

What to Do with Anger...

Anger is one of the most difficult emotions for me to express. Reared as a "proper" young lady, I was taught that anger was not becoming. Many of the women I have spoken to were similarly taught.

I found, however, I did not have the tools to deal with the deep anger that came shortly after the death of my daughter. My anger was spilling over to people who did not deserve it, or I vented excess anger by overreacting to some situations.

With the loving care and patience of several people, I developed some tools that helped me express my anger. Rather than trying to suppress my angry feelings, I learned to release them in constructive ways. Hopefully, some of these coping techniques will be helpful to others.

Exercise ~ This is a great way to release anger, plus get into shape! I joined the YMCA, swam twice a week, did 'Y's Ways to Fitness' three times a week and walked three to five miles each day. At first, I was concerned about doing so much exercise because I have a very bad back, so I took it easy and worked my way up to my present routine. I always feel much better after a good workout, and I had the extra benefit of getting out of our home and back into society. After my daughter's death, my life felt so out of control; but as I became more fit, I retained some control. This renewed strength aided my recovery.

Writing ~ When the anger bubbled up in me, I would write. Many times I didn't know where to begin, so I just stated by writing, "I am angry because....." Soon, my thoughts were coming faster than I could write them down. After I had expressed my anger in writing, I often discovered that the sources of my anger were different than I had imagined. It usually sifted down to just being angry about my daughter's death. The technique of writing about your feelings is especially nice because you can just throw away or burn your words and the anger with them.

Painting ~ There is nothing like taking bright oils or acrylics and stoking them over an open canvass. I had not painted in over fifteen years, but I went up into the attic and got down the easel, brushes and paints. I always felt better after a good painting session. Those times were very private for me and no one ever saw my creations, but they were helpful in expressing anger.

Talking ~ Sometimes I would call a friend and just rant and rave. My friend was a very good and non-judgmental listener. She realized that most of what I said in anger I did not mean. She never gave advice or held me to any "anger" statements, she just lovingly listened.

This technique calls for a careful choice of friends who can maintain confidentiality and not be afraid of anger. It is even more helpful if the friend has had a similar loss.

Energy ~ Convert anger into energy and use that energy to change the world. Angry with the limited support that mothers of children with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) had in their communities, I converted that anger into action. I joined several nation-wide support groups and helped to bring their support into our community. My anger was further converted into energy which I used to raise money for SMA research. I baked over seven hundred loaves of bread (a lot of anger there!) for a fund raiser. My friends saw my energies and joined to help. Together, our efforts raised over \$6,000 in under six weeks. Reaching out to others can help in healing. If something good can come from our tragedies, it can add meaning to their deaths.

Eggs ~ Yes, eggs! When I just could not resolve my anger with any of above techniques, I would take a dozen eggs and black felt-tipped pen and go into the back yard. Writing the reason I was angry on the egg, I threw it at the back fence. At first, I thought this was a little crazy, but after throwing the first egg and watching it shatter, I felt so much better!

I always used just one word to describe my anger. it might be: Death, SMA (the disease my daughter died of), Husband, a friend's name, God. No one need know what you write on that egg! Afterwards, the birds would have a treat eating the eggs; and listening to their happy noises while having their treat, eased my anger.

These are some of the techniques I used to express my anger. It is OK to be angry, and it is important to express, not suppress anger. Suppressed anger can result in deep depression.

It is also alright to be angry with God. His is forgiving and understands our emotions. He would rather have us angry with Him than shut Him out.

Author Unknown, *TCF Alva Area*, Nov. 1993
Lovingly lifted from ~
TCF North Shore Chapter Vancouver, BC Aug/Sept '95

