

Grief

& Loss



Andrea Miller, LMSW

Mental Health & Wellness Consultant

Higginbotham, Wellness & Health Risk Management

What is Grief?



Grief is a natural response to loss



It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away



The more significant the loss, the more intense the grief

Types of Loss

Death of a loved one

Miscarriage

Death of a pet

Loss of health or a diagnosis of serious illness

Divorce

Loss of a job/financial stability

Retirement, empty-nesting

Loss of safety after trauma

Types of Grief

“Normal”: typical reaction and behaviors after a loss

Anticipatory: may provide time to prepare for loss, accept the loss, resolve unfinished business

Complicated →

- **Chronic grief:** normal grief that does not subside, continues over long periods of time
- **Disenfranchised:** grief encountered when a loss is experienced and cannot be openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned, or publicly shared
- **Delayed:** normal grief that is suppressed or postponed; consciously or unconsciously avoiding the pain of the loss
- **Masked:** survivor is not aware that behaviors that interfere with normal functions are a result of the loss

Everyone Grieves Differently

Grieving is a highly personal and individual experience

How grief is experienced depends on your personality, coping style, life experience, faith, nature of the loss, etc.

Time is essential as healing happens gradually; there is no “normal”

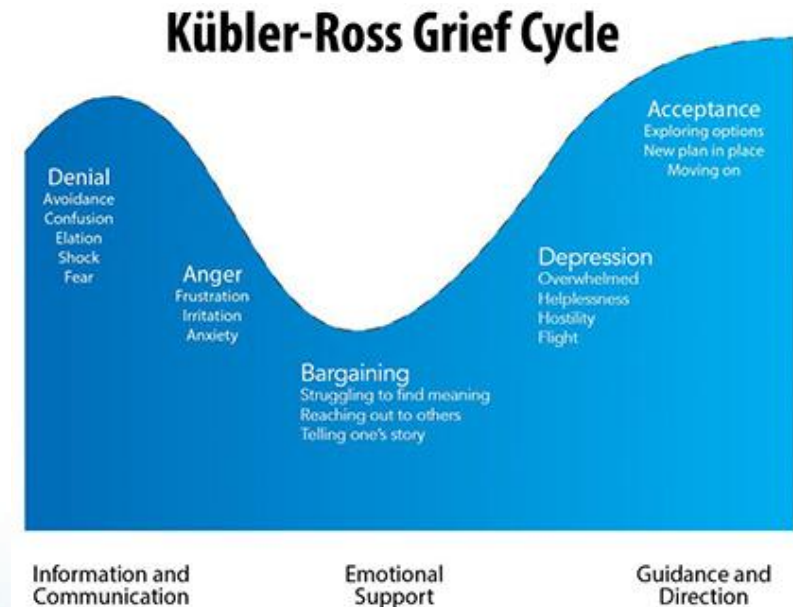
Five Stages of Grief

In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross introduced what is now referred to as the “five stages of grief” after writing her famous book *On Death and Dying*:

- ▶ Denial
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Bargaining
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Acceptance

Stages do not always happen in order to achieve healing

Some don't go through any of the stages



Stages of Grief: Denial

- ▶ Can initially help you survive the loss
- ▶ May be unable to make sense of the loss because it has no meaning or is so overwhelming that it makes you “numb”
- ▶ Hard to understand how life will go on
- ▶ State of shock
- ▶ Stop living in “actual reality” but rather a “preferable reality”
- ▶ Is actually a defense mechanism to help you cope with loss because it staggers the full impact of the loss; it’s your mind saying “there’s only so much I can handle at once”
- ▶ Eventually, the shock begins to fade and the healing process begins, with suppressed feelings coming to the surface

Stages of Grief: Anger

- ▶ Might set in once you start living in “actual reality”
- ▶ Common thoughts are: “why me?”, “life isn’t fair”, “ it’s ____ fault”
- ▶ Often redirect anger to family, friends, and loved ones
- ▶ Necessary stage that is encouraged in therapy; the quicker you feel anger, the quicker it will start to dissipate
- ▶ Anger is a strength that binds you to reality and builds a bridge that connects you with people again
- ▶ Natural, necessary step in healing

