

Five Stages of Grief

At some point, each of us faces the loss of someone dear to our hearts through death, a medical condition or intense disappointment. The grief that follows can be unbearable, in part because we don't know what to expect. Most people recover from loss if they have positive social supports and healthy habits.

Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a leading expert on grief, identified five stages of grief.



STAGE 1: DENIAL & ISOLATION

Individuals deny the loss happened. They may withdraw from social contact. This stage may last for a brief or extended amount of time.



STAGE 2: ANGER

The grieving individual may be furious at the person who inflicted the hurt, even if deceased, at the world for letting it happen or themselves for allowing the event to occur, even if realistically, nothing could have prevented it.



STAGE 3: BARGAINING

The grieving individual may bargain with God, "If I do this, will you take away the loss?" "If you bring them back, I will change my life."



STAGE 4: DEPRESSION

The individual feels numb, although anger and sadness may be underlying.



STAGE 5: ACCEPTANCE

After the anger, sadness and mourning have diminished, the individual can accept the reality of the loss.

As we experience grief, it is common to have conflicting feelings such as sorrow, anger, sadness, shame, anxiety and guilt. These strong emotions can lead to additional stress. Yet, if we deny these feelings and choose not to work on them, it is harder on our body and mind.

7 Facts About Grief

1 GRIEF IS NORMAL

Grief is not a disease, rather a normal human response to a significant loss. Saying that grief is normal does not minimize the difficulty

2 THE WORSE KIND OF GRIEF IS YOURS

A loss is a very personal matter. Your loss seems like the worst thing possible that could have happened to you. When you lose a significant person/thing in your life, it hurts and nothing takes away from your right to feel the loss and grieve the absence of that person/thing in your life.

3 THE WAY OUT OF GRIEF IS THROUGH IT

Grief is painful. Loss is one of the most difficult experiences that humans must face. There is no easy around loss. We can try to avoid the pain. But most often that doesn't work. We need to find the courage to work through the experience of loss.

4 GRIEF IS HARD

A grief response is also known as a grief-work. It requires a lot of hard work, which most individuals don't understand. It takes a toll on us physically and emotionally. This is why individuals feel tired and fatigued after a loss. The other problem is expectations from others wanting us to be strong and pull ourselves together or to just get on with life.

7 Facts About Grief

5 YOUR GRIEF WILL TAKE LONGER THAN PEOPLE THINK

Individuals often ask, "How long will I grieve?" The answer is, your grief is finished when it is finished. The first few months may be intense. The first year is generally the most difficult as you face a lot of "firsts" without your loved one. The first holiday, birthday, etc. All are difficult days that need to be anticipated, and understand they are normal. You may experience different emotions as grief is unpredictable. Just when you think you have it figured out, something will trigger your feelings of the loss. You need to be able to give yourself some grace on these difficult days.

6 GRIEF COMES AND GOES

If you have a headache, you can take a medicine and it will go away. Grief does not work that way. Our healing processes are different. We at first don't often experience the pain of grief because we are in the state of shock. Often our pain is greater in the months after the loss. The pain related to loss is like an ocean. Some days are going to be calm and other days are going to be rocky. We need to realize that this is the process of grief. Grief will work itself out if we trust the process as difficult as may seem some days.

7 EFFECTIVE GRIEF WORK IS NOT DONE ALONE

Our communities can have unrealistic expectations when it comes to grief because they understand what normal grief is and can sometimes come off as being insensitive. Many individuals believe that our losses are so personal that we don't want to share the loss with others. On the contrary, the healing process works best if we have a good positive social support system and healthy habits to help us through our grieving process. Grief is about coping with the loss and often in a helping relationship, relief can be found.

Can I Move On With My Life?

Individuals are often worried that life for themselves has often ended along with the loss of their loved one. Mourning the loss of a loved one does take time. With time of mourning, we can find a new meaning and restore our own purpose and direction for our own lives. Below is a list of strategies that might help you process your loss.

TALK ABOUT THE LOSS OF YOUR LOVED ONE

Talk with your family, friends and those who you work with each day. This will help you remember your loved one. Avoidance of talking about the loss can lead to isolation and will disrupt the healing process with her support systems.

ACCEPT YOUR FEELINGS

You are going to experience a wide range of emotions. It is important that you are able to accept all of the feelings you are experiencing over the loss of your loved one. If you are overwhelmed by these emotions, it might be beneficial for you to seek help with a mental health provider to help you learn skills to cope with your feelings and to help you get back on track. You can also find a grief group in your community to help with some additional support.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

Eating healthy food, getting exercise and plenty of sleep can help your physical and emotional health. Check in with relatives to see if they are also maintaining proper steps for continued good health

REACH OUT AND HELP OTHERS DEALING WITH LOSS

Spend time with the deceased family. This can help everyone cope with the loss. Whether you are sharing stories or just listening to music can be an added benefit for making others feel better as well.

REMEMBER TO CELEBRATE THE LIVES OF YOUR LOVED ONES

Anniversaries of lost loved ones can be a difficult time for family and friends. This also can be a time of honoring the loved one who has passed. How you choose to honor the loved one is up to you as it allows for the uniqueness of your relationship in a way that feels good to you.