

STAGES IN THE CYCLE OF GRIEF

Grief is a natural and necessary reaction to a significant loss in our lives. It is a healthy human response.

The grief process often works in a CYCLE. It is not linear. There may be times when you think you have completed a certain stage or “feeling state” then a new circumstance arises which causes feelings to resurface unexpectedly. This is not a setback. As you move through the stages, though they may reoccur from time to time, the intensity of the feelings will lessen and the length of time they remain with you will diminish.

SHOCK AND DENIAL are generally the first that hit you when you experience a serious and sudden change in your life. Your mind immediately says: “NO, this is not true.” Shock is a natural buffer which protects you from absorbing more than you can handle. Often it is months before you can completely let go of all the denial and face the reality of the present.

ANGER may be caused by feelings of helplessness and frustration. Your world has been turned upside down. Nothing is the way you thought it would be. Anger at God/Higher Power is common. Anger at your loved one who died is also normal. Anger and blame can be directed toward others such as your family, friends, and medical professionals.

Anger turned inward against yourself produces GUILT. You may be filled with thoughts of “if only” and “I should have”. These feelings of self-blame and regret are also normal reactions to grief.

You may find yourself BARGAINING with life. You make wild promises and deals in the hopes that suddenly you will “wake up” and everything will be alright again.

These initial stages may allow you to deny your loss, to feel anger that it has occurred, and to bargain for life to return to normal. None of these has changed the reality of the situation. Now you may be left with anguishing pain, unanswered questions, and the heartache of loneliness. Sadness and tears often seem to have no end.

DEPRESSION AND DESPAIR Characterize this period. You may feel drained of energy, and even the day-to-day tasks of living can be difficult. Fears of being unable to cope often surface.

Gradually, you will find a way to ADJUST to the reality of your loss, ACCEPT what has happened, and begin to think about going on with your life. You will one day look back and realize that your “good days” are out numbering your “bad days”. That you are moving through your healing journey.