that they can feel so overwhelmed by their emotions that they lash out at someone or damage property before they can stop themselves.

Chronic anger –

Is one of the most negative types of anger as it is relentless and can be driven by a victim mentality. With this type of prolonged anger, you can be filled with resentment of others, your personal circumstances and can be directed at yourself.

Judgmental anger –

is shrouded in the belief that others are not as educated, good, attractive, intelligent and hold views that you do not feel you should tolerate.

Overwhelmed anger -

is one of the most destructive types of anger. Those who experience this type of anger feel they have no emotional or behavioural control of a particular situation or circumstance. They can become overwhelmed with feelings of hopelessness and frustration.

Passive-aggressive anger -

is typically about avoidance. It can be driven by repressed feelings of fear, low self-esteem or frustration. It is often as a result of not feeling able to speak up or confront an individual or situation. This is usually expressed through the use of sarcasm, silence or mockery.

Retaliatory anger -

is a common instinctual response to confrontation or physically being attacked. It is usually motivated by the desire for revenge and is planned and intimidating.

Self-abusive anger -

is probably the most destructive type of anger. It is described as shame-based driven from feelings of worthlessness and self-hatred. This type of anger is usually expressed through extremely negative behaviours like self-harm, substance abuse and eating disorders.

Verbal anger -

is easy to identify. It is an extremely destructive and can cause emotional and psychological damage at those that it is directed. It can be expressed through shouting, criticising, threatening, ridiculing and or making fun of someone.

Volatile anger -

It can be the most difficult to understand for those around you. This type of anger can appear to occur out of the blue with no warning. Those that experience this form of anger are often quick to anger and just as quick to calm down.

However, those around them can feel on edge as they cannot anticipate or avoid what makes you angry as you may not even be aware of your own triggers.

Anger and Rage

Anger and Rage have been close friends of mine
From the moment my abuse began
And I always received the message growing up
That a woman was less than a man

Although I had all of these feelings inside
I was never allowed to express
My power, my choices had all been removed
There were things I could never confess

The impact of never getting to say
All that I felt deep inside
The anger the rage the frustration
Got harder and harder to hide

Everyone reaches a breaking point
When they feel they can't take any more
The anger only helped to hide my pain
The rage frightened me even more.

Aggression made others think I was strong
But really all I was, was scared
Most of the time on the inside
All I felt was frightened and afraid

When I look back now at those times
I can see I was an absolute mess
How anyone ever loved me
Makes me feel that I must have been blessed

Lots of love, time and plenty of support
Are the things that got me through
I have a message to give you now
And that is,.... you can do it too.

June Kavanagh

WHAT ANGER DOES TO YOUR HEALTH

*"You will not be punished for your anger,
you will be punished by your anger.*

Buddha

Anger triggers your body's 'fight or flight' response flooding your body with stress hormones (adrenaline & cortisol). If not managed it may become a destructive force in your life leading to physical and emotional problems.

Physically you can develop aches and pains, high blood pressure, sleep problems, digestive problems, skin disorders and an impaired immune system.

Mentally going over something that makes you angry or upset will only intensify the feelings and make you miserable. You are likely to develop depression, sleep difficulties, changes in appetite, feelings of hopelessness, fear and anxiety. Emotionally your confidence and self-belief will suffer, you may turn to alcohol or substance abuse to attempt to alleviate the emotional pain. So interrupting your thought processes is important to maintain your mental health.

Individuals who suffer with anger are often diagnosed with the following psychiatric conditions/disorders. Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Conduct Disorder (in children and adolescents), Psychotic Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Antisocial, Borderline, Paranoid and Narcissistic Personality.

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS ANGER

*'Speak when you are angry - and you'll
make the best speech you'll ever regret.'*

Laurene J.Peter

If you have identified the type of anger you either express or repress your emotions with then here are some helpful tips to help you explore a more positive form of emotional expression.

