

STAGES OF GRIEF

Following a death, those left behind grieve in a variety of ways. Although grief is usually described in a series of stages, not everyone touched by the death goes through the stages of grief in the order listed below, and not every person goes through every stage. In addition, some people may return to stages an observer may think that person has already passed through earlier.

1. DENIAL:

“No, it can’t be! Not him/her!” This may be mixed with shock or disbelief that the event has actually occurred. Students may spend time confirming the facts with fellow students, hoping to discover that there has been some mistake in the reporting.

2. ANGER:

“Why him/her? Why not someone else? Someone else is always doing bad things. Why not someone else?” As the reality of the loss sinks in, there may be blaming of other people for the event having happened. Or there may be anger at unrelated people and events, a need to rant and rave and be critical.

3. DEPRESSION:

“It’s so hard, everything is so hard and nothing seems important anymore.” Often depression sets in as anger begins to lessen. Depression is normal during a period of loss. The person generally lacks energy and retreats from activities and people. Although survivors have other people for support, they may still feel very much alone and sad.

4. BARGAINING:

“Dear God, if you bring him/her back again, I promise I’ll be good and never get mad at him/her again.” This may be associated with feelings of guilt, where a student wishes to undo earlier interactions with the one who has died, or even make promises that if this event can be undone, the survivor will be a better, different person.

5. ACCEPTANCE:

“Well, I don’t like what’s happened, (sigh) but I can’t change anything about it now.” This is the culmination of successful grieving when survivors come to grips with the reality of the death.

6. LIFE AFTER:

Individual and families probably won’t end up at the same place they started before the loss or crisis began. If the loss was severe such as suicide of a close friend or family member, the person or family may function at a lower level for the rest of their lives. However, if people can accept their feelings, talk them out, and accept help from others, they may have a new sense of self-esteem, security, and empowerment, knowing they can meet challenges and problems in the future.