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Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' Five Grief Stages

On Death and Dying by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

These stages are not sequential and are not intended to corner you into a category of grief, or tuck messy emotions into a neat package. It's a frame of reference to understand the nature of the loss you are experiencing. Grief is as individual as our lives.

Denial

This first stage of grieving helps us make it through the loss. It can be like a state of shock and denial or a feeling of being numb. It is a survival mode mentality. It is also can be a place of disconnecting emotionally from the reality at hand. Denial can give pace to our emotions so we should be gracious with ourselves and others in denial.

Anger

Anger is a normal part of grieving. Be open to feeling your anger. It can move not only to your friends, your family, yourself, an organization, but also to God.

Bargaining

"Please God," you bargain, "I....if you'll just,....." After a loss, bargaining can take look like, "What if I devote the rest of my life to....., then.....?" "If only..." or "What if..." statements can rule your thought life for a season. Guilt is often bargaining's close emotion. The "if onlys" cause us to find fault in ourselves or others and what we "think" we, or they could have done differently.

Depression

Empty feelings settle themselves, and grief enters our lives on a deeper level, deeper than we ever imagined. Depression here does not mean clinical depression or mental illness, but more like a sorrowful sadness, contemplation and truly grieving.

Acceptance

Acceptance does not mean that now you're over the situation or it's okay. It's about accepting the reality of the loss/change and recognizing that a new reality is the permanent reality. The sting of the loss has lessened but the loss is still real and present.