1. Always try to remove yourself from the situation and give yourself some time to calm down.
2. Try to identify what physical reactions precede an anger outburst. Bring your attention to your breath, breathe in for 10-breaths out for 10 and then reduce to 9,8,7, etc.
3. Ask for help, call someone, a professional counsellor, family member, friend, colleague, partner. It is a sign of strength to ask for help not a sign of weakness.
4. Try to reduce any additional stress in your life, if possible delegate jobs that can be carried out by others.
5. Self-reflection is always important to explore what is really going on, is that person, thing, situation worth falling out or damaging a relationship for.
6. Find a more positive way to express how you feel, write down your feelings in a letter you can decide after you have completed the letter whether to send or burn the important thing is to get the feelings out and make sense of your emotional responses.

7. Take time to explore the other persons point of view, we all filter things through our own experiences and can be guilty of reading a situation wrongly.

8. Attend a self-development or self-assertive course that will assist you feeling in more control of your emotions during stressful times. It will also help you confront your fears and understand that confronting an individuals or situation is never as bad as the feelings around them.

9. Lastly forgive yourself and make peace with however you reacted, you can always apologise to others if you feel you were wrong. Forgiveness or letting go is the most compassionate gift you can give yourself.

OUR EXPERIENCES

'Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.'

Buddha

JOYCE

I learned very early that expression of emotions was not a good thing, it was a luxury awarded to some adults. Although this didn't stop me crying a lot as a child I neither understood or truly felt what was happening to me. I had many coping mechanisms to get me through none of which I was aware of as a child or an adult.

Anger was something I was well used to as I witnessed my father throwing a tantrum daily over one thing or another. His angry outbursts although scary were part of my daily experience almost as regular as the sexual abuse. One emotion I recall easily is fear, it was the strongest emotion I can recall but I think my father liked me afraid so showing fear was not an issue.

I know I felt angry at times, but it was always topped with frustration as I had no outlet for it. Besides our limitations in the home we lived in a culture where women had very clear roles of being a good wife and mother and men were always more important. Women didn't get angry it was a privilege afforded to men only.

On occasion I was so overcome with anger I would starve myself or faint. I liked fainting as no matter how I felt when I fainted I was always relaxed when I woke up and felt my head was clear for a while. Starving myself was a cry for notice, I

wanted someone to notice me or ask me how I was feeling, the reality is if someone did ask I probably wouldn't have been able to answer as I was so cut off from myself I don't think I knew what was going on for me most of the time.

I believed I was an idiot as I wished I could get away and yet even school was a big threat to me, for as bad as things were at home it was the only place I felt safe. Contradictions like this made me feel like an idiot. When I felt anger as a teenager I would just get snappy with my siblings and at times I was cruel to them. It was the only way I could feel I had some form of control and it was safe to express with them as I felt they knew no better than me.

As an adult I simply used the energy that came with anger to get physical, I would dig the garden or do a spring clean with attitude. I'd be so exhausted when I was finished I'd forget why I was angry in the first place. My other immature method of dealing with anger as an adult was to isolate myself by giving everyone the silent treatment. I know I convinced myself it was for their own good as I had no idea what I would say or do but the reality was the energy that went side by side with anger was quite frightening.

I only recall feeling rage once in my life and to be honest it took me years to recover as the fear of what I could have done was so frightening it impacted me deeply. I was having an argument with my then husband and honestly if I could have reached him I would be doing time now for murder. My mind went blank, I was engulfed by white light and nothing else mattered, not the fact that I had a baby in the next room, not that I would hurt someone, not that I would have to pay for what I did, I cared about nothing other than reaching and hurting him fatally. Following that episode, I learned once again that it is not safe or good to be angry.

As I learned more about how to feel, name and deal with normal everyday emotions I became better at identifying what was happening for me, what triggered me and how best to deal with any given situation. I can and do get angry at times, but I can deal with it maturely by saying how I feel and why. It also provides me with information on the action that led to my anger in the first place and to be honest most of the time it is thoughtlessness and inconsideration that makes me angry and once I express myself it is gone.

