

Our ongoing services:

- Stoppit Anger Support Group, every Wed. 6:30-8:30 PM at Family Health Care, Rainbow and SW Blvd
- Individual, Couples and Family Training
- Workshops-professional and consumer
- Presentations for professional staffs, churches, support groups
- Workplace and employee conflict resolution

www.anger.org



News from Anger Alternatives

Guest Writers



As an educational program, Anger Alternatives' intent is to use our newsletter as a platform to present different ideas, thoughts and views relating to anger.

To implement this, we have started inviting professionals* from various fields to bring forth information and knowledge that are "out of our box". We believe this will be of great interest to our readers.

Our first guest writer is **Karen Martin, M.A., L.P.C.**, who brings 24 years of experience as a psychologist and retreat and workshop facilitator. She works with each client to "enliven" their lives often using writing and/or art, to treat core issues and become able to risk changing patterns that continue pain and suffering

We had new discoveries when we read Karen's article and did the exercise she presents. We hope you enjoy and profit from her piece and ask you to share your experience and feedback with us at rusty@anger.org or through our website www.anger.org.

Jerry and Rusty

**If you are a community professional and have an interest in taking part in our newsletter to present your "view" on anger, we invite you to [contact us](#).*

My Life as a Work of Art



Karen Martin

When anger is in control of life, it is never a pretty picture. Learning to own and express in meaningful and responsible ways one's angry feelings is tough work, constant work. The payoff, however, is magnificent. The payoff is freedom from slavery to our reactionary behaviors. Freedom to experience my own emotion as a tool that *informs* me rather than *controls* me.

The aim of this article is to teach one simple way to slow down, explore your angry feelings - in a way that not only gives you information about yourself (or your Self!) but also encourages growth from the inside out. The whole idea springs from a period of art called Expressionist.

Expressionist is an artistic style in which the artist depicts personal, spontaneous, subjective emotions and responses to situations and events. It is no accident that when this movement in the art world showed up it became a time of great social change. It was the late 19th and early 20th century, and for the first time the world saw expression of inner experience

on canvas, not just classical, rational depictions of the exteriors of settings and people. The goal was not to reproduce accurately something for the rest of the world to see, but to vigorously, visibly show the artist's own emotional statement, an accurate representation of its real meaning to him.

It is no accident that the very expression of vivid thoughts and emotions is a safe way - after all, it was only a painting - helped spawn positive social changes in the world. Have you ever seen Edvard Munch's "The Scream?" Ever feel just that anxious? Or Vincent Van Gogh's "Starry Night." Ever feel that intensely? In Don McLean's song, "Vincent", he gives us lyrics for the painting that say "Starry, starry night, paint your palette blue and grey, Look out on a summer's day, with eyes that know the darkness in my soul." So, in Expressionism, artists began "speaking," giving permission to emotions for us all.

What if we'd do the same for ourselves personally? Allow and express vividly our feelings to ourselves? Maybe our worlds would undergo marvelous change, because in expressing safely to ourselves, and ourselves alone, we can learn what's *really* beneath that fury, that depression, that powerlessness or need for superpower.

Most of us were trained to do one of two extremes with our vivid responses to "life:" hold it in or act it out. Neither is conducive to an "artful" life, ie: personal growth or relationship strengthening. If we're not involved in insightfulness or strengthening, life is rather empty; whether pretty or ugly, it is an empty picture that results in no growth, meaning or connection.

We can take the Expressionists' lesson, to vividly depict thought and felt responses to situations and interactions in our lives...put it up in front of ourselves, as if in our own gallery, stand back and say, "Huh, wow, I get it now." This is the first step toward being able to experience the feeling of anger in a way that informs me, not controls me.

So, here's an art-full exercise. *No previous art experience necessary!* And only three supplies are needed:

1. Paper
2. Colors, like crayons or markers.
3. A topic: some interaction, event that is sparking angry feelings.

Directions:

All the way through, use only the *non-dominant* hand. The one you never write with. Why? First, you have permission to not be able to make great art with the hand that never even writes or brushes your teeth! Second, the non-dominant hand will go much more slowly, which gives you time to slow down and hear the emotions, intuition, and wisdom that live in the right brain.

So, with the non-dominant hand (the one you never write with):

1. Begin by drawing a border.
 - a. just this simple line creates safety, boundaries, a sense of control b. it can be any shape, sturdiness or color
2. Still with the non-dominant hand, write on top of the paper: I am angry at _____ and fill in the name or situation.
3. Close your eyes now and feel the anger in your body. Where in your body does the anger reside? And, notice, becoming aware that these are feelings **within you** more than they are feelings **at** someone or something.
4. Imagine the anger flowing out of you, now drawing the anger out of you, making whatever kinds of marks on the paper it feels like. Keep drawing, still with the non-dominant hand, until the last bit of it (for now) is on the paper.
5. If you notice words coming into mind as you are expressing this anger, the non-dominant hand can write them on the paper, too.

6. When you feel there is no more anger in you, sit back and breathe, “Ahhh.” Feeling the shift within you, a greater understanding of yourself.
7. Express gratitude to yourself for contacting and expressing this anger is such a safe way.
8. Treating your “expressionist” drawing like any great piece of art, give it a title. Yes, write the title on the paper! Still with the non-dominant hand.
9. Lastly, take a clean piece of paper and draw a picture of yourself now, empty of the old angry feelings. And write any words or title that occur to you.

Continue making art? That may sound like quite a leap if you’ve called yourself a “non-artist.” But you’ve just made an important piece of art! Important to you, and your growth. If all the above self-communication takes place before we communicate with each other, what a better (more artful) world it would be. And voila! Our lives become works of art.

To contact Karen Martin, please call (816)-561-1622.

For more information on dealing with anger issues, please visit anger.org or contact us at 816-753-5118.