

## Moving From Grief to Acceptance

After a loss, it's not uncommon for people to experience grief. However, grief is not limited to experiences with death. Grief can manifest from the loss of a job, a move away from close friends, a divorce, or tough breakup.

### *Stages of Grief*

Grief commonly occurs in five stages, however just as we are all different, our grief may also come in different forms. The five stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance and serve as a framework by which we all may progress through the pain and grief we experience after a loss. Experiencing one or more of these stages can provide you the comfort and peace of mind that you are moving forward in a positive direction and coping with the loss you have experienced.

#### *Stage 1: Denial*

During denial, it's hard for you to believe that the loss has actually happened. You may often feel numb and in a haze. It is possible during this time to also carry on with your daily activities as if nothing has happened, and everything is the same as it was. This innate coping mechanism occurs as a survival mechanism. The shock and pain of loss is often too hurtful to take in all at one time. As time passes, however, acknowledging the event is an important part of healing and moving forward.

#### *Stage 2: Anger*

In the second stage, you become frustrated by the fact that you're vulnerable, that you have no control over what's happened, and you begin to look for the events and people that you can blame. Anger is the bridge from numbness to feeling, and once you get through the anger, you are able to peel away the many layers of pain associated with the loss.

#### *Stage 3: Bargaining*

During this stage you often fall into "if" statements, such as "What if I had done this?" You want to bargain with your life to try and get back what you used to have, change what happened, or even try to replace the pain with something else.

#### *Stage 4: Depression*

In the fourth stage, depression sets in. You can begin to feel overwhelmed by the situation and hopeless about the future. You may withdraw from your life and feel as if there is no reason to go on. This can be a very difficult but necessary part of the grieving process. When you lose someone you love, it's a natural reaction to feel it in the deepest part of your heart.

#### *Stage 5: Acceptance*

The fifth and final stage is related to acceptance. You're finally able to accept the reality of what's happened and begin to look for avenues to move on. It's important that during this stage you accept how this loss has changed your life and stop wishing for everything to go back to how it used to be. Your life is forever changed and it is now time to seek out new meaning.

Moving on is related directly to the nature of the loss, how resilient you are to grief, and the support networks you have in place to assist you when hard times come. The order and experience with these stages may differ from one individual to the next, but that doesn't mean they're any less important. If you become stuck in one stage or are unable to cope with the loss over a long period of time, you might need to seek the assistance of a trained professional.