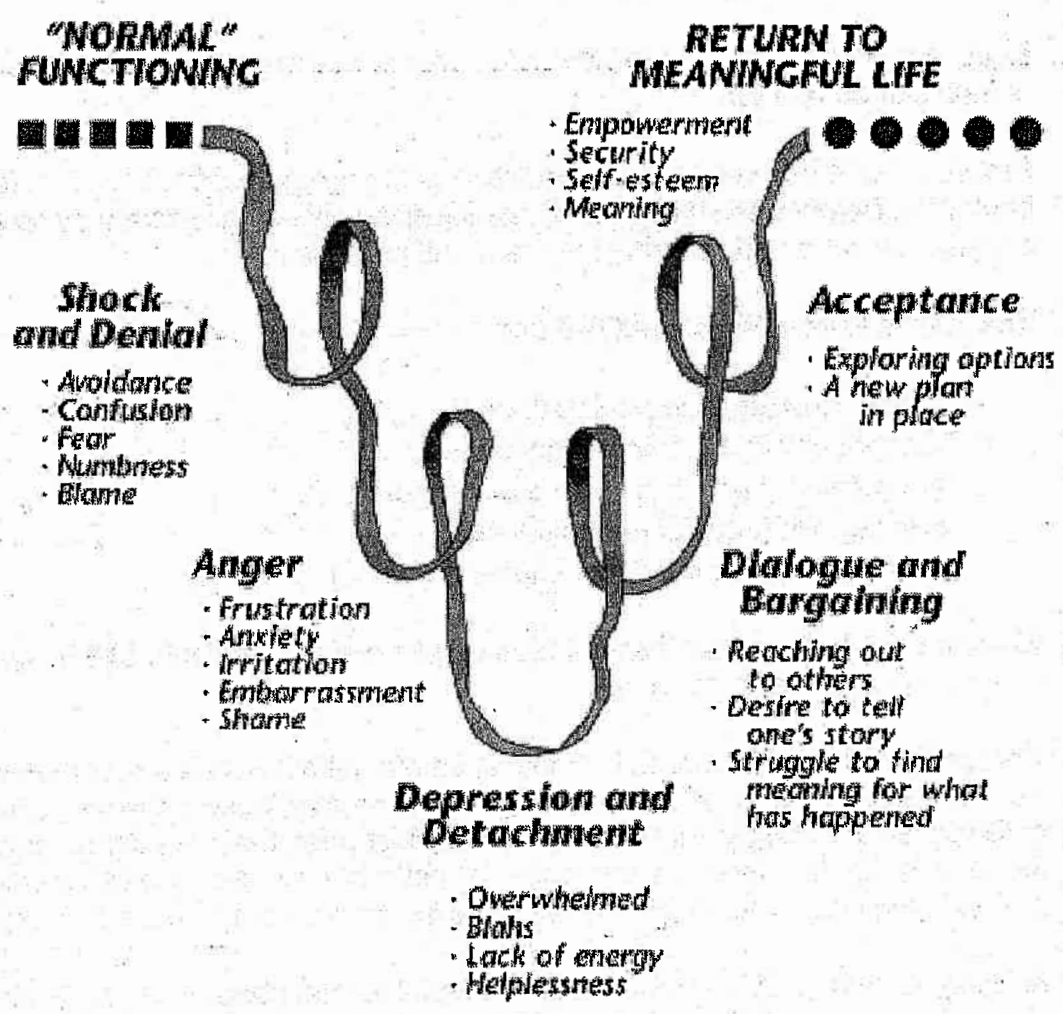


Tom

Kubler-Ross 5 Stages of the Grief



We've all experienced grief. We've all felt those intense rolling waves of emotion. But, do we all experience the same feelings each time we lose a loved one?

What Are The Stages of Grief?

Many people have tried to explain what grief is; some have even identified certain stages of grief.

Probably the most well-known of these might be from *Elizabeth Kubler-Ross'* book, "**On Death and Dying.**" In it, she identified five stages that a dying patient experiences when informed of their terminal prognosis.

The stages Kubler-Ross identified are:

- **Denial** (this isn't *happening* to me!)
- **Anger** (why is this happening to *me*?)
- **Bargaining** (I promise I'll be a better person *if...*)
- **Depression** (I don't *care* anymore)
- **Acceptance** (*I'm ready* for whatever comes)

Many people believe that these stages of grief are also experienced by others when they have lost a loved one.

