



Advice for Coping With Anger

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Male Speaker:

How do you help people deal with the anger of cancer?

Kathie Rickman:

Well, by being truthful about it. But I have seen hundreds of male patients whose only emotion is anger. And to teach them other ways of expressing emotion without becoming angry. We're only as sick as our secrets. And you don't heal if you don't feel. So teaching patients that it's okay to have one of the five major emotions—mad, sad, glad, afraid and—I forgot...

Male Speaker:

...anxious.

Kathie Rickman:

Maybe. There [are] only five.

Male Speaker:

See, even doctors don't remember it all.

Kathie Rickman:

Our memory is the first thing to go. But also giving patients the freedom to express any emotion in a safe place. Because what we talk about in therapy stays in the clinic. But as far as caregivers, we do see caregivers frequently who feel overwhelmed and overcome by having to do all of their stuff plus everything else. And we strongly support the theoretical model that the airlines use. And that is if we lose oxygen on the airplane and the little masks come down, put it on yourself first so that you'll be available and able to help those around you.

So as my grandmother used to say, what's down in the well comes up in the bucket. And I didn't exactly know what that meant when I was 8 or 9 years old but I do now. I am responsible for my well being full. No one can fill my well for me. So when I come every day and see 10 patients who are hurting and scared and upset, I give away every ounce of compassion and kindness that I have. When I go home, I've got work to do. I've got to eat well, I've got to sleep well, I've got to take care of my emotional well-being and that is my world, so that I can come back again tomorrow and do the same thing over again. It's very important.

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