ARE THEY ANGRY?

Different perspectives. Different meanings.

Our brains look for patterns, especially when a message feels uncertain. A short reply, silence or unfamiliar tone can trigger an immediate story: “They must be angry.” That story may be understandable, but it is not the same as evidence.

THE INTERPRETATION LOOP

Event → first interpretation → body response → reaction → relationship outcome. The first interpretation can be revised before we respond.

A DIFFERENT POSSIBILITY

A brief “OK” might be irritation. It might also be agreement, limited energy, a busy day or a preferred concise communication style.

Reflection: Which signals do you tend to interpret as anger? How certain are you?

WHEN MEANING IS UNCLEAR

Separate what happened from what you imagined.

OBSERVATION

“They did not look at me while I spoke.”

INTERPRETATION

“They do not care about what I am saying.”

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

They may listen better without eye contact, feel overloaded or be concentrating.

RESPECTFUL CHECK-IN

“I am unsure how that landed. Would you like to talk about it?”

Try it: Write one recent interaction as a neutral observation before adding an explanation.

COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

Why the same behaviour can mean different things.

DIRECT WORDS

Directness can be a preferred communication style, not an attempt to hurt.

SILENCE OR DELAY

Processing time, shutdown, uncertainty or fatigue can affect responses.

TONE AND EXPRESSION

Natural prosody, concentration, pain or anxiety may change how someone sounds.

SENSORY OVERLOAD

Noise, crowded spaces or emotional intensity may reduce available communication capacity.

A useful question: “Is now a good time to talk, or would later be easier?”

PAUSE, CHECK, CONNECT

A practical four-step response to uncertainty.

1 NOTICE

Name the thought: “I am assuming they are angry.”

2 REGULATE

Slow down, relax your shoulders, and give yourself a moment before replying.

3 CONSIDER

Think of two or three explanations that fit the same facts.

4 ASK

Use a gentle check-in: “I might be reading this wrong. Are we okay?”

Reflection: Which step feels hardest when you are already stressed?

MY PERSPECTIVE PRACTICE

A reflection worksheet for a real-life situation.

What happened? (Only what I observed)

What did I immediately assume?

What else could explain it?

What do I need, and what could I ask?

What would I like to remember next time?

Safety note: Consider alternative explanations when meaning is uncertain. Do not ignore threats, coercion or repeated harmful behaviour. Your boundaries and safety matter.