Personally, I think of these definitions as emotional behaviors rather than stages, per se. I believe we may certainly experience some of these behaviors. But, I believe just as strongly, that there is no script for grief; that we cannot expect to feel any of our emotions in a particular set pattern. I do agree that acceptance is probably the last emotion felt, and in some instances it may be the only one.

A lesser known definition of the stages of grief is described by *Dr. Roberta Temes* in the book, "**Living With An Empty Chair - a guide through grief.**" Temes describes three particular types of behavior exhibited by those suffering from grief and loss. They are:

- **Numbness** (mechanical functioning and social insulation)
- **Disorganization** (intensely painful feelings of loss)
- **Reorganization** (re-entry into a more 'normal' social life.)

I am better able to relate to this definition as it seems to more accurately reflect the types of behavior I have experienced and observed. Within these types of behavior might well be most of the feelings described in Kubler-Ross' writings as well.

Which List Is Right?

In my opinion, both of these lists, and many others that we've all seen, are all descriptive of some of the emotions and functions we go through when we lose a loved one.

I believe that grief, like so many other things in our complex lives, can't be reduced to a neat list with absolute definitions, timelines, strategies, goals, and completion dates. Would that it were so easy

Grief is as individual as those of us who feel it, and as varied as the circumstances of death which occur.

Will I Go Through Every Stage?

If a 98-year old grandfather died in his sleep I think there would be different stages of grief and loss experienced than if a two-year old child were run over by a car and killed.

If a person has had a long life, death is somewhat expected as the natural scheme of things. There will be emotions of grief and loss but they might be more for what we will miss.

If a young life is cut short unexpectedly, there may well be feelings of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and in some cases acceptance.

Just as we have different emotional reactions to anything that happens in our lives, so too, will we experience grief and loss in different ways. I think the important thing to remember is that there is a wide range of emotions that may be experienced; to expect to feel some of them and to know that we cannot completely control the process.

When Will I Be Through Grieving?

Grieving used to be much more ritualistic than it is today. In generations past there were set periods of time when certain customs must be observed:

- **Widows** wore all black clothing for one year and drab colors forever after.
- **Mourners** could not attend social gatherings for months.
- **Laughter** and gaiety were discouraged for weeks or months.

Today we are unfettered by these restrictions and might even be confused about when we should be done grieving.

Actually, we'll probably never be done.

We'll never forget the person we grieve for. Our feelings may be tempered more with good memories than sadness as time passes, but that isn't to say that waves of raw emotion won't overcome us way after we think we should be done.

I think the trick here is to understand that the feelings will occur, try to keep them in perspective, try to understand why you feel a certain way, and if there are any unresolved issues that cause particular emotional pain, forgive yourself and others and if necessary talk with someone about it.

There is no completion date to grieving...let your emotions flow through the stages of grief.

Grieving Process

Shock/Denial - Reality set in
- Strong at first
- Resistance
Ex; Shock of the results of medical test

Anger - Patient frustrated because they have to change lifestyle
- Taking them out of their comfort zone
- You're telling them what to do/when to do it
- Put yourself in their shoes

Bargaining - Patient is very manipulative
- They want some level of control
- Taking away their coping skills
- Early stage of grieving process
Ex: I know what I did wrong, give me another chance

Patient spends most of their time in Anger and Bargaining phases.

Guilt - 20 yrs. of shit, they remember the stealing, abuse, etc and they can't numb it out.
- They'll have resistance and mood swings
- There's other ways of getting high

Depression - They'll feel low because the support system and coping skills are taken away.

Loneliness - They can't be with friends or family
- Encourage them to go to meetings
- THEY AREN'T ALONE
- Quicker they do this the sooner they'll get passed this

Depression and Loneliness – reiterate to the client they're doing the right thing.

Everything that was mentioned above is all negative.

Grief Sentence Completion

Right now, I feel... _____

I feel the saddest when... _____

The thing I miss the most about the person who I lost is... _____

Since the loss, things have been different because... _____

My family usually feels... _____

If I could ask the person I lost one thing, I would ask... _____

My worst memory is... _____

Something I liked about the person who I lost was... _____

One thing I learned from the person who I lost is... _____
