

In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced what is known as « the five stages of grief. » Denial, Anger, Negotiation, Depression, Acceptance.

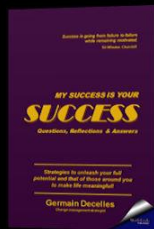


Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

(1926 -2004)

Swiss American psychiatrist, a pioneer in near-death studies, and author of the internationally best-selling book, *On Death and Dying*, known as the « Kübler-Ross model ».

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DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE GRIEVING AND LOSS PROCESS?

No matter what kind of loss, you've suffered, there's no right or wrong way to grieve. But by understanding the stages and types of grief, you can find healthier ways to deal with it.

Grieving is a natural response to the loss. It is the emotional pain you experience when something or someone you love is taken away from you.

Often the pain of loss can seem overwhelming. You may feel all kinds of difficult and unexpected emotions, from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt, and deep sadness.

The pain of bereavement can also disrupt your physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even think properly.

These are normal reactions to a loss and the greater the loss, the more intense your grief will be.

Coping with the loss of someone or something, you love is one of life's greatest challenges.

You may associate grief with the death of a loved one, which is often the cause of the most intense type of grief, but any loss can cause grief, including:

1. A divorce or relationship breakdown.
2. Loss of health.
3. Loss of employment.
4. Loss of financial stability.
5. A miscarriage.



6. Retirement.
7. The death of a pet.
8. The loss of a cherished dream.
9. Serious illness of a loved one.
10. The loss of a friendship.
11. Loss of security following trauma.
12. The sale of the family home.

Even subtle losses in life can trigger feelings of grief. For example, you might be grieving after leaving home, upon graduation, or a job change.

Whatever your loss is personal to you, so don't be ashamed of what you're going through or believe it's somehow appropriate to grieve some things. If the person, animal, relationship, or situation was important to you, it is normal to grieve the loss you are experiencing.

Whatever the cause of your grief, there are healthy ways to deal with the pain that, over time, can lessen your sadness and help you come to terms with your loss, find new meaning, and eventually move on.

A. The approach:

Grieving is a highly personal experience. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and how important the loss is to you.

Of course, the grieving process takes time. Healing takes place gradually and cannot be forced or rushed. There is no « normal » time for mourning. Some people start to feel better after a few weeks or months.

For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grieving experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to unfold naturally.

B. *Myths and realities:*

1. *Myth:* The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.
Reality: Trying to ignore your pain or prevent it from happening will only make it worse in the long run. For true healing, it is necessary to confront your grief and actively deal with it.
2. *Myth:* It is important to be « strong » in the face of loss.
Reality: Feeling sad, scared, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you're weak. You don't need to « protect » your family or friends by showing courage. Showing your true feelings can help them as well as you.
3. *Myth:* If you're not crying, it means you're not sorry for the loss.
Reality: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry can feel pain just as deeply as anyone else. They may just have other ways to show it.
4. *Myth:* mourning is expected to last about a year.
Reality: There is no specific time limit for mourning. The time it takes differs from person to person.



5. *Myth:* Moving on means forgetting your loss.
Reality: Moving on means you have accepted your loss, but it is not the same as forgetting. You can move on and keep the memory of someone or something you lost as an important part of you.

In fact, as we go through life, these memories can become more and more integral to defining who you are.

C. *Dealing with the process:*

While grieving a loss is an inevitable part of life, there are ways to help deal with the pain, come to terms with your grief, and eventually find a way to pick up the pieces and move on.

1. Accept your pain.
2. Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions.
3. Understand that your grieving process will be unique to you.
4. Seek face-to-face support from people who care about you.
5. Support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically.
6. Know the difference between grief and depression.

D. *The stages.*

In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced what is known as « the five stages of grief. » These stages of grief were based on her studies of the feelings of patients dealing with terminal illness, but many people have generalized them to other types of negative changes and loss of life, such as the death of a loved one or a breakup.

1. *Denial:* « It can't happen to me. »
2. *Anger:* « Why is this happening? Who is to blame? »
3. *Negotiation:* « Make sure this doesn't happen, and in return, I'll _____. »
4. *Depression:* « I'm too sad to do anything. »
5. *Acceptance:* « I am at peace with what happened. »

If you are feeling any of these emotions following a loss, it can be helpful to know that your reaction is natural and will heal over time.

However, not everyone who cries goes through all of these stages and that's okay. Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessary to go through every stage to heal.

In fact, some people resolve their grief without going through any of these steps.

And if you go through these stages of grief, you probably won't experience them in a neat, sequential order, so don't worry about how you « should » feel or what stage you're supposed to be in.

E. *Symptoms.*

Although loss affects people in different ways, many of us experience the following symptoms when we are grieving.

Remember that almost everything you experience at the start of grief is normal, including feeling as if you're going crazy, having a bad dream, or questioning your religious or spiritual beliefs.



1. *Emotional symptoms:*

- a. *Shock and skepticism:* immediately after a loss, it can be difficult to accept what has happened.

You may feel numb, find it hard to believe the loss really happened, or even deny the truth.

If a pet or someone you love has died, for example, you can still expect them to show up, even though you know they're gone.

- b. *Sadness:* deep sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief.

You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, longing, or deep loneliness.

You may also cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable.

- c. *Guilt:* you may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't say or do. You may also feel guilty about certain feelings.

For example, feeling relieved when someone dies after a long and difficult illness.

You may even feel guilty for not doing more to prevent your loss, even though it is completely out of your control.

- d. *Fear:* a major loss can trigger a host of worries and fears. If you have lost your partner, your job, or your home, for example, you may feel anxious, helpless, or uncertain about the future. You may even have panic attacks.

The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality, about facing life without that person, or about the responsibilities you now face alone.

- e. *Anger:* even if the loss is no one's fault, you may experience anger and resentment.

If you've lost a loved one, you might be angry with yourself, God, the doctors, or even the person who died for abandoning you.

You may feel the need to blame someone for the injustice done to you.

2. *Physical symptoms:*

We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but grief often involves physical issues, including:

- a. Tiredness
- b. Nausea
- c. Decreased immunity
- d. Weight loss or gain
- e. Aches and pains
- f. Insomnia



F. Seeking support:

The pain of bereavement can often cause you to want to withdraw from others and withdraw into yourself.

But having face-to-face support from other people is essential to healing from loss.

Even if you are not comfortable talking about your feelings under normal circumstances, it is important to express them during your grief.

While sharing your loss can ease the burden of grief, it doesn't mean that every time you interact with friends and family you should talk about your loss.

Comfort can also come from simply being around other people who care about you. The main thing is not to isolate yourself.

If you follow a religious tradition, embrace the comfort its mourning rituals can bring you.

Spiritual activities that are meaningful to you, such as prayer, meditation, or going to church, can bring you comfort.

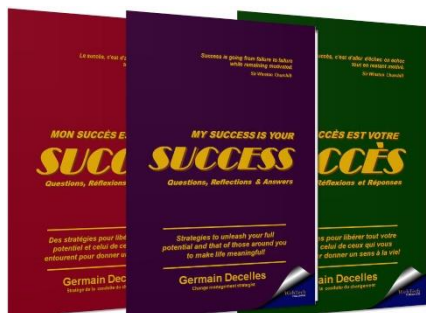
If you question your faith as a result of the loss, speak to a member of the clergy or others in your faith community.

Grieving can make you feel isolated, even when you have loved ones around you.

Sharing your grief with others who have experienced similar losses can help.

To find a bereavement support group in your area, contact local hospitals, hospices, funeral homes, and health service centers.

There are far more details to assimilate and cannot be expended in a simple article. I suggest that you explore chapter 10 of the book « My success is your success. »



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In addition to writing, Germain Decelles acts as Change Management Strategist. He has over 40 years of business and consultation experience with local and international markets, including sectors such as retail trade, distribution, information technology and communications, transportation, manufacturing, financial services, and government organizations.



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