

I Have Painful Feelings

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Painful Feelings: Introduction

Ever notice that some feelings are more acceptable than others? Families, cultures, and even geography all are factors here, but generally speaking, we're all a bit squeamish when it comes to feelings of anger, guilt, and hopelessness.

Many people will say, "Oh, don't feel (pick a feeling – guilty, angry, hopeless, etc.)" when you tell them how you're feeling. That never works.

It's just not that simple.



Anger

Your loved one is sick. You are sick. Someone has died. You're angry. Of course you are. Ironically, on some level, you're probably also telling yourself you shouldn't be so angry.

The reality is you have every right to be angry. And not just angry. Furious. Howling, terrifyingly, raging-screaming-storming outraged. Your world has just been turned on its head. Plans you made have been thwarted. Dreams smashed. And you're angry.

The real question is 'what are you going to do with that anger?'

Sometimes, it'll get the best of you. You'll lash out. You'll throw some good ol' floor-pounding temper tantrums.

But, do you feel the energy that's there? That anger is a powerful force within you. That force drives people to do incredible things. People run marathons, build monuments, and start foundations with that anger. They write, paint, and draw with it. They change lives. That's right: anger can be a force for good. That outrage that you're feeling – it can do good in the world. Right now, you may feel completely exhausted, but when you're ready – when you feel that anger quivering just below the surface – it might be a good time to talk with a counselor to make a plan.

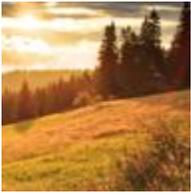


Guilt

"I should have..." "I shouldn't have..." "I wish I had said..." "This is all my fault..."

If thoughts along those lines are keeping you up at night, you may find it helpful to talk with a counselor.

Some of those thoughts may be legitimate. We have regrets, and sometimes we need to make amends. But some of them are probably your own desperate attempts to make sense of a senseless circumstance. Faced with the unthinkable, our minds naturally try to produce an explanation. “If only I hadn’t stopped at the store on the way home from work...” A counselor can help you sort out what’s yours and what’s not. And then make a plan from there.



Hopelessness

People have probably told you not to lose hope, or to keep the faith. They mean well, but maybe the pragmatic side of your brain feels like there isn’t much worth hoping for.

A terminal diagnosis is pretty clear. A death is awfully final. The future looks bleak. You may wonder what anyone – including a counselor – could say to make you feel better, and the answer may surprise you. Counselors are not going to try to candy-coat your situation and convince you there’s a silver lining. But if you feel like you’re at the bottom of a well, and you want someone to be there with you, it’s a good time to call a counselor.

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