

“Finding One Another”

by Carlo Griseta

Chapter 7

Anger Beneath the Surface

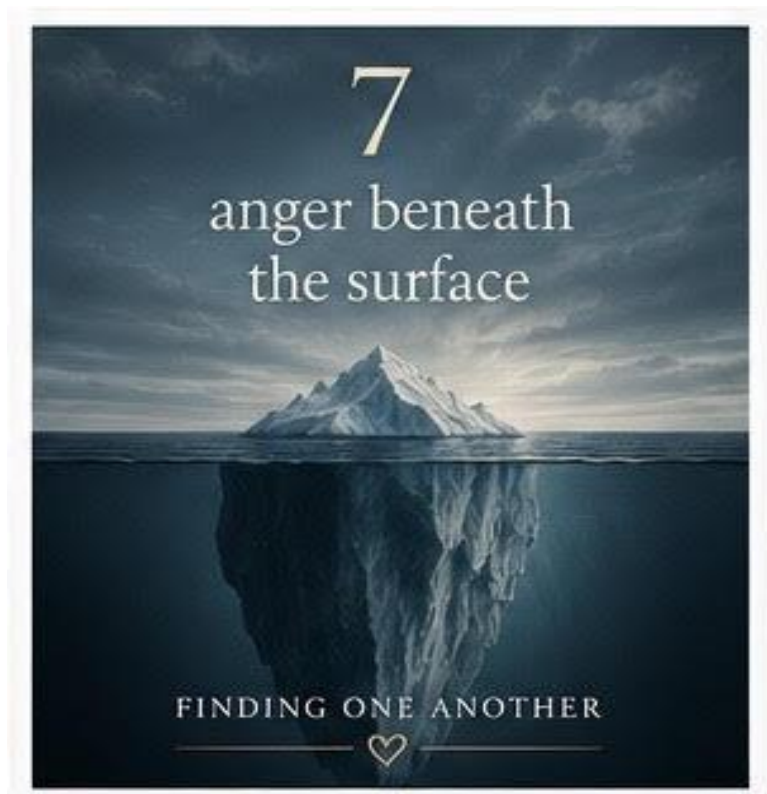
Neither of them remembered exactly when the irritation began. At first it was small: a sharp tone, a dismissive comment, an eye roll, a heavy sigh, a sarcastic joke that carried more truth than humor. Nothing dramatic, but over time, small frustrations hardened into emotional distance.

Jenna noticed it first in herself, she became increasingly irritated by ordinary things Marcus did: leaving dishes in the sink, looking at his phone while she talked, forgetting small details, withdrawing when she needed connection, seeming

emotionally absent even when physically present. But beneath the irritation was something deeper she rarely admitted honestly: hurt. She no longer felt emotionally important to him.

Marcus had his own internal resentment too. He constantly felt criticized, unappreciated, as though nothing he did was ever enough. Whenever Jenna brought up concerns, he immediately felt accused, even when she spoke calmly. So, he defended himself, withdrew, shut down, or became sarcastic himself, and slowly, conflict stopped being about the actual issue and became about years of accumulated emotional injury, neither of which fully understood how to address.

One evening after dinner, Jenna asked Marcus if he could help clean the kitchen, his response was immediate and irritated, “I just sat down.” Jenna froze, not because of the sentence itself, but because it represented something much larger inside her. Suddenly years of emotional loneliness, exhaustion, and resentment rushed to the surface, “You always disappear when I need help,” she snapped. Marcus immediately became defensive, “That’s ridiculous. I work all day too.” The argument escalated quickly, not because of dishes, but because neither of them were truly fighting about dishes, they were fighting about feeling unseen. Unappreciated. Disconnected. Emotionally alone. Within minutes both were saying



“Finding One Another”

by Carlo Griseta

things harsher than they intended. Marcus eventually grabbed his keys and left the house angrily. Jenna sat at the kitchen table crying, not because they argued, but because she no longer recognized who they had become together. An hour later Marcus sat alone in a parking lot staring through the windshield, anger still pulsed through him, but beneath the anger was another feeling he hated confronting: sadness. Because if he was honest, he missed her too. Missed laughing. Missed warmth. Missed affection. Missed emotional ease. Missed feeling like they were on the same side. And for the first time in a long time, he wondered whether anger had simply become the language both of them were using to express deeper pain they no longer knew how to reveal safely.

