

From the Heart

Coping with Anger

Jill Moore, MDiv, Bereavement Coordinator, Conyers, GA

After losing a loved one anger is often like an unwanted houseguest: “At first, the fact that you lived through the loss is surprising to you. Then more feelings hit and anger is usually at the front of the line as feelings of sadness, panic, hurt and loneliness also appear stronger than ever. Loved ones and friends are often taken aback by these feelings, because they surface just as you were beginning to function at a basic level again.”*

Anger doesn’t have to “make sense” or be logical. Although those outside of the grieving experience often misunderstand, anger is a normal part of grief and can give us a helpful framework when our lives have been turned upside down: “Anger is strength and it can be an anchor, giving temporary structure to the nothingness of loss. At first grief feels like being lost at sea: no connection to anything. Then you get angry... Suddenly you have a structure—your anger [toward a person, God, an event, etc]. The anger becomes a bridge over the open sea, a connection from you to them.



It is something to hold on to, and a connection made from the strength of anger feels better than nothing.”*

Whenever it comes, anger is an important part of the healing process. Anger is strong, anger brings energy and it surfaces for a reason. Often there are other feelings beneath the anger, but to reach them, we must first get mad. In the wake

of loss, anger is not only appropriate, it is essential.

We often know a great deal about suppressing anger, but are at a loss when it comes to allowing anger to surface in healthy ways.

If you are physically able, exercise can be a helpful way of putting that energy to use. Some people like to journal. If there is a friend or loved one who is capable of listening without judgment, talk about some of your feelings. There is often a great deal of anger at God surrounding the loss of a loved one, so prayer or meditation may help. Despite what some may think, anger at God is more than acceptable, in fact, expressing that anger honestly to God can be very healing. Scream into a pillow;

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Coping with Anger	1
Imitation: One Form of Healthy Grieving	2
Helpful Support..	2
Please Listen	3

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Anger is a normal part of grief and healthy expression assists in our grieving.*
- *Imitating our loved one is a way to keep the memories alive.*
- *Sometimes we may have to coach people for them to know what we need the most.*

Continued on page 4



Imitation: One Form of Healthy Grieving

By: David Gilleland, MDiv, Bereavement Coordinator, Athens, GA

The loss of someone we love creates an emptiness and you may not understand why the pain of loss is so intense. This emptiness can effect your sleep, appetite, willingness to socialize, personal relationships and even your work. This sense of emptiness and loss can not only create profound sadness, it may also foster anger. Both expressions, if not resolved can lead to further emotional distress.

A wonderful coping mechanism is to incorporate beloved characteristics of our loved one into our own life. In fact, imitating someone is the greatest honor we can give. As we incorporate characteristics of our loved ones into our lives, we keep them



near us and acknowledge their contribution to our own journey.

What if the deceased did not enrich your life? Perhaps you are experiencing regret and anger over the nature of the relationship. Practice the traits and characteristics you desired from the deceased. This may be difficult to do. However, it may help you build healthier relationships as your journey continues.

Keeping the memories alive is a healthy form of grieving. Living your life to the fullest becomes the greatest testimony to the one you have lost.

HELPFUL SUPPORT....

By: Darin Easler, MDiv, Bereavement Coordinator, Conyers, GA

Grief can feel like the loneliest experience in the world -- especially when it seems no one understands. While grief is individualized, we all need opportunities to share our thoughts and feelings with others. Often people are present to accompany the bereaved on this journey, but I hear statements like, *"I know they mean well, and they really want to help, but sometimes the things they say are not helpful; sometimes I wish they wouldn't say anything at all."*

Allowing others to accompany us on our grief journey helps us to find deeper healing, reconciliation and acceptance of our loss.

The question is, how do we help others to know what we need? How can we create a safe space to express our deep feelings of pain and loss, while allowing others to be present with us in that process?

Asking others to simply be with us and listen without providing answers, creates the space and support we need. Honoring our feelings of grief that need to be expressed is important in the healing we seek. I hope the reflection on page 3 will be helpful in your healing.

Please Listen

Author Unknown: *Heartland Home Health Care & Hospice Bereavement Manual, ch.5, p23.*

When I ask you to LISTEN to me - and you start giving advice
You really have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me - and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,
My feelings feel trampled upon.

When I ask you to listen to me – and you seem intent on ‘solving’ my problems,
You are failing me, strange as that may seem.



LISTEN!

All I ask – is that you LISTEN.
PLEASE! -- not to TALK or DO --
JUST HEAR ME.



Advice is cheap; a quarter gets me both Dear Abby and Billy Graham
in the same newspaper, and I can do that for myself.

I'm not helpless – maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

Please try to understand.

When you do something FOR me, that I CAN and NEED to do for myself,
rather than helping, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But when you accept as a simple fact that I really do feel the way I say I feel,
no matter how irrational – then I can conserve my precious energy.

I then have the energy to get about this business
of understanding what's behind my irrational feelings.

And when that's clear, the answers become obvious, and the advice becomes unnecessary.

I can make sense of my irrational feelings, when I begin to understand what's behind them.

SO PLEASE LISTEN AND JUST HEAR ME.

And if you want to – or need to talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I'll LISTEN to you.

Continued from Page 1



Heartland Hospice
Life to the fullest

scream out loud, for that matter!

The point is to allow the anger to surface, allow it to come out. Not everyone may not understand, but that is OK. Anger affirms that you have loved and lost. Despite how uncomfortable it may feel, find the courage to express anger and it will eventually fade, helping your life to continue to transform.

*quotes taken from *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*, by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler.