

# Got Anger? Try Naming It To Tame It

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Over the past three years, I've had one major goal in my personal life: To stop being so angry.

Anger has been my emotional currency. I grew up in an angry home. Door slamming and phone throwing were basic means of communication.

I brought these skills to my 20-year marriage. "Why are you yelling?" my husband would say.

"I'm not," I'd retort. Oh wait. On second thought: "You're right. I am yelling."

Then three years ago, an earthquake hit our home: We had a baby girl. And all I wanted was the opposite. I wanted her to grow up in a peaceful environment — to learn other ways of handling uncomfortable situations.

So I went to therapy. I kept cognitive behavioral therapy worksheets. I took deep breaths, counted to 10 and walked out of rooms. And I even meditated at night.

These strategies helped me manage the anger, but they never really decreased it. It was like keeping a feral horse in a barn. I was contained, but not really domesticated.

Then, six months ago, I was talking with [Lisa Feldman Barrett](#), a psychologist at Northeastern University. Right at the end of the hour-long interview, she tossed out this suggestion: "You could increase your emotional granularity."

My *emotional* what?