

Stages of Grief

Coping With Grief & Loss



What Are the 5 Stages of Grief?

What to expect in each of the 5 stages of grief & how to cope.

1. Denial

Normal reaction to great loss. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief - It's nature's way of letting in only as much as we can handle

2. Anger

We may still not be ready to deal with the reality of our loss, so we express our intense pain as anger - we search for blame, feel intense guilt, and lash out.

3. Bargaining

We may try to make a secret deal with God or a higher power in an attempt to postpone the inevitable. Bargaining is the "What if...." stage of grief.

4. Depression

Depression may occur when reality of loss sinks in. Intense sadness, decreased sleep, reduced appetite & loss of motivation are common.

5. Acceptance

We accept the reality that our loved one is gone & recognize that this is permanent. It doesn't mean we're "over" our loss, it may just mean having more good days than bad.

Where did the "stages of grief" come from?

The concept that there are "stages of grief" was developed by **Elisabeth Kübler-Ross** in her 1969 book, "*On grief and grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss*" and has been adopted by many health-care professionals worldwide.

Common Misconceptions About How the Stages of Grief Work:

- People move through the 5 stages of grief in a linear, prescribed order.
- Once you've moved through all 5 stages, grief is "over".
- Grief is manifested with emotional symptoms only.

How the Stages of Grief Actually Work:

- Our grief is as individual as our lives. Each person has a unique experience with grief because each person has unique DNA and a unique personal history.
- Not everyone will go through all of the 5 stages of grief.
- Not everyone will go through them in a prescribed order and the 5 stages of grief do not have a predictable, uniform and linear pattern.
- You can switch back and forth between each of the five stages of grief.
- The 5 stages of grief are simply tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling.

Symptoms of Grief

Emotional Symptoms May Include:

Denial / Sadness / Anger / Guilt / Helplessness / Numbness / Yearning / Loneliness / Relief / Anxiety / Obsession (With Memories of the Deceased)

Physical Symptoms May Include

Overwhelming Tiredness & Exhaustion / Confusion / Difficulty With Concentration / Sleep Changes / Appetite Changes / Nightmares / Crying / Social Isolation / Restlessness / Aches & Pains / Anxiety Attacks / Difficulty Breathing



Grief Impacts:



Where to Turn for Help?

- Grief Support Groups
- Talk to a Grief Therapist
- Talk to Friends & Family
- Expressive Grief Activities (Grief journaling, Drawing, Painting etc.)
- Religious or Spiritual Practices



How Long Does Grief Last?

Multiple Factors May Impact The Intensity & Duration of Your Grief:

Your Personality / Your Attachment Style / Your Genetic Makeup & Unique Vulnerabilities / Your Age & Health / Your Spirituality & Cultural Identity / Your Supports & Resources / Number of Losses You've Suffered / Type & Nature of Relationship to Deceased / Type of Loss

Sources:

Love Lives On "5 Stages of Grief & How to Survive Them" . <https://www.loveliveson.com/5-stages-of-grief/>

Kübler-Ross, E., & Kessler, D. (2005). On grief and grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss. New York ; Toronto: Scribner.