

## Five Steps of Grief

*I don't remember where I found this article*

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Grief is a somewhat complicated and misunderstood emotion. Yet, grief is something that, unfortunately, we must all experience at some time or other. We will all inevitably experience loss. Whether it is a loss through death, divorce or some other loss, the stages of grieving are the same. There are five stages of grief. If we get stuck in one stage or the other, the process of grieving is not complete, and cannot be complete. Thus there will be no healing. A person **MUST** go through the five stages to be well again, to heal. Not everyone goes through the stages at the same time. It is different for each person. You cannot force a person through the stages, they have to go at their own pace, and you may go one step forward then take two steps backward, but this is all part of the process, and individual to each person. But, as stressed, **ALL** five stages must be completed for healing to occur.

The five stages of grief are:

1-Denial-"this can't be happening to me", looking for the former spouse in familiar places, or if it is death, setting the table for the person or acting as if they are still in living there. No crying. Not accepting or even acknowledging the loss.

2-Anger-"why me?", feelings of wanting to fight back or get even with spouse of divorce, for death, anger at the deceased, blaming them for leaving.

3-Bargaining-bargaining often takes place before the loss. Attempting to make deals with the spouse who is leaving, or attempting to make deals with God to stop or change the loss. Begging, wishing, praying for them to come back.

4-Depression-overwhelming feelings of hopelessness, frustration, bitterness, self pity, mourning loss of person as well as the hopes, dreams and plans for the future. Feeling lack of control, feeling numb. Perhaps feeling suicidal.

5-Acceptance-there is a difference between resignation and acceptance. You have to accept the loss, not just try to bear it quietly. Realization that it takes two to make or break a marriage. Realization that the person is gone (in death) that it is not their fault, they didn't leave you on purpose. (even in cases of suicide, often the deceased person, was not in their right frame of mind) Finding the good that can come out of the pain of loss, finding comfort and healing. Our goals turn toward personal growth. Stay with fond memories of person.

Get help. You will survive. You will heal, even if you cannot believe that now, just know that it is true. To feel pain after loss is normal. It proves that we are alive, human. But we can't stop living. We have to become stronger, while not shutting off our feelings for the hope of one day being healed and finding love and/or happiness again. Helping others through something we have experienced is a wonderful way to facilitate our healing and bring good out of something tragic.

## **How to work through grieving and begin to enjoy life again**

At some point in life, everyone loses someone they feel especially close to and we enter into grieving. The loved one can be a parent, child, spouse, dear friend, or even a beloved companion animal.

The grieving that follows a loss is real, and can be very painful.

While it may be tempting to deny grieving in an attempt to avoid the pain, it's much healthier to accept those feelings of pain and loss, and to work through the grieving process in an intentional way.

In his book, "Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, Second Edition" (Springer, 1991), J. William Worden, PhD, describes what he calls "The Four Tasks of Mourning." These tasks can be the means by which a healthy person works through the pain of grieving for a loved one, and moves into the next phase of life.

In my practice as a therapist, I have counseled many people who lost a loved one and worked through the grieving process. Combining my own experience with clients and the work of Doctor Worden, here are five steps that can help you work through grieving in a healthy way.

**1. Learn to accept that your loss is real.**

For many people who are grieving a loss, the first impulse is to deny the loss. Grieving denial can range from downplaying the loss, as if it's not important, to having the delusion that the person or pet is still alive.

It's often easier for people who are grieving to have an intellectual understanding of the death (the person or pet is physically gone) than an emotional understanding (the loved one is not coming back). So the first task for the grieving person is accepting that the loved one is really gone.

**2. Make it OK to feel the pain.**

The pain of grieving can be both emotional and physical, and unfortunately there's no way to avoid it. Denying the pain of grieving can lead to physical symptoms and can also prolong the grieving process. Some people try to avoid grieving pain by being busy or traveling; others minimize their loss by idealizing the loved one or refusing to allow negative thoughts about the loved one enter their minds. Some grieving people use drugs or alcohol to deaden the pain.

Feeling the pain of grieving is difficult, but it's an important step toward healing

## **Part 2: Adjusting to your new life, moving on with respect for your loved one**

*In Part 2, learn how you can adjust to life without the deceased, and what you can do with the feelings of love that you hold.*

**3. Adjust to living without the deceased.**

When a loved one dies, we also lose the part of our lifestyle that included the deceased. So while we are grieving for the loved one, we are also grieving for the parts of our life that will never be the same. Sometimes it can take a few months following the death for this realization to sink in.

For example, if a man's wife dies, he misses her physically and emotionally, but he may also have lost a dear friend, sexual partner, golfing buddy, and fellow grandparent. Part of his grieving will naturally include missing the parts of his life that have changed because of her death.

When a beloved pet dies, we miss the companionship and the love, but we can also miss having a special friend to come home to, walks in the park, playtime, riding in the car, or other activities we shared.

The tendency for some people is to feel that their lives are more empty following a loss.

**loved one, and allow yourself to move on.**

This task can be especially hard for a grieving person because it can feel at first that you're being disloyal when you start to think about enjoying a life that doesn't include the deceased.

It's likely that memories of the loved one will stay with you throughout your life, and sometimes, even years after the death, you may feel a stab of pain when you think about the beloved person or pet that was so important to you.

When this happens, it's important to remind yourself that it's a normal part of the grieving and healing process. Allow yourself to have these feelings.

Learning to cherish a memory without letting it control you is a very important step in the grieving process. By finding a special safe "place" for that person, you can heal from grieving and move back

into your life. You begin to find joy in new experiences, and you can take comfort in the knowledge that you keep your cherished memories with you, wherever you go.

The "place" where you decide to keep your memories is up to you. You can visualize tucking your loved one into a space in your heart, or you can keep a box of cherished photos or mementos. Perhaps you'd like to find a special tree or nature setting that you can revisit. Give some thought to where you'd like to hold memories of your loved one.

The important thing is learning how to cherish a memory without getting stuck there.

### **5. And finally, what do you do with the love that you feel?**

For many people, the hardest part of losing a loved one and grieving that loss is figuring out what to do with all the love they feel for the person or pet who is gone.

Remind yourself that you don't have to stop loving someone just because he or she is no longer with you. When a memory pops up, send a loving thought and know that you are loved in return. You may find comfort in this, and the strength to continue on in your journey.

### Additional Information

The 5 Stages of Grief & Loss

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-5-stages-of-loss-and-grief/>

Understanding the Stages of Grief

<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/grief/understanding-the-stages-of-grief/>