

ANGER INSIGHT SURVEY

What are your anger reactions? Using the following survey, respond according to how you are feeling at this moment. Your answers could vary from day to day. It may be difficult to sort out which of your angry feelings are related to loss and which are due to other factors. Don't worry about that now. As you continue through this booklet, you'll become more skilled at identifying the sources of your anger.

- When I get angry, I _____ my anger is related to the death of my loved one.
 - am immediately aware if
 - gradually become aware if
 - am not usually aware if
 - am never really sure if
- Words I'm most likely to say to others when I'm angry are: _____
- Words I'm most likely to say to myself when I'm angry at myself are: _____
- When I get angry, the amount of control I usually feel over my anger is:
 - None
 - Almost none
 - A little
 - Some
 - Quite a bit
 - Almost total control
 - Complete control
- When I get angry, it is at a specific event or person (rather than at the world in general).
 - Never
 - Once in a while
 - Some of the time
 - Quite often
 - Always
- The person I most often get angry with is: _____ and it is usually because: _____

- When I get angry, it happens very quickly.
 - Never
 - Seldom
 - Once in a while
 - Some of the time
 - Quite often
 - Always
- It takes _____ to get me angry.
 - almost nothing
 - very little
 - a mild irritation
 - a moderate irritation
 - quite a bit
 - a great deal
 - a tremendous amount
 - a moderate irritation
- When I get angry, it usually lasts for
 - just a few seconds & it's over
 - quite a few seconds
 - a minute or two
 - several minutes
 - 15-30 minutes
 - 1/2 hour to two hours
 - a few hours
 - several hours
 - the remainder of the day
 - into the next day
 - several days
 - one to four weeks
 - a few months
 - several months or more
- Circle each of following statements with which you agree or strongly agree
 - I hurt deep down beyond any words.
 - Sometimes I feel like I'm going to blow up.
 - There is a person I can't forgive for hurting me like this.
 - I feel a part of me has been cut from my life.
 - I am angry for all the pain I'm going through.
 - It feels like I will never love (or be loved) again.
 - Anger is the major feeling I have during the course of a day.
 - Anger seems to be controlling my life.
 - I hate life.

Before you move to the next page, please answer the following:

- What have I learned about myself so far? Can I put it into words?
- What, if any, changes do I wish to make?

Later in this booklet you will be asked to fill out another survey that will help you focus on the reasons for your anger, on your anger-related feelings, and your targets of anger.

"Anger is depression turned inwards."

Anger

Anger is normal. It may be directed at the deceased for leaving and causing a sense of abandonment, or at the doctors and nurses who did not do enough, or at a murderer who killed without remorse. People of faith may feel anger at God, for allowing so much pain and anguish. Anger may also be directed at oneself for not saving the life of the loved one. It can be a mild feeling or a raging irrational emotion. It can test one's faith in religion or even in the goodness of life.

Emotions Of Grief: Anger

It is very common after the death of a loved one to experience feelings of anger and bitterness. When feelings of anger are added to the mix of other painful emotions that we tend to experience as we grieve, the process of mourning a loss can become an even more difficult one to navigate.

The sources of anger after a loss are many. One can feel angry that their loved one was taken "before her time." This type of emotional response frequently occurs after a sudden loss or the loss of a child or younger person. We can feel robbed, as if our loved one was stolen from us far too soon, without permission. Anger is also likely to occur in the case where a death is viewed as preventable. Such deaths include most suicides and homicides, and as well as many accidental-type deaths. Even some forms of natural death are often seen as having been preventable, typically when the cause of death is related to the behavior of the deceased person. An obvious example of this would be the case of a smoker developing cancer. In the case of a homicide, feelings of anger at the perpetrator of the violence toward the loved one can be intense. I have spoken with several persons who lost loved ones through a homicide, and some feel intense rage toward the perpetrator, bordering on fantasies of wanting to exact some measure of revenge against the person responsible for the death. In the case of suicide, it is not uncommon for anger to be experienced against the deceased person him- or herself. This tends to be a very painful emotion for mourners to deal with, as it runs counter to the societal norm to not "speak ill of the dead." However, when anger comes upon us as we mourn, it must be faced and dealt with squarely so that it does not cause us longer-term harm, as unprocessed emotional reactions tend to do. It is also true that we can feel angry with ourselves for aspects of our behavior while the person was alive. Perhaps one might feel that they treated the person with less caring or tenderness than they should have, and may thus feel upset with themselves for their behavior. It is also sometimes the case that anger can function to protect us from examination of other issues that we might otherwise have to directly deal with as we grieve; issues that may be even more painful and that may cut even deeper into our selves. I want to take pause to state here that some bereaved persons do not experience anger as a significant feature of their grief – it is the same story, that each person experiences their grief in highly personal ways and in ways unique to them. If you are mourning the death of a loved one and anger has not been a part of your grief yet, you need not feel that it should be.

So what can one do to deal with feelings of anger and bitterness after a loss? Many persons find that grief counseling provides a particularly effective forum within which to examine such difficult emotions. In counseling, one need not worry about revealing anger (particularly toward the deceased person or other relatives) as one may when speaking about such feelings with family members or other acquaintances. As with any emotional response, what tends to help is to be able to thoroughly examine it in the light of day. Talking to a concerned listener can be one way that you can help yourself, whether that listener be an acquaintance or a professional counselor. We do ourselves a disservice when we put the cart before the horse, so to speak, and we do so when we find ourselves not wanting to discuss our experiences for fear of the consequences of our words. What is true about most of us is that we need to express our thoughts and feelings - to speak the words that come to us as we grieve. We can then benefit by working through our thoughts and feelings, after they have been openly acknowledged.
