



Stages of Grief

Grief is a very personal thing. Some people may cry while others express anger at the situation. It's important to accept grief as a natural part of the healing process, and to progress through the steps at your own pace. Many people experience the following stages during the grieving process; however, not everyone will go through every stage. Remember, if you need help you can always contact a Licensed Professional Counselor through your confidential Health Advocate EAP+Work/Life Program.

Denial and Shock

When impacted by a loss, the initial reaction might be denial. As the grieving person begins to talk about the loss and the feelings associated with it, the shock becomes real and hits hard. It is natural to want to escape this reality, and so denial sets in.

Anger

The grieving person may get angry at the seeming unfairness of the events and wonder, "Why should I/we suffer?" As they receive support from friends, colleagues and family members, the grieving person will become less angry.

Bargaining

Some people may attempt to bargain with a higher power for the return of the way things "used to be."

Guilt

Many times, the person who is left behind feels guilty about the circumstances that are not under their control. Forgiveness and acceptance of reality is important in order to move on.

Depression

With a loss, there may be a "wish" to go back to the way things "used to be." Some people will experience mood fluctuations and may feel isolated or lonely for a long time. It is important to allow those who are grief-stricken enough time to work through this stage.

Loneliness

Some people will experience loneliness as their lives change because of the loss. It's important to fill the void with new relationships, activities or interests. As the grief-stricken person reaches out to others, they will be able to successfully work through this important stage.

Acceptance

At this stage, those experiencing the loss accept and deal with the change. This does not mean that the person has forgotten all about the events, but just that they have been able to accept the loss as a final reality. They are taking control of how they feel and behave.

Hope

Finally, those who have suffered will again experience the hope of the future. They will look ahead to brighter and better times, or at least to a peaceful acceptance of their circumstances and a sense of getting on with life.

[Sources: "Trauma, Loss & Bereavement," www.counselingforloss.com;
"The Grieving Process," www.ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/process.shtml;
"Grief Tips," www.willowgreen.com]

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