

# Dealing with Grief

We all deal with grief at some point in our lives, and it is often hard to swallow. There are stages to overcome it, but there is no correct way to move through them. Here are some ways to conquer each stage as you recover from a painful time in your life.

**1. Denial** - Our bodies take a fight or flight response when they feel there is danger. Now, consider that our brains do the same to save us from heavy emotional turmoil. Denial is the flight response to an emotional situation which would otherwise destroy us. As you move through this stage:

- Give yourself time to think about other things so that your brain doesn't have to process the hurt immediately.
- When it starts to sink in let it, but don't dwell on it. Eventually you have to face it, but take it in small doses.
- Talk about it, even just a little bit. It has to become real to you before you are able to progress to the next stage.

**2. Anger** - This will probably follow the denial stage, although that's not always the case. After your mind has come out of the flight response its next protective move is the fight response. Your physical reaction to anger is often the same one as your body preparing itself to fight. As you move through this stage:

- Don't try to force yourself to calm down; you are

angry for good reason. Just let it go in a healthy manner.

- Releasing all this initial anger will make you feel some of the pain, so cry if you need to. Remember that it is not a sign of weakness.
- After some time, learn to rein your anger in. Try deep breathing, counting slowly until you feel your body relax, clenching and un-clenching the muscles in your body, or taking a hot shower or bath. Try different things until you find what works for you.

**3. Bargaining** - This usually comes hand in hand with guilt. As you move through this stage:

- Pray if it comforts you. Many people believe in the power of prayer. If talking to a higher power brings you comfort, that is perfectly okay.
- Reflect on other times when you've tried to bargain and realize that it can be unrealistic.
- Remind yourself over and over again that it's not your fault. Change and loss are inevitable, and sometimes we can't do anything about it.

**4. Depression** - You've come to terms with how much it hurts, and now you feel an intense, maybe even slightly unbearable sadness. As you move through this stage:

- Recognize your sadness, and don't try to force yourself into being cheerful.

- Let the people that love you in. They can help you to reminisce on happier times and lend a sympathetic ear.
- Return to hobbies/routines that once brought you joy, or explore new ones.

**5. Acceptance** - Congratulations! You have made it to the stage