**Episode intro:**

I think it's most dangerous if someone is like I should be good with other people's anger. No, you shouldn't. You either are or you are not. If you aren't, take care of yourself. If you are, great, lean in. Just worry about loving your own anger, and all the rest of it will take care of itself.

Welcome to the Art of Accomplishment, where we explore how deepening connection with ourselves and others leads to creating the life we want with enjoyment and ease.

My name is Brett Kistler. I am an adventurer, entrepreneur and a self exploration enthusiast. I am here with my co-host**,** Joe Hudson. Joe is a business coach who has spent decades working with some of the world´s top executives and teams developing a unique model of human patterns that underpin how we operate with ourselves, each other and the world. A good entry point into this model is a mindset called VIEW, vulnerability, impartiality, empathy and wonder.

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It may be that the most misunderstood and hated emotion in our society is anger. At some point in probably everyone's life, words spoken in anger have cut us deep to the bone. Actions taken from a place of rage have broken relationships and door hinges and turned families and societies against themselves, but where would we be without our anger? How can anger point to what we and others love and care deeply about? What does anger look like when we allow ourselves to feel it fully and cleanly?

**Brett:** Welcome to our series on emotions and the wisdom behind them. How are you doing today, Joe?

**Joe:** I'm doing well. It is a rainy spring day in Sonoma County.

**Brett:** Joe, what makes us so afraid of anger?

**Joe:** I think a lot of us have suffered abuse through anger. I think a lot of us have abused other people through anger. There is a time in development where you get so angry that you lose control. You do something that you don't want to do. You say something that you don't want to say. That often hurts other people. Often, we are taught pretty early on that getting angry can get you what you want, or it can oppress you. If it is a power over dynamic, one person is oppressed and one person is apparently getting what they want. No matter which side you are on on

that, there is a certain amount of shame that goes along with it. You can't feel completely 100% good with having oppressed somebody, and you can't feel completely 100% at being oppressed.

For all those reasons, what I would call this very beautiful, amazing energy gets tabooed, hated. People are scared of it. Then it becomes this weapon and this villain, and then the whole society points towards that anger as an out of controlness or something. They are not making the distinction between the emotion of anger and somebody using anger at somebody, using anger to manipulate.

**Brett:** What is that distinction then between feeling anger in a way that's not meant to manipulate or control?

**Joe:** It's going and getting angry out in the woods. That would be a simplified example of it. Another example is I have this thing about cooking breakfast, and my kids have this thing about waiting unconsciously for the moment when all of the pancakes have to be done in the right place and the eggs. It is that moment of, I am totally focused, and that will be the time my kids will ask me for three or four things at the same time. My wife will be like have you cut the lawn or whatever. Not that I have cut the lawn in like decades or maybe ever.

There's a story. One time that was happening and I was just so frustrated. I put down my spatula, and I jumped up and down. I am angry. I am angry. I am angry. My daughter was like 11. She looked at me and was like that was some pretty good anger, dad. Thanks. That's what anger looks like when it is not at somebody. You are just angry. You are just frustrated. It is what it is. If I was like God damn it, kids, stop talking to me while I am cooking. I am trying to control them. I am using my anger to influence them, to scare them into submission.

Of course, if you get hacked at by a sword enough, you are going to dislike the sword, but then you don't get to use the sword in the way that it is useful, that it is constructive and beautiful.

**Brett:** What is the way that is constructive and beautiful when you are feeling anger in the kitchen with your kids?

**Joe:** Anger for me nowadays, one, it shows there is something that I care about. If I am angry about something, it means there is something I care about and that I love. In this particular case, I care that I am cooking for my kids. I am nurturing them. I am taking my responsibility as a dad seriously. There is love and care there. That's one of the things it teaches me.

The second thing it teaches me is that I have a boundary that's being crossed. There's a way in which I am not taking care of myself. In that case with my kids, there are probably three times they have tried to interrupt me before and instead of

saying sweetie, I am cooking. Could I have time to concentrate and then we can talk over breakfast? I've instead gone, I should be okay with her interrupting me. I'd be a good dad. I was good with it. Why am I not patient? Why am I so bothered by the fact she is interrupting me? I did something like that instead of taking care of myself and saying I would love to talk with you about that, but let's do it over lunch.

That's another thing. There's a boundary that I am not taking care of myself. That's the second indicator, and then the third indicator is there is something that I am scared about. There is some way in which I am scared that I am going to make a crap breakfast and then everybody is going to make fun of me. They are not going to want to eat it. I can't remember exactly, but maybe at the time I was scared I was going to make more work for my wife who had already worked hard that week with the kids. There is also a fear there. That's also a really good indicator. What is it that I feel scared of?

