

THE STAGES of GRIEF

<http://www.memorialhospital.org/library/general/stress-the-3.html>

A Normal Life Process

At some point in our lives, each of us faces the loss of someone or something dear to us. The grief that follows such a loss can seem unbearable, but grief is actually a healing process. Grief is the emotional suffering we feel after a loss of some kind. The death of a loved one, loss of a limb, even intense disappointment can cause grief. Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has named five stages of grief people go through following a serious loss. Sometimes people get stuck in one of the first four stages. Their lives can be painful until they move to the fifth stage - acceptance.

Five Stages of Grief:

Denial and Isolation:

At first, we tend to deny the loss has taken place, and may withdraw from our usual social contacts. This stage may last a few moments, or longer.

Anger:

The grieving person may then be furious at the person who inflicted the hurt (even if she's dead), or at the world, for letting it happen. He may be angry with himself for letting the event take place, even if, realistically, nothing could have stopped it.

Bargaining:

Now the grieving person may make bargains with God, asking, "If I do this, will you take away the loss?"

Depression:

The person feels numb, although anger and sadness may remain underneath.

Acceptance:

This is when the anger, sadness and mourning have tapered off. The person simply accepts the reality of the loss.

Grief and Stress:

During grief, it is common to have many conflicting feelings. Sorrow, anger, loneliness, sadness, shame, anxiety, and guilt often accompany serious losses. Having so many strong feelings can be very stressful.

Yet denying the feelings, and failing to work through the five stages of grief, is harder on the body and mind than going through them. When people suggest "looking on the bright side," or other ways of cutting off difficult feelings, the grieving person may feel pressured to hide or deny these emotions. Then it will take longer for healing to take place.

Recovering From Grief:

Grieving and its stresses pass more quickly, with good self-care habits. It helps to have a close circle of family or friends. It also helps to eat a balanced diet, drink enough non-alcoholic fluids, get exercise and rest.

Most people are unprepared for grief, since so often, tragedy strikes suddenly, without warning. If good self-care habits are always practiced, it helps the person to deal with the pain and shock of loss until acceptance is reached.