



Stages of Grief



1. **DENIAL**: unable or unwilling to accept the reality of loss. This is a defense mechanism to help a person cope with the pain by pushing the hurt away.
2. **ANGER**: suppressed emotions and pain begin to emerge blaming others, self, or higher powers.
3. **BARGAINING**: making a deal with higher power or others in exchange for a return to the “normal” desire to feel a sense of control. This thinking can provide a temporary escape from the pain and anger the person is feeling and allows time to adjust to the reality of loss.
4. **DEPRESSION**: feeling of sadness, loneliness, fear or regret as reality of the loss sets in. Some common signs that a person may experience include chronic sadness, decreased sleep, and lack of appetite.
5. **ACCEPTANCE**: no longer distraught dealing with pain and loss and moving forward. The person no longer feels distraught and begins to learn how to cope and move forward.

Tips for Coping with the Stages of Grief

- Give yourself permission to “feel your feelings.” Don’t let anyone tell you how you should feel.
- Don’t try and suppress your grief. Acknowledge your pain; it is ok to cry.
- Express your feelings to others (to friends, family, church members, counselors, etc.)
- Find ways to creatively express your feelings (journaling, painting, drawing, etc.)
- Avoid negative behavior that can harm your health & body.
- Set up a small exercise goal each day. Get your endorphins flowing and your frustrations out.
- Plan ahead for grief “triggers” (Holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays). Ask family & friends for extra support.
- See a medical doctor if the pain or your loss is so constant & severe that it keeps you from resuming your life, or if you have suicidal thoughts.

