

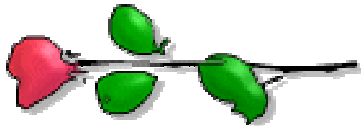
Please Be Gentle

Please be gentle with me, for I am grieving. The sea I swim in is a lonely one, and the shore seems miles away. Waves of despair numb my soul as I struggle through each day. My heart is heavy with sorrow, I want to shout and scream and repeatedly ask, "Why?" At times, my grief overwhelms me, and I weep bitterly, so great is my loss.

Please don't turn away or tell me to move on with my life. I must embrace my pain before I can begin to heal. Companion me through my tears and sit with me in loving silence. Honor where I am in my journey, not where you think I should be. Listen patiently to my story. I may need to tell it over and over again. It's how I begin to grasp the enormity of my loss. Nurture me through the weeks and months ahead. Forgive me when I seem distant and inconsolable. A small flame still burns within my heart, and shared memories may trigger both laughter and tears. I need your support and understanding. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. I must find my own path. Please, will you walk beside me?

By Jill Englar, Westminster, MD
From Bereavement Magazine

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A Struggle with Anger

Some time after we have lost a child, we struggle with anger. Initially, it may not be there and we may even have a sense of smugness that we don't feel angry; that we've risen above it. I know. I've felt this way. Some many never feel angry, but for others, like myself, it can be very difficult to cope with.

The anger can take many forms: anger at God (why does He allow any parent to experience this pain?) If we don't allow ourselves to be angry at God (I may need Him,) then we take it out on other people. They did not help enough or they did not call or visit, we think. There is a smoldering ache that sees neglect and uncaring silence. Or, we become very angry at some stupid remark someone has made. "You are lucky he did not suffer." I am not lucky at all, my son is dead.

Sometimes our anger is directed at the person who died, some circumstances more fertile ground than others for anger. Sometimes it is toward other grieving parents, perhaps specifically for supposed neglect. (Why weren't you watching her more carefully?) Often, the anger is against ourselves for not doing what we feel we should have done. At times, it is less specific ("Why am I not over it yet?") For many parents, there is the third party at whom the anger is directed; the murderer, the drunken driver or medical personnel.

In many cases, there is an overwhelming great, big ANGER, with no specific direction. "It's not fair!" But, things not being fair did not stop the anger. When I realized this, I became aware I was taking my anger out in a diversionary way.

People who had hurt me, sometimes many years ago, injustices I had suffered all surfaced, often with great clarity and detail and my anger became directed toward those people. A justifiable anger, after all, because I had been hurt and it was more comfortable to live with than the nonspecific anger. Perhaps you can identify with this diversionary anger, too?

How do we deal with this anger? It is most important to allow it to be. You are angry, very angry because your child is dead and it is not fair. Your faith hasn't seemed to help and people have said stupid things. Visitors have stopped coming. It is okay to be angry about all of this. It is normal; other bereaved parents feel the same way.

Realizing I was normal and that my feelings and diverted anger were shared by others, helped me to keep balanced. I had a very supportive friend who listened when I ranted and raved over imagined and real hurts. Being able to express those feelings often dissipated much of their force. I could also picture in my mind Jonathan who had died at age 21, smiling and saying, "Let it go, Mum, life is too short." For him, it was too short.

Because of him, I am choosing to let the anger go. I have read many times in the TCF newsletter to be gentle with myself. Now, as time goes by, I'm learning to be gentle with others, too. I think Jonathan would be pleased with the progress I'm making.

By Margaret Baird,
Kingston, Jamaica
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