

By

John Kenny

John Kenny Coaching

The Five Stages of Grief

Grief occurs as the result of the loss of something significant, such as the passing of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of mobility due to illness and also things that may seem insignificant – but you still feel loss because of them.

The common factor in all these events is **change**. Change, even when positive, equates to some kind of **loss**, and any loss requires adjustment – this adjustment process is your time of **grief**.

An awareness of the stages of grief can help us to deal with the feelings that can accompany loss. If we are aware that what we are feeling is **entirely normal** we are better placed to be able to **accept and allow the process** of grieving.

People experience the stages in varying orders, times or degrees of intensity and some skip certain stages entirely.

The Five Stages are:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Regret/Bargaining
4. Sadness
5. Acceptance

Denial

Let's say we have just heard of the death of someone we loved, perhaps our grandmother.

Denial is generally the first stage in the grief process. A part of us won't accept that the change or loss has actually occurred. We may feel numb or experience shock.

This is our emotions way of dealing with an unexpected and significant change.

Anger

We feel angry that we have lost.

We feel that the loss is unjustified, and ask "Why me?"

You may also have mixed or unresolved feelings towards the person/situation.

Regret and/or Bargaining

We may regret that we didn't spend more time someone when they were alive.

In the bargaining stage, we are trying to come to terms with what has happened and may regret what we didn't do, could have done or wished we had done (in this stage we are likely to think of these as what I should of done).

Sadness

We can start to feel deep sadness. Feelings of sadness can actually signal the end of the grieving process. Sadness is a very positive emotion; it means we are beginning to actually **feel** the loss and come to terms with it.

We may wish to end this stage and to “move on” as quickly as possible, as no one likes to feel pain, but it is very important that we process our pain in order that we can move on more quickly.

Acceptance

The final stage in the cycle is acceptance, and represents that the healing is complete. We are starting to incorporate into our life and our thinking, the knowledge that what is gone and is not coming back. The thoughts and feelings are less frequent and less emotive.

Awareness of the stages of grief can help us to give ourselves permission to do what we need to do and be who we need to be in these difficult times.

It can also increase our emotional intelligence because we are better able to identify what/why we are thinking and feeling as we are.

In addition to the above 5 Cycles of Grief there are also something we can experience - **Transference**.

Transference

This is a term that was coined in psychodynamic therapy around shifting emotions from someone in life to a therapist. In grief we can be grieving over one event but we are also feeling unresolved grief over an earlier event.

If the feelings surrounding our previous loss have not been fully processed, we will likely experience some degree of transference onto the next loss.

This can lead to outcomes such as overwhelming grief for the subsequent loss or what seems to be grief that is out of proportion for the actual loss you are incurring.

Noticing this will allow you to reflect on the fact that your previous losses have not been completely resolved and you are dealing with more than one event.