I have also learned that in 99% of the situations I still use anger to keep me away from some hurt I am feeling so when I get past my resistance I delve into how I am feeling now and why and again when I discover what is hurting me I can let it go.

This is not such a big issue for me now, but I am far from immune to anger it is just not so threatening anymore.

JUNE

It is very hard to describe how I experienced anger as a child. It certainly was an emotion I was familiar with all my life. I never knew there were ten different kinds of anger and now that I do know, I can see that at different stages in my life I have felt and acted out of every one of them.

I was in my teens when I realised how awful it was to feel angry all the time. I hated myself, I hated my father, I hated God, I hated my life. I felt lonely all the time. I was feeling anger and rage on a regular basis and I wanted to kill my father on many occasions, but my fear of him smothered my anger leaving me feeling like a coward. I couldn't find any answers to the questions in my head, like why is this happening to me? Does my father not love me? Why would he hurt me? What is wrong with me? What can I do about it?

The use of sarcasm allowed me to seep out fragments of my anger. I grew up in a house filled with sarcasm and so I joined in and became very good at it. This behaviour helped somewhat but was not enough to release the amount of anger I felt and eventually this led to regular bouts of depression. I was filled with self-hatred because I thought I was the problem and had such a poor self-image. I could see no way to escape my abuse leaving me feeling trapped and wanting to die.

In my late teens I had an argument with my brother over who owned a karate outfit. He was convinced it was his, but it was given to me. He wasn't backing down and I could feel the anger rising in me to the point I feared I could literally kill him. My mother intervened and ended the argument. I don't remember the outcome, but I was now more concerned with the fear I had of my own rage. I walked away from the disagreement shaken but never told anyone what I had felt inside because it was yet

again another confirmation that I was not a good person.

Of course I can also remember many occasions screaming at my Father silently in my head, No, No, No, leave me alone.... begging him to stop hurting me, and praying for someone to help or save me.

In hindsight I know my anger and rage were a reaction to the pain and hurt I felt inside. I could not stop the abuse and although I had resigned myself to the fact I had no power that resignation felt like a death to me.

It was futile to hope for anything better, but I still had to carry on living. I had no choice in the fact that I had to take part in something that hurt me, sickened me and I hated. It makes sense to me now that the result of suppressing my feelings for so many years led to me believing that I was weak, I was ugly, and I was stupid. I couldn't make decisions for myself, I was afraid of everything. I used anger to beat myself up, it was my go to emotion, always handy and easy to get to.

My defects as I saw them were simply the result of my childhood experience, the more awareness I gained about my childhood the more I was able to release the anger and rage I held inside for so long. I no longer needed a cover for my pain as I found better ways to deal with my emotions. The happier and healthier I became the less I suffered with feelings of anger. Although I may never be entirely free of anger, rage is a stranger to me now. I am not immune to anger, I am working on it and hopefully someday I will learn to manage it completely.

PAULA

I looked at the list above and I can tell you there are some types of anger that as a child I definitely did not express myself out of. You could never say that I was assertive with my anger and turned it into something positive. Neither could you say that I used my anger in a retaliatory manner as I was so afraid of confrontation that would just not happen.

I would describe my anger as internal. If I could draw an image of it would be like hot steam running around looking for an escape but with no outlet so just building and building.

When I was younger I was so filled with rage more than anger. I constantly felt powerless and directed my thoughts at myself and how cowardly I felt at not doing something, anything. I hated that I never said anything, fought back, hit someone, ran away, or even smashed something, just to release the feelings I had.

Although I often felt overwhelmed with anger because I could do nothing about it. I used sleep, obsessive behaviours or running to manage the build-up. I cannot describe just how much I hated my life and everyone at home. I fear that if I had lived in a country where people had guns. I would have been one of those that killed their family and then shot themselves.

