

5 Stages of Grief

If you've recently learned that someone you care about has suddenly passed away. It's important for you to know that there are people who understand what you are going through right now and that you do not need to go through this on your own. The experience of bereavement following a death can be intense and overwhelming. There may be a wide range of feelings and thoughts, which are difficult to understand and to manage.

To help you understand what you may be feeling we have listed the '5 Stages of Grief', which describes the five primary responses to loss. In bereavement, we spend different lengths of time working through each of the following and we can express each stage with different levels of intensity. The five stages do not necessarily occur in any specific order.

We often move between stages before achieving a more peaceful acceptance of death.

1. Denial

"This can't be happening" At first, we tend to deny the loss has taken place and may withdraw from our usual social contacts. It is a normal reaction to rationalise overwhelming emotions. It is a defense mechanism that buffers the immediate shock. This is a temporary response that carries us through the first wave of pain.

2. Anger

"Why has this happened?" You may feel angry towards the person who has passed away. This is a natural emotion because you may think the person who has passed could have done something to prevent it. You may be angry with yourself for not seeing any warning signs, even if, realistically, nothing could have prevented it.

3. Bargaining

"I will do anything to change this" The normal reaction to feelings of helplessness and vulnerability is often a need to regain control- If only we had sought medical attention sooner... If only we saw some warning signs . . .

4. Sadness

“Will I ever be able to get through this?” At this stage of sadness you may come to recognise that a loss has occurred and begin to isolate yourself and spend time crying and grieving. Sadness is a precursor to acceptance because we begin to recognise our loss.

5. Acceptance

“It’s going to be ok” Finally, you will come to accept their loss. You will start to understand the situation logically and come to terms emotionally with the situation. Remember, grieving is a personal process that has no time limit, nor one “right” way to do it.