Reflection Reading

Anger Often Protects Something More Tender

Many couples believe anger itself is the primary problem in their relationship, but often anger is not the deepest emotion, it is the visible emotion covering the more vulnerable issues lying underneath. Beneath anger often lives: hurt, fear, loneliness, shame, disappointment, rejection, exhaustion, grief, emotional neglect, or the longing to feel important again.

In long-term relationships, unresolved emotional pain accumulates slowly. Small disappointments compound over years: feeling unheard, emotionally abandoned, criticized, rejected, unseen, unappreciated, or emotionally unsafe. When these wounds remain unattended, resentment quietly grows, and resentment changes the emotional atmosphere of a relationship. As a result, people become: reactive, defensive, sarcastic, impatient, emotionally guarded, or increasingly sensitive to one another's behavior. Eventually couples may begin fighting about surface issues while never addressing the deeper emotional injuries underneath. Arguments about: dishes, schedules, sex, parenting, money, phones, chores, or tone of voice often carry years of deeper emotional meaning beneath them. The danger is not merely conflict itself.

Healthy couples experience conflict. The danger is when anger becomes chronic and unresolved. Because unresolved resentment slowly erodes: tenderness, admiration, emotional safety, attraction, and goodwill.

“Finding One Another”

by Carlo Griseta

Over time, partners may stop assuming the best about each other, everything becomes interpreted negatively, and eventually couples begin emotionally protecting themselves rather than emotionally reaching for one another.

One of the hardest truths about resentment is this: People often become harshest toward the person they most deeply wanted comfort from. This does not excuse cruelty, but it helps explain why emotional pain inside relationships can become so intense.

Healing requires more than simply “stopping arguments”, it requires learning how to: recognize deeper emotions beneath anger, communicate pain honestly without attack, listen without defensiveness, and rebuild emotional safety slowly over time, because beneath many angry relationships still exists longing: longing for tenderness, understanding, safety, connection, and the hope that love might still feel possible again.

Individual Reflection Questions

Personal Reflection

1. What emotions usually exist beneath my anger?
2. When do I feel most emotionally reactive?
3. What unresolved hurts may I still be carrying?
4. Do I tend to express pain through criticism, withdrawal, sarcasm, or defensiveness?
5. What situations trigger feelings of rejection or inadequacy in me?
6. Have I become emotionally guarded in this relationship?
7. What do I most long for emotionally from my partner?
8. What resentment have I struggled to release?
9. When do I feel least emotionally safe?
10. What would healthier emotional communication look like during conflict?

Shared Conversation

“Finding One Another”

by Carlo Griseta

Conversation Guidelines

Conflict conversations require emotional discipline.

Do not:

Interrupt, escalate, shame, weaponize vulnerability, or rewrite history.

Focus on:

Emotional understanding rather than proving who is right.

Conversation Prompts

1. What hurts may exist beneath our recurring conflicts?
2. When do you feel most criticized, dismissed, or emotionally alone?
3. What patterns tend to escalate conflict between us?
4. How do we each react when we feel emotionally unsafe?
5. What helps you feel emotionally heard during difficult conversations?
6. Have we stopped believing we are on the same team emotionally?
7. What would help us rebuild tenderness and emotional trust?

Weekly Practice

Slowing Reactivity

This week is about recognizing emotion before escalation.

Assignment

During the next seven days, when tension rises:

Pause intentionally before responding, take one deep breath, and ask yourself: “*What am I actually feeling underneath this reaction?*” Then attempt to communicate the deeper feeling rather than only the anger.

Examples:

Instead of: “*You never listen.*”

Try: “*I feel unimportant right now.*”

“Finding One Another”

by Carlo Griseta

Instead of: *“You don’t care.”*

Try: *“I feel emotionally alone.”*

Additionally:

Each partner should complete this sentence aloud:

“One thing I miss emotionally between us is...”

The listening partner should only listen and reflect back what they heard. No defending. No fixing.

Closing Reflection

Anger is often the visible expression of invisible pain. Beneath criticism may live loneliness. Beneath defensiveness may live shame. Beneath withdrawal may live fear. Beneath resentment may live grief.

Many couples are not truly enemies, they are wounded people struggling to reach each other through years of accumulated disappointment and emotional protection, and sometimes healing begins the moment two people stop asking: *“Who is wrong?”* and begin asking: *“What pain have we both been carrying beneath all of this?”*