All of that together is, if you feel that fear and you feel the care, there is often this feeling of trappedness that comes along with it, too. I am a bad dad if I don't get the pancakes right. I am a bad dad if I don't answer their questions. I can't fucking win. Fuck! It's like that. Those are the indicators of what the anger is, and that really allows you to open up the whole thing. All of that is this very intellectual process, and in the case of this where you just let the anger move for a moment. I am just so angry, and they are like that's good angry, dad. Immediately I have connection again, and immediately I had clarity.

I remember after I was done, and then we all kind of laughed. I said hey, can you let me focus for a moment until breakfast is ready, and they were like yeah. That clarity of action. This is what I need to do to take care of myself, and you just do it. Anger just talks differently than logic does. Actually all emotions probably talk differently than logic does, in the same way. Logic is like a plus b equals c, and therefore a minus c equals b. That's the logic system. Whereas anger is more like [jumbled noise], aah, clarity. When you really allow the anger to move through without the resistance, with the love, you find these great moments of clarity and empowerment.

**Brett:** You mentioned this thing about damned if you do, damned if you don't, where you feel trapped between these two outcomes you want to avoid, being a bad dad in one way and being dad in another way. Anger seems to be something that comes up when we feel trapped. There could be times when we are physically trapped, and we are angry. But more often than not, we are psychologically trapped or emotionally feeling trapped.

That anger is our attempt, our determination to get out of that trappedness. That seems like a healthy impulse to have. How does that become twisted into something that's dangerous and damaging?

**Joe:** That feels like that's a two-part question. The first part of your question is how does it, directly, which is, we then use the anger to try to control others, but the deeper question is, how does that even get to the feeling of trappedness in the first place? That's usually based on trauma. For instance, I would be a fine father if I screwed up the pancakes and I would be a fine father if I showed frustration at my kids. None of those is going to make me a bad father. Maybe doing them over and over and over again on purpose or something would.

I am not actually trapped. In that moment, I am not actually trapped, but I've convinced myself I am. The reason we convince ourselves we are trapped and we are not, is often because of our childhood. Because in my childhood, for instance, if I didn't do something right, I would get yelled at. I am trying not to get yelled at. I feel trapped, not because I am trapped in this particular day and age. I am trapped, because it reminds me of a situation where I was trapped as a kid. That's the other thing that happens is that the feeling– Oftentimes we are not angry at the situation we are in. We are angry at a situation we couldn't control from our earlier childhood days.

Trauma is basically the experience of being in an old circumstance instead of the circumstance you are currently in, i.e., somebody who has PTSD thinking they are back in Iraq when they are in the middle of Illinois. You put yourself back into a situation that's not what's occurring today.

**Brett:** What makes us then so afraid of feeling that anger?

**Joe:** What makes us afraid of feeling it? Generally with almost all of these emotions, each one has their own particular thing, but with almost all negative emotions, people feel scared of doing it, because they think it is going to make it last forever. The other reason particular with anger is people think they will destroy things with anger. You can see some of the other traditions where the angry entity, the angry expression of god, the Tibetan habit, the angry expressions of the divine. The Hindus have these angry Cali with these angry expressions of the divine. There is this understanding that destruction and rebirth is part of the natural cycle, and anger is part of that destruction.

It is seen as how things get built, is by allowing them to be destroyed, and that conflict and friction are part of the rebuilding. They are part of the evolutionary process for people. When we get scared of being angry, we think we are going to destroy, hurt somebody, end a relationship. We are not going to be loved anymore. That's the fear. You just watch it.

Our brains don't even notice in this moment that there's another option. I can't get angry, because I might destroy my friendship. No one ever thinks, just go get angry somewhere else. What makes that happen? If you really think about that for a second, "I am mad at a friend, but I tell myself I can't get angry at them, because I will lose my friendship. I will just go get angry somewhere else." No one thinks that. It is like no, I will just repress the anger. What makes that so? It is because it is not really about this fear of destruction that's happening. It's really the fear, "I will be destroyed by my own anger. If I let anger out, I might lose myself in it."

**Brett:** Maybe in the case of the friend, the fear we will lose the friend, because we know that if we draw the boundary we need to draw, we might lose the friend.

**Joe:** Even before the boundary, let's say you have stolen something from me. I am upset with you. I am like I can't get angry, because I might lose him, and it was only $20 bucks. But I don't go and say I am going to go to the beach and get really angry at Brett and come back. What makes it that we don't think that? What makes it that the only options are angry at the person or repress the anger? What limits our thinking to that small instead of I am going to write something really angry and then burn it up? I am going to the beach and yell or all sorts of ways we can express anger. What makes it that we just don't even think to do any of those things?

