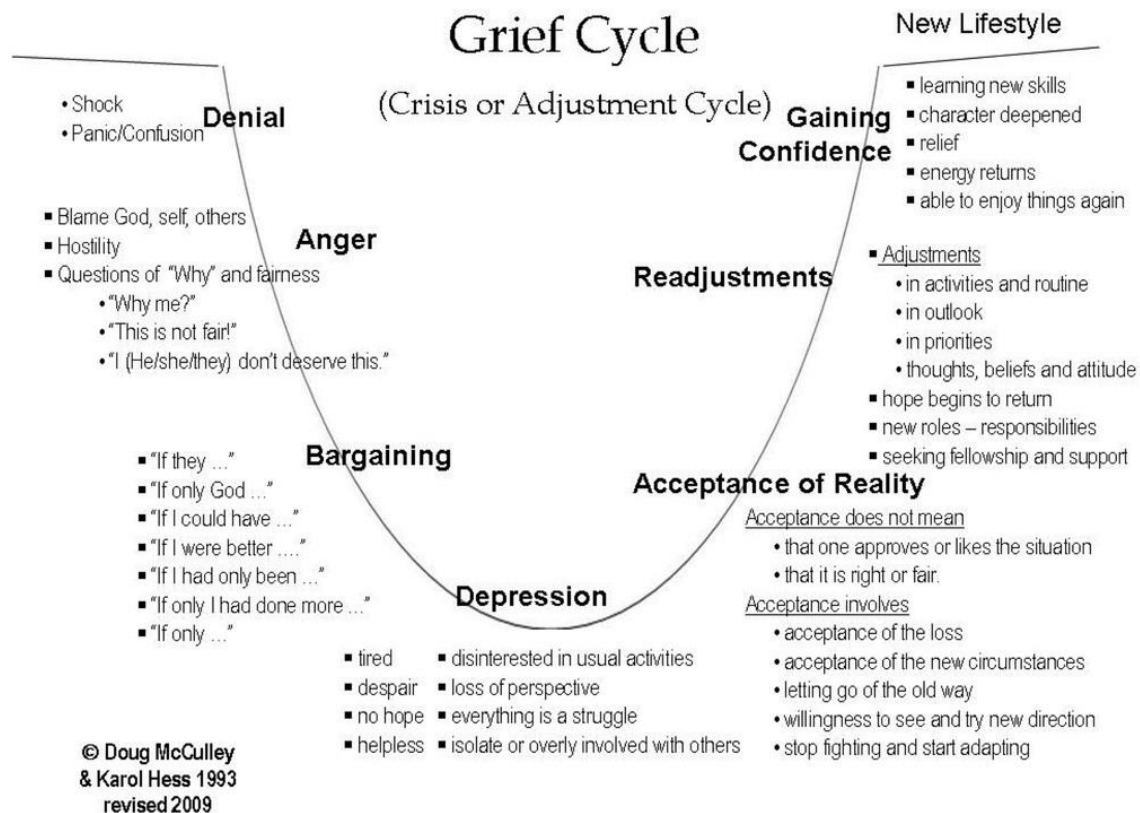


Guide- The Grief Cycle

Introduction

When considering whether to come to mediation and, more importantly, when to start on the mediation journey where you are in the emotional and psychological separation journey will be a key factor.



So, what are the 5 stages of grief?

<https://www.psychom.net/depression.central.grief.html>

Denial

Denial is the stage that can initially help you survive the loss.

You might think life makes no sense, has no meaning, and is too overwhelming.

You start to deny the news and, in effect, go numb.

It's common in this stage to wonder how life will go on in this different state – you are in a state of shock because life as you once knew it, has changed in an instant. If you receive news on the death of a loved one, perhaps you cling to a false hope that they identified the wrong person.

If your partner has just told you that they intend to leave you, you might be shocked, panicked and confused.

In the denial stage, you are not living in 'actual reality,' rather, you are living in a 'preferable' reality. Interestingly, it is denial and shock that help you cope and survive the grief event.

Denial aids in pacing your feelings of grief. Instead of becoming completely overwhelmed with grief, we deny it, do not accept it, and stagger its full impact on us at one time. Think of it as your body's natural defence mechanism saying "hey, there's only so much I can handle at once."