Stages of Grief: Bargaining

- ▶ Bargaining = negotiations: “I will be a better wife if only my husband is healed”
- ▶ This stage is false hope; negotiations won’t change the outcome of the loss
- ▶ May inspire you to make major life changes in hopes they will induce change and regain normality
- ▶ Guilt is the best friend of bargaining; it brings endless “what ifs” (e.g., “what if I left home 5 minutes earlier”, “what if I had gone to the doctor sooner”)

Stages of Grief: Depression

- ▶ Commonly accepted form of grief and often expected immediately
- ▶ Represents the emptiness in living with the reality that a person or situation is gone or over
- ▶ May withdraw from common activities or not want to get out of bed; the world is too overwhelming and has too much to handle
- ▶ Can become suicidal, “what’s the point of going on”

Stages of Grief: Acceptance

- ▶ “My husband died and I am going to be okay”
- ▶ Emotions stabilize and you come to terms with and re-enter the new reality
- ▶ Adjustment/readjustment period
- ▶ Good days start to outnumber the bad days
- ▶ Start to reengage with activities, friends, relationships

Symptoms of Grief

Crying

Headaches,
aches and
pains

Difficulty
sleeping,
fatigue

Loss of
appetite

Detached
feelings,
isolation

Abnormal
behavior

Worry,
anxiety

Frustration,
stress

Guilt

Anger

Question
life's
purpose

Treatment

- ▶ Medication and counseling are most common, but some doctors prefer not to provide medication
- ▶ Support groups, bereavement groups, individual counseling all help to work through grief
- ▶ Intervention may be needed if the grief event created obstacles to daily life or you are unable to get back on track
- ▶ Treatment offers strategies to help deal with grief but does *not* cure grief

Tips for Coping with Grief



National Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

National and local resources, <https://www.nami.org/Home>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255, <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help/index.shtml>

Mental Health America (MHA)

<https://www.mhanational.org/>

United Way

Community Resources

Lewisville ISD Resources



Help, when you need it most

With your Employee Assistance Program and Work/Life Balance services, confidential assistance is as close as your phone or computer.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

Your EAP is designed to help you lead a happier and more productive life at home and at work. Call for confidential access to a Licensed Professional Counselor* who can help you.

A Licensed Professional Counselor can help you with:

- Stress, depression, anxiety
- Relationship issues, divorce
- Anger, grief and loss
- Job stress, work conflicts
- Family and parenting problems
- And more



WORK/LIFE BALANCE

You can also reach out to a specialist for help with balancing work and life issues. Just call and one of our Work/Life Specialists can answer your questions and help you find resources in your community.

Ask our Work/Life Specialists about:

- Child care
- Elder care
- Financial services, debt management, credit report issues
- Identity theft
- Legal questions
- Even reducing your medical/dental bills!
- And more

Better benefits at work™

unum.com

*The counselors must abide by federal regulations regarding duty to warn of harm to self or others. In these instances, the consultant may be mandated to report a situation to the appropriate authority. Unum's Employee Assistance Program and Work/Life Balance services, provided by HealthAdvocate, are available with select Unum insurance offerings. Terms and availability of service are subject to change. Service provider does not provide legal advice; please consult your attorney for guidance. Services are not valid after coverage terminates. Please contact your Unum representative for details.

Insurance products are underwritten by the subsidiaries of Unum Group.
© 2020 Unum Group. All rights reserved. Unum is a registered trademark and marketing brand of Unum Group and its insuring subsidiaries.
EN 2058-1 FOR EMPLOYEES (10/20)

Who is covered?

Unum's EAP services are available to all eligible partners and employees, their spouses or domestic partners, dependent children, parents and parents-in-law.

Always by your side

- Expert support 24/7
- Convenient website
- Short-term help
- Referrals for additional care
- Monthly webinars
- Medical Bill Saver™ — helps you save on medical bills

Help is easy to access:

Phone support: 1-800-854-1446

Online support: unum.com/lifebalance

In-person: You can get up to three visits, available at no additional cost to you with a Licensed Professional Counselor. Your counselor may refer you to resources in your community for ongoing support.



References

National Institute of Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

American Psychiatric Association

Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (2013) (5th ed.)

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/>

FactRepublic.com

<https://factrepublic.com/facts/15402/>