

The Seven Stages of Grief

BEFORE A LOSS



THE LOSS HAPPENS



AFTER A LOSS

1. SHOCK & DENIAL

Most people react to learning about a loss with numbed disbelief. You may deny the reality of the loss at some level to avoid pain. Shock provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at once. This may last for weeks.

2. PAIN & GUILT

As shock wears off, it is replaced with the suffering of excruciating pain. Although it feels unbearable, it is important that you experience the pain fully, and not hide it, avoid it or escape from it with alcohol or drugs. You may have guilty feelings or remorse over things you did or didn't do with your loved one. Life feels chaotic and scary during this phase.



3. ANGER & BARGAINING

Frustration leads to anger. This is a time to release bottled up emotion. You may lash out and lay unwarranted blame for your loss on someone else — try to control extreme overreaction, as permanent damage to your relationship(s) may result.



You may ask “Why me?” or try to bargain in vain with the a higher power for a way out of despair (“I will never drink again if you bring him back”).

4. DEPRESSION, REFLECTION, LONELINESS

A long period of sadness may overtake you. You might realize the true magnitude of your loss sets and it will sadden you. You may isolate on purpose, reflect on things you did with your lost one, and focus on memories of the past. You may also sense feelings of emptiness or despair.



5. THE UPWARD TURN

As you start to adjust to life with your loss, your life becomes a little calmer and more organized. Your physical symptoms lessen, and your “depression” begins to lift slightly.

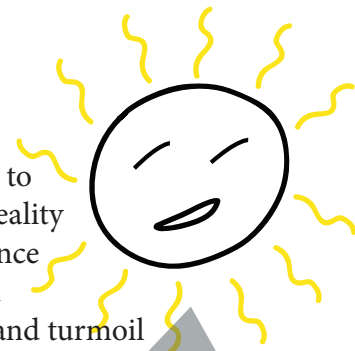
7. ACCEPTANCE & HOPE

In the last stage, you learn to accept and deal with the reality of your situation. Acceptance does not necessarily mean happiness. With the pain and turmoil you experienced, you can never return to the carefree, untroubled YOU that existed before this tragedy, but you will find a way forward.

You will start to look forward and plan things for the future. You will be able to think about your lost loved one in sadness, without wrenching pain. You will once again anticipate some good times to come, and yes, even find joy again in the experience of living.

6. RECONSTRUCTION & WORKING THROUGH

You become more functional and your mind starts working again. You will find yourself seeking realistic solutions to problems posed.



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