



Purpose

Grief can be a complex emotion to manage and oftentimes presents itself in multiple stages. The stages of grief do not occur in a set order, and each person spends differing amounts of time working through each phase. Knowledge of the stages can help to identify and work out emotions after you face a loss.

Information

Stage 1: Denial

Intense feelings of loss and grief can cause suppression of your initial emotional reaction. Denial acts as the mind's defense mechanism when the pain and sadness feel unbearable. It can be difficult to accept the discomfort grief causes. However, as the situation becomes a reality, the grieving process can continue.

Stage 2: Anger

As the unbelievable becomes believable, it is natural to feel anger at the actuality of loss. Grief can create feelings of frustration and unfairness that feed into anger. At times, anger is a way to ground ourselves in reality. Such feelings may be directed at our closest friends, family, strangers, or even those we lost. While anger is sometimes considered a negative emotion, professionals believe that allowing yourself to feel the anger is the most authentic way to move through this stage.

Stage 3: Bargaining

Grief and loss can leave us feeling desperate for control. We may attempt to negotiate the non-negotiable with a higher power, and some may start "what-iffing," and believing they could have done more to prevent the loss. Bargaining and guilt often go hand in hand and are common responses to feeling powerless in the face of grief.

Stage 4: Depression

Mourning can lead to feelings of deep sadness. Depression is a normal reaction to death and loss. This stage can be accompanied by hopelessness or numbness. Depression is not



something to get over; it requires time and understanding to work through.

Stage 5: Acceptance

Over time we start to recognize the unchangeable and may begin to come to terms with our loss. Acceptance of grief is not equal to moving on or letting go. Rather acceptance is the process of finding a new normal. Grief does not end when we accept a loss. Grief is a unique and evolving process. However, acceptance allows us to continue living and healing.

Sources:

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