

July 29, 2020

ANGER

Dear Friends,

Before I begin my reflection today, please let me extend my sincerest appreciation to so many of you who have extended support, love and prayers to me and my family during these trying times of loss and sorrow. Our aunt in El Salvador, however, has been released from the hospital and thank goodness she is on the mend. As a family, we have come together in our grief for both my brother and brother-in-law, and as painful as it is, it is also beautiful to see how love heals.

Today I would like to talk a little bit about anger. Long before the pandemic hit, I think many of us had to have noticed how much anger there was in the air; people just seemed angry for all kinds of reasons. Now, with the pandemic and protests, and riots, and mixed messages, and political amplification, and loss, and grief, and heat, and economy, and joblessness, and kids at home, and isolation, and social injustice, and weather, andyou get the point...it seems as if the anger has been intensified in a crucible and is being released in all kinds of ways everywhere. Jim Butcher is quoted in the heading of today's reflection in *Grief One Day at a Time*: "Anger is just anger. It isn't good. It isn't bad. It just is. What you do with it is what matters. It's like anything else. You can use it to build or destroy. You just have to make a choice."

As emotions go, anger takes a bad rap. Well, let's face it, it isn't pretty, and many of us have been raised learning to suppress it. Like all the emotions we feel in grief, however, anger needs to be released. If we do not release our anger, we are in danger of it being swallowed and stored up in our bodies where it can often morph into depression. And there's the rub. How do we find healthy ways to release our anger without hurting people or pets or property? What do we do with all this pent-up anger? Dr. Alan Wolfelt says, "When we're feeling anger in grief, it tends to make other people uncomfortable. After all, anger can be assertive and loud. It can even get violent." We have all seen, all too well, especially lately, what anger turned into violence can do and how destructive it is. On the other hand, in our grief, we may now realize

how anger is understandable and necessary. Unfortunately, anger can flip into rage in the blink of an eye and irreparable damage can be left in its wake.

An old friend of mine used to share a quote, “Hurt people hurt people.” If you think about it for a second, it makes a lot of sense. Most people who hurt other people have somehow been hurt themselves. “It’s a lot easier to be angry at someone than it is to tell them that you are hurt.” (Tom Gates) So how do we harness anger and release it in healthy ways? Because I found it helpful, I would like to recommend that you simply Google: ‘healthy ways to release anger’... there are many insightful and helpful articles and guides there, including the Mayo Clinic and Psychology Today. In managing our anger, there is no easy or set way, and it can be tricky, but we need to find our own ways of releasing any pent up anger we may be feeling and try to take notice if we are releasing it in unhealthy ways toward our family and friends (or pets or property). This self-inventory can be very helpful in our road toward overall healing in our grief.

Peace & Serenity, Kevin