As I got older I operated out of a victim mentality. I blamed everyone for everything and as I also struggled in admitting any mistakes. I made poor judgments based on my own insecurities and the belief that I was not worth anything and nobody cared if I was alive or dead.

Unconsciously my anger was seeping out all over the place. I came across aggressive, argumentative and opinionated. I was

terrified all the time, I was deeply depressed and as much as I tried I couldn't feel anything other than self-disappointment.

I recall when I was in college I had to interview a friend of Joyce's for an assignment. I had to ask a number of pre-prepared questions about her role within the organisation and what her challenges were, nothing too heavy. I taped the interview to make it easier and make sure I missed nothing.

I cannot to this day tell you how much listening back to that recording impacted me. I was horrified at my voice and the tone or aggression in each question I asked. It took many years for me to recover from the reality of how much I sounded angry even when I was anything but.

Only in my 40's this began to change, writing our first book was the start of me finding something in myself to like. It was slow but over time I got to understand that strength lies in sharing your story. In the telling of my story I found compassion from others, but more importantly myself. I got to see how destructive keeping things inside can be.

I on occasion still fall back into this pattern of behaviour of closing down and isolating myself but it doesn't last nearly as long. I now have people in my life that recognise what I am doing and challenge it.

In writing our second book I put the final pieces of the jigsaw together. I hope I sound a lot less angry now as I certainly no longer feel I am holding anger inside. I have got a lot better at expressing myself when I am hurt or annoyed at someone. And I no longer fear confrontation. I am much more willing to put my hand up and no longer see my mistakes as the end of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

"You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."

Maya Angelou

We are three sisters from a family of ten children who grew up in Dublin, Ireland, in the 1960's. We were strongly influenced by our surroundings of poverty and a culture where no one spoke about what happened in their homes.

This culture ensured we keep our 'Secret' without ever questioning if we had a choice. We were each being sexually abused daily by our father and regardless of how we felt about what was happening, at the time we each believed it was only happening to 'ME'.

It's hard to imagine how we lived through the trauma or how we all emerged out the other end, but here we are. We can now look back with gratitude that our experience set us on a path of self-discovery and personal growth.

It is through our deep understanding of ourselves and our behaviors and all of the complexities that arise from sexual abuse that we now believe we are in a position to help others.

It is our intention to contribute to the eradication of childhood sexual abuse using our knowledge and understanding of the impacts that sexual abuse has on its immediate and secondary victims.

Through the writing and promotion of our books: We aim to,

- Promote open discussions on childhood sexual abuse.
- Encourage recognition that a change in perspectives on how perpetrators are currently viewed and treated by society is necessary.
- Through the telling of our own story, we provide an in-depth; picture of childhood sexual abuse to prevent minimizing or underestimation of its impacts.
- We strongly promote compulsory and substantial training on all crimes of a sexual nature for all members of the legal system but with particular emphasis on judges.
- We also wish to raise awareness of the suffering of the many secondary victims in our communities who can often find themselves ostracized for a crime they did not commit.

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

"It has never been easy for me to understand why people work so hard to create something beautiful, but then refuse to share it with anyone, for fear of criticism."

Elizabeth Gilbert

[Click, Click](#), our first book was published in 2011 and tells the story of our childhood abuse. It took us 20 years to complete and was a very difficult book to write.

Our intention when writing the book was to provide the child's perspective to ensure that there was a clear understanding of exactly what abuse is and also to prevent abusers romanticizing or lying to themselves about what they were doing to children.

This required that we each revisit our abuse and write about it as if it was actually happening then and there. The process along with our discussions about the insights we gathered while writing are what is contained within the book.

Our approach to writing was not easy and we often had to walk away from the book for months or even years at a time to allow healing to occur.

We knew we had to complete the book so no matter how difficult it was to write, we kept returning to it until it was done. Healing the wounds of our past meant we could finally move forward with our lives and that is exactly what we have done.

