

The Iceberg of Feelings (or The Anger Iceberg)

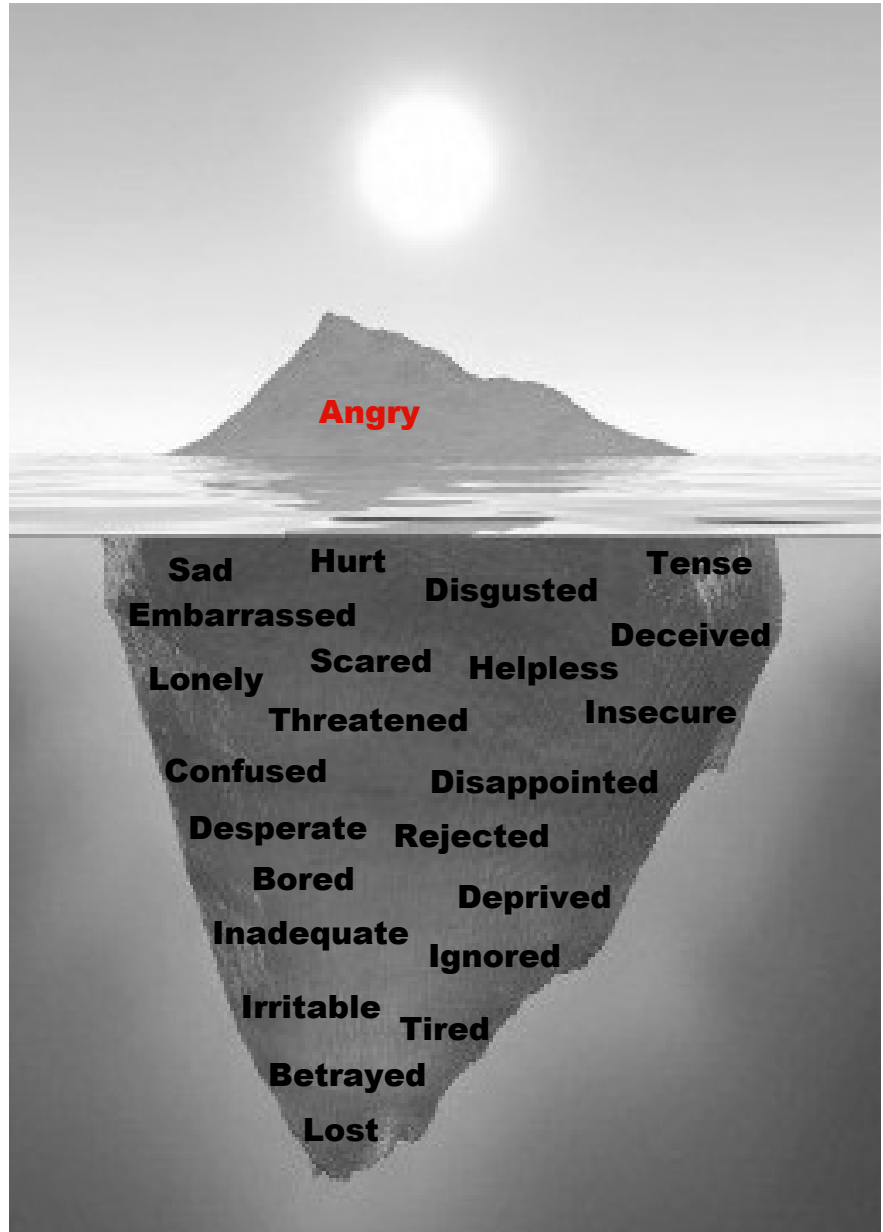
Feelings are like an iceberg. It's easy to notice the tip of it, above the water. The Titanic found out the hard way that what lies underwater may be harder to notice, but is still pretty important.

Anger is the feeling in the "tip of the iceberg." It is hard to miss. Your heart pounds. Your face darkens. Your voice gets louder. You might even have had something to do with the pieces of broken plate lying on the kitchen floor.

Anger may be hard to miss, but it is not the only part of the picture. Only 10% of the iceberg is above water. Remember the Titanic!

The feelings (both emotions and body sensations) under the surface are just as important as anger. One might say that they are even more important.

That is because anger is often a "secondary emotion." This just means other feelings happen first, followed by anger in response to them. In other words, the tip of the iceberg would not be there, if not for what is underwater.



"Anger management" often fails when the "underwater" feelings are not noticed, and dealt with. They can be hard to notice. Even if they are, they can be hard to admit and especially to really pay attention to. But while difficult to face and deal with, doing so can help foster many improvements in life, including the reduction of anger.

The diagram only lists a sample of feelings. It is not a complete list, and as you work to identify specific feelings lurking underwater in your life, you may discover others to add to the list. Write them in the space below, for reference. As well, you may want to circle the feelings in the iceberg diagram which apply to you, and/or write them below.