

Abstract

"For years, I've been treating the Hulk like he's some kind of disease, something to get rid of. But then I start looking at him as the cure. Eighteen months in the gamma lab, I put the brains and the brawn together and now look at me. Best of both worlds."

—Bruce Banner

When I first heard the above quote, I felt deeply moved. Here was this 'monster' that people were afraid of, who was deeply ashamed of himself, yet an important part of the Avengers assemble. Seeing how the team members accepted him fully and how Bruce would self-sabotage relationships and withdraw, really touched me deeply.

From my own experience of anger and rage I am aware of the shaming responses that can be experienced to the result of expressing anger and how this can cause relational breaks and inner confusion and turmoil.

I found that several of my clients were having similar difficulties expressing their anger due to developmental mis-attunements. I am aware that relational breaks can create an unhealthy coping mechanism to emotions, especially to anger as in British culture it is frowned upon. This can then lead to further relational difficulties with others and even with the self. I have found that empathy and

acceptance to anger aids in decreasing shame, which itself can generate anger as a self-defence within a client.

I witnessed this with a client, who I will provide a case study for, who struggled to feel angry for himself yet would experience bouts of rage on the part of another, particularly his children. He had developed alcoholism to numb and repress overwhelming feelings and was initially completely unaware of instances of passive aggression that he would demonstrate to others. I will share how we explored his feelings of anger and how over time he has managed to acknowledge the pain that his anger is protecting him from. At time of writing, he still holds an element of shame around his anger, however it is to a much lesser extent, and he has been able to recognise and express himself more congruently to others.

I will be looking at the development and the importance of working with anger within a therapeutic relationship and why it is something a therapist would find of great use if recognising within themselves. My literature review will be from books, papers, and online sources and explore what is currently known in the field of psychotherapy around this subject.

My aim is to learn more about this often misunderstood and undervalued emotion, to be better able to support the clients that I see in my placement.