Our second book [‘Why Go Back? 7 Steps to Healing from Childhood Sexual Abuse,’](#) published in 2017 took six years to complete. This book demonstrates all the learning and growth that has occurred since the completion of our first book.

Initially it was a surprise to us that people were constantly asking us how we ‘got over’ our abuse as it was something we never thought about. We soon realised we had more work to do, not only on ourselves but for the many other victims of sexual abuse.

We began our process of discussing, writing, challenging, researching and at times, just as with [‘Click, Click’](#), we had to walk away for a period of time to allow us to integrate the learning and allow more growth to occur.

With this book we finally felt like adults, standing on our own two feet, taking control and full responsibility for our lives. We grew up with this book and it was not without a cost. Growth can be painful at times. Finally, [‘Why Go Back? 7 Steps to Healing from Childhood Sexual abuse,’](#) was complete and we were filled with pride. The process of writing this book has healed a lot of our past hurts and we know in our hearts it will do the same for others.

We have come so far and the process of writing the content for [‘Click, Click’](#) and later [‘Why Go Back? 7 Steps to Healing from Childhood Sexual Abuse.’](#) is a huge contributing factor. Changing the beliefs, we held around our personal responsibility for what had happened to us was vital for us to move forward.

Today we are happier than we could ever have hoped to be and want to help other survivors of childhood sexual abuse take their own healing journey.

We are now the proud Authors of two books. '[Click, Click](#)', and '[Why Go Back? 7 Steps to Healing from Childhood Sexual Abuse](#).'

We are also looking forward to publishing a number of FREE to download workbooks along with a Workbook that will be a companion to '[Why Go Back? 7 Steps to Healing from Childhood Sexual Abuse](#).' in early 2018.

Get in touch! thekavanaghsisters@gmail.com
Visit our website www.thekavanaghsisters.com

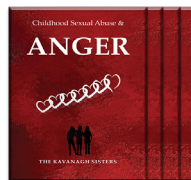
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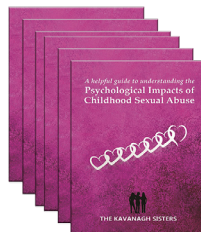
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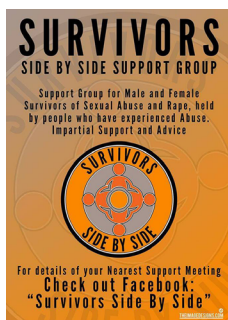


WHY GO BACK?
7 Steps to Healing from
Childhood Sexual Abuse



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Organisation	Phone Number
DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE	1800 77 8888
Athlone Midland Rape Crisis Centre	1800 306 600
Carlow & South Leinster Rape Crisis Centre	1800 727 737
Sexual Violence Centre Cork	1800 496 496
Donegal Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre	1800 4488 44
Galway Rape Crisis Centre	1800 355 355
Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre	1800 633 333
Kilkenny Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Counselling	1800 478 478
Mayo Rape Crisis Centre	1800 234 900
Rape Crisis Midwest (Limerick)	1800 311 511
Rape Crisis Midwest (Nenagh & Clare Outreach Services)	1800 311 511
Rape Crisis Northeast (Louth)	1800 212 122
Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Counsellign Centre for Sligo, Leitrim & West Cavan	1800 750 780
Tipperary Regional Sexual Abuse Rape Crisis Centre	1800 340 340
Tullamore Regional Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre	057 932 2500
Waterford Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre	1800 296 296
Wexford Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Services	1800 33 00 33
NEXUS NI	028 9032 6803
ONE IN FOUR	01 662 4070
SMARITANS (UK)	116 123
PIETA HOUSE	01 628 2111



This facebook page has been set up by Shaneda Daly a survivor of sexual abuse, to help other victims, their families and friends.

She is currently in the process of setting up countrywide support groups Survivors Side by Side Support Group

[Survivors Side by Side Support Group](#)

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Theodore Roosevelt

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