**Brett:** Something that comes up for me is, so many of us are never really alone in the woods or alone on the beach or so rarely. In fact, the time we might be alone is when we are driving, which might explain why so much road rage comes out. People feel alone but they are actually interacting with others between metal and glass. That's a rare moment when they can process their anger without scaring everybody around them or being judged.

**Joe:** As a matter of fact, I have a lot of my clients say they don't have a safe place to be angry. I am like, get in your car. Do it on your commute. I had this one executive I worked with, and when we first started working together, she very much felt like a victim. She didn't have control over this bureaucracy. I was like, here's the homework. Just get angry every night on your commute. Every night just get pissed at everything you want to get pissed at. Literally within two or three weeks, her level of empowerment changed significantly. She didn't feel as trapped anymore. I would say a low-level depression started changing for her into much more empowerment. I have seen that dozens of times.

Maybe if a car is the only place you have got, do the car. One executive I worked with the other day went to the beach, right up to the ocean and yelled at the ocean. Nobody could hear, in San Francisco. There is always a way to do it, and there's always a reason not to, because our brain will find any way it can to not be angry. If

we were told as a kid that anger was bad or if we were punished for our anger or if we get to experience someone's abuse through anger, we will shut it down in ourselves. We will suffer depression because of it. We will feel like we can't make the moves we want to make. We will feel disempowered because of it, because we don't have access to that beautiful energy of anger in a way that's healthy and loving.

**Brett:** What if somebody has just a lot of anger built up and the drive home on a commute isn't enough to release all of it? It just opens the floodgates, and the moment they get home, they are still angry and take it out on their family.

**Joe:** Keep driving. Keep driving. Find a different way. Walk in the door. Go oh shit, I am still angry. Hey guys, I am really angry right now. I don't want to take it out on any of you. I am going to go drive for 20 minutes and be back. I can't imagine a husband or wife going no, no, no, I need you to help cook. Great, please don't get angry at us. Thank you.

**Brett:** I could imagine that. I could also imagine somebody seeing somebody be like, I am angry, and I need to go drive, think that they are being abandoned by that and try to stop it.

**Joe:** I need to go drive or I will be back in 20 minutes is, I think, a huge difference between abandonment or not abandonment. What I notice is when somebody is removing their love as a form of punishment, they don't give you a timeline. Hey, Brett, I just can't be around you. Goodbye. Or hey Brett, I am not able to be with myself right now in a way that I want to be with you, and so give me 20 minutes. I will be back. Let's start the conversation again. Hugely different things.

**Brett:** That's true.

**Joe:** What do you think the repercussions of having an episode on anger are?

**Brett:** Repercussions of having an episode on anger is people might feel permission to just start abusing people in their lives with anger under the guise of I am just moving my anger.

**Joe:** For sure, we are not recommending anywhere that someone gets angry at another person. That's part of the shame cycle. That's part of the blame cycle, and it will only make the anger more stuck. I think one of the real repercussions of an anger episode is there are a series of people out there who have really been hurt by another person's anger. They are going to be upset that anybody is saying that anger could be a beautiful and good thing. Most likely because they have been hurt so badly by anger, they are not going to be aggressive about it. They will be passive aggressive about it.

The most likely thing we will get is a series of subtle passive aggressive attacks. I don't feel safe with this episode, or some way of demeaning the conversation through passive aggression. I think that's the most likely scenario for an episode on anger.

**Brett:** Perhaps somebody blaming the episode on anger for somebody listening to it and then taking anger out on them.

**Joe:** That could happen as well. Again, we are not recommending anybody take anger out on anybody. That's just resisted anger. We are talking about loving your anger. We are talking about letting it move, letting it get out. We are talking about learning to have anger unresisted instead of being lost in your anger.

**Brett:** Something we are pointing to right now is, I've been feeling a little bit off in this episode talking about anger, because anger is so uncomfortable to talk about or to bring into a conversation. It is deeply patterned right now in my system that even right now recording this episode, I am like people are going to get angry at me. People are going to get angry at us. They are going to take it out on us. It has been blocking my clarity and my wonder in this conversation, which is really just an interesting observation for myself.

**Joe:** Having done back in the day these live workshops, there was always somebody who would get angry at me in the middle of the workshop. I was really good when somebody was outright angry. They would be like dada dada da, and I would be like tell me about it. Please, I want to hear it. What's the wisdom in your anger? What do you care about that's making you like this? I want to respect that. Then they would get angry, and they would say they were met, and it would all be done.

But the ones that trapped me, especially early on, were the passive aggressive ones, the ones where the aggression was done through the idea of safety. We didn't make introductions, and so I don't feel safe. It was that way. It was hard for me to learn how to deal with that, because there was this subtle attack that wasn't being acknowledged as an attack. It would undermine the group, undermine everybody else's ability to get things done and to learn what they were there to learn.

