

Anger and Grief

Anger is just one of the intense emotions which are part of the typical grief experience. Not everyone feels it, but many do. It is a natural part of our self-preservation response. We know that when an animal is threatened or hurt, it will try to run away. If it cannot run, it will turn and fight. Psychologists call it the "fight or flight" response. Our minds register emotionally and physically painful situations as threats to our survival. If we cannot avoid them, we often strike out in anger.



The anger is easy to understand. If someone killed our loved one by accident or homicide, we have both a clear reason to be angry and a specific target for our anger.

*"Everyone has their bad days. The last few have evidently been mine. My negativism in my remarks lately shows this to be true. So in order to keep up with my current status, I'd like to say good riddance to you murderers out there who are to be executed. Good riddance to my ever forgiving the man who killed my brother. It will be a cold day in hell before I forgive him. For anyone that feels that I have lowered myself to these criminals' level, good riddance to you, too. Let's trade. Let us resurrect my brother and put **your** most beloved in his place. And then you may hold yourself above the murderer and feel good because you forgive him and you let him walk free. And the, and only then, will I consider forgiving."*

We try to understand why we are angry and who or what we are angry with. Anger needs a reason and a target to exist. The reason is clear - someone we love has been murdered. The target of our anger may be at someone specific such as the murderer(s), doctors, nurses, emergency response teams, funeral directors, friends, family members or even ourselves. God is a common target. If we cannot identify a specific target, we tend to walk around like time bombs waiting to explode. Knowing why we are angry and who or what the anger is aimed at helps us control the anger rather than allowing it to control us.

We may not be able to control how we feel, but we can control how we act. Find an appropriate way and a safe place to get it off your chest. You may never get rid of the anger entirely, but letting it out in a safe and appropriate way helps us begin to heal. A trusted and understanding friend, counselor, or a support group may be helpful.



"I also think that when we think about the killers having to live the rest of their life with what they have done we should get some sort of relief from that. I don't. I think in order to coldly kill someone as my son and others were killed takes someone that has no conscience whatsoever. That means that they will not be "suffering" the ramifications of what they have done. It does not bother them at all."

"I believe the killers have feelings and I believe they show how they feel when they are caught. They cry and whine about how society or their home life or some other thing made them killers. They feel they are "good people."

"Too many times I have watched 20/20 or some other newsmagazine and I hear how horrible they are treated in prison and how bad it is for their loved ones on the outside. My heart bleeds purple peanut butter every time one of them says they only get to exercise for an hour a day. I have no sympathy for them. No, that is not true; I have as much sympathy for them as they did for their victims. I think that is fair."

"My son, Jason, was 17 years old on July 4, 1992. A 14-year old boy shot him 5 times because "his friend told him to shoot him, so he did". Jason was 5'11" and the killer was shorter and had to raise the gun over his own head to put the first bullet in my son's head. Then he emptied the gun into Jason after he fell. Does this sound like someone who has a conscience? I don't think so."

~Written by Tom Golden LCSW - Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing