



The Grief Cycle: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance

Following almost immediately behind shock and denial comes anger. To test this statement in everyday life, imagine if you were to run up to someone and stomp on his foot. His first reaction would be shock: *What...?* The next would be *That didn't really happen, did it.* Then comes anger: *Who do you think you are, doing that to me!* All those thoughts may flash through his mind in the few moments before he retaliates against you. However prolonged or momentary, those steps in the process happen.

Perhaps breaking out of shock and denial has left you feeling angry. Feeling anger is so much a part of the grieving process that even people who lose spouses to accidental deaths feel anger that the spouse has gone off and left them alone.

Name five people you've felt especially angry with:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

I still blame _____ for the fact that I _____ .

The one person I'm going to have a hard time forgiving is _____ .

If God really cared about me _____ .

I'm really angry with _____ for _____ .

If you've been unable to answer the preceding questions, it doesn't mean you don't have anger. It probably means that you have spent a lifetime trying to make others comfortable and happy, and in the process, you've trained yourself to suppress your anger.

Remember, anger is a natural, healthy, emotional mechanism for dealing with pain and loss. Feeling anger does not make you a bad person feeling anger makes you normal. If you haven't acknowledged your anger to this point, do it now. There is good evidence that deeply held and repressed anger can suppress the immune system of the body. You need to get that *toxic waste* out of your system.