What I learned was just to say hey, great, I really hear that you are upset with something I have done. Can you help me by being just direct and angry with me about it? Just as an experiment, instead of being passive aggressive, be aggressive aggressive. As soon as I learned that, if they were game, they would do that and then they could have this big smile on their face and I would have a big smile on my face. They would feel the freedom of actually getting in touch with their anger. It was a whole different thing, but it messed with me, because at some point

in that process I was like, “I hope I don’t have somebody who is doing that passive aggressive thing, dismiss me, because I was a white man or dismiss, because I was a venture capitalist at some point, dismiss, because I swore too much.”, whatever it was.

It is a challenge to learn how to love people’s anger in both the aggressive and passive aggressive forms. It’s a challenge and it is so rewarding.

**Brett:** That’s a component of that, that’s learning to love the anger, but then there is also the component of being okay with feeling the fear of somebody undermining the entire group. It seems like there are two things here. There is welcoming and becoming more and more okay with our anger so we can be with people in their anger and comfortable with that. Then there’s also attenuating the fear response to anger, the threatened feeling.

**Joe:** The threatened feeling or the trauma. That can take time. Be patient with yourself and draw good boundaries. I think it is most dangerous if someone is like I should be good with other people’s anger. No, you shouldn’t. You either are or you are not. If you aren’t, take care of yourself. If you are, great, lean in. Just worry about loving your own anger, and all the rest of it will take care of itself.

**Brett:** It seems like the shoulding oneself to be okay with someone else’s anger could put yourself in a position to receive more anger than your nervous system can handle, which will then make you respond in ways you didn’t want to respond.

**Joe:** If your system goes into freeze, if you are unable to maintain love, draw a boundary, remove yourself and learn to love your own anger. It will all work out, but there is no rush in any of this. It’s not your job to love anybody’s anger. It’s your job to love yourself, all the aspects of you.

**Brett:** Given that we have so much anger coming up in our society right now, what do you think society would look like if everybody was doing this? At some stage where people are welcoming each other’s anger and welcoming their own anger, drawing the boundary and removing themselves from a situation, so they can feel and process it in a safe place, what would that look like?

**Joe:** Far more peaceful, far more loving. Look at a political debate for a second. If somebody on one side of the fence, as if there was a fence, as if there was a side, but one person on one side of the fence is really emotional, really upset and really getting angry at something somebody on the other side of the face did. It is not this manipulative anger at anything like you see the pundits do. You had this anger, and they were met with love. How does that change? How does it change?

I see there is something really important here that you care about. I mean the crazy thing is on both sides of the political spectrum, people feel stuck and trapped in a

country they don't want to be a part of anymore. They don't feel like they can do anything about it. We are incredibly unified in this way. We all agree that the country isn't the country that we want exactly, and that we want it to change, and we feel frustrated we can't get it to change.

I don't care what side of the spectrum you are on. If we can love and accept that in each other and if we can let the anger express in a way that's not controlling anybody, that's not shame based or blame based, then our society has a determination to shift. That's what you see. Countries that are on their way up are countries that believe and understand they have the capacity to change, they have the capacity to grow, and they have the capacity to become more powerful. There are very few people in our country that believe that anymore. Almost everybody in our country seems to suffer under the delusion that society is in a place where nothing can be done to make it better. It is a taught apathy.

Of course that makes you angry if you believe that. How could it not? Something you care about so much like your children, your friends, your family, your country, all being stuck in a situation that is no good for anybody. How could you not be angry? Does it really matter what side you are angry at? Of course, you are going to be angry.

**Brett:** The paradox there is a society that is suppressing its anger is becoming more and more angry in dangerous ways. A society that doesn't suppress its anger is just determined.

**Joe:** Most societies I see repress their anger, not all but most suppress their anger, but they have better or worse outlets for the anger. It is no mistake that as all of our outlets for anger, whether it be gyms or sports games, got taken away from us during COVID, that it started manifesting in other ways. The anger has to get out. It is going to get out. The question is how it gets manifested in a way that's healthy. How do you do it in a way that's respectful and loving and not at anybody?

**Brett:** This was a lot of really good intellectual discussion. I am curious if you have any questions for our audience to sit with after this episode.

**Joe:** Yes, I have three. The first one is: What's necessary for you to express your anger without hurting anybody or doing it at anybody? What would it take for you to feel safe doing that? Another question I would ask is: How can you love your anger unconditionally? How can you love your anger the same way you wish to love the kids that you have or the kids that you hope to have? The last question I would put out is: What would it take for you to never get angry at somebody again and to allow yourself to be angry whenever you were?

**Brett:** That does sound very interesting to sit with. Thank you, Joe.

**Joe:** You are welcome, Brett. What a pleasure to be with you as always.

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