Stages of Grief

After a loss, it's common to have a range of intense thoughts and feelings. The **stages of grief** are one way to understand these responses. Keep in mind that grief is not linear. You can go through stages in any order, skip stages, or be in various stages at the same time.

Denial

An attempt to protect yourself from an upsetting reality. You deny a loss will happen, minimize your feelings about it, distance yourself from people who have accepted it, or refuse to talk about the loss or your emotions. You may feel numb or disconnected.

"This can't be happening." *"I don't even care."* *"It's not really over."*

Anger

A way to express pain or fight against a difficult reality. You feel angry or enraged at yourself or others. You may lose your temper easily, lash out, or blame others.

"This isn't fair!" *"Why is this happening to me?"* *"This is all ____'s fault!"*

Bargaining

An attempt to control or prevent the loss. You beg and plead for the loss not to happen. You might tell a partner you'll do whatever they want if they stay with you or try unproven treatments for a terminal illness.

"I'll do anything to change this." *"Just give me a little more time."* *"Please don't let this happen!"*

Depression

A reaction of sadness or devastation that shows the loss weighs heavily on you. You feel hopeless, crushed, or a sense of longing. You might cry and isolate from others. You might be unsure how to move forward.

"What's the point of going on?" *"I can't get through this."* *"I'll never be happy."*

Acceptance

A processing of the loss—even though it remains painful--and a gradual movement toward a new normal. You accept the loss logically *and* emotionally. You might recall good memories, talk about your grief, or even find meaning in the experience.

"It's really over." *"I'll find a way forward."* *"I'm going to be okay."*

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