Once the denial and shock starts to fade, the start of the healing process begins. At this point, those feelings that you were once suppressing are coming to the surface.

Anger

Once you start to live in 'actual' reality again and not in 'preferable' reality, anger might start to set in. This is a common stage to think "why me?" and "life's not fair!"

You might look to blame others for the cause of your grief and also may redirect your anger to close friends and family.

You find it incomprehensible that something like this could happen to you. If you are strong in faith, you might start to question your belief in God. "Where is God? Why didn't he protect me?"

Researchers and mental health professionals agree that this anger is a necessary stage of grief. And encourage the anger.

It's important to truly feel the anger. It's thought that even though you might seem like you are in an endless cycle of anger, it will dissipate – and the more you truly feel the anger, the more quickly it will dissipate, and the more quickly you will heal. It is not healthy to suppress your feelings of anger – it is a natural response – and perhaps, arguably, a necessary one.

In everyday life, we are normally told to control our anger toward situations and toward others.

When you experience a grief event, you might feel disconnected from reality – that you have no grounding anymore. Your life has shattered and there's nothing solid to hold onto. Think of anger as a strength to bind you to reality. You might feel deserted or abandoned during a grief event. That no one is there. You are alone in this world. The direction of anger toward something or somebody is what might bridge you back to reality and connect you to people again. It is a "thing." It's something to grasp onto – a natural step in healing.

Bargaining

When something bad happens, have you ever caught yourself making a deal with yourself? "If I can change my husband/wife's mind, I will strive to be the best wife/husband I can ever be – and never complain again."

This is bargaining. In a way, this stage is false hope.

You might falsely make yourself believe that you can avoid the grief through a type of negotiation. If you change this, I'll change that. You are so desperate to get your life back to how it was before the grief event, you are willing to make a major life change in an attempt toward normality. Guilt is a common wing man of bargaining. This is when you endure the endless "what if" statements. What if I had been more aware of his/her needs. What if I had been more present and listened more closely....

Depression

Depression is a commonly accepted form of grief.

In fact, most people associate depression immediately with grief – as it is a "present" emotion. It represents the emptiness we feel when we are living in reality and realize the person or situation is gone or over.

In this stage, you might withdraw from life, feel numb, live in a fog, and not want to get out of bed. The world might seem too much and too overwhelming for you to face.

You don't want to be around others, don't feel like talking, and experience feelings of hopelessness. You might even experience suicidal thoughts – thinking "what's the point of going on?"

Acceptance

The last stage of grief identified by Kübler-Ross is acceptance. Not in the sense that "it's okay my husband and I are no longer together" rather, "my husband left me, but I'm going to be okay."

In this stage, your emotions may begin to stabilize. You re-enter reality. You come to terms with the fact that the "new" reality is that your partner is never coming back or that the relationship will look and feel very different in the future and perhaps be centred around the children –and you're okay with that. It's not necessarily a "good" thing – but it's something you can live with.

It is definitely a time of adjustment and readjustment. There are good days, there are bad days, and then there are good days again. In this stage, it does not mean you'll never have another bad day – where you are uncontrollably sad, but the good days tend to outnumber the bad days.

In this stage, you may lift from your fog, you start to engage with friends again, and might even make new relationships as time goes on. You understand your loved one can never be replaced, but you move, grow, and evolve into your new reality.

Symptoms of Grief

Your grief symptoms may present themselves physically, socially, or spiritually. Some of the most common symptoms of grief are presented below:

1. Crying
2. Headaches
3. Difficulty Sleeping
4. Questioning the Purpose of Life
5. Questioning Your Spiritual Beliefs
6. Feelings of Detachment
7. Isolation from Friends and Family
8. Abnormal Behaviour
9. Worry
10. Anxiety
11. Frustration
12. Guilt
13. Fatigue
14. Anger
15. Loss of Appetite
16. Aches and Pains
17. Stress

Summary

By recognising and understanding that what you are feeling is part of the grief and healing journey you are on it may help you to:

1. Articulate what you are feeling and why to those who matter to you.
2. Self-regulate your emotions so that 'they' do not feel like they have completely taken you over.
3. Ask for 'support' from a professional to help you manage the impact on you.
4. Ask for support and understanding from your former partner. This might be in the form of patience with you as you take a bit of time to come to terms with your situation so that you feel more mentally and psychologically equipped to work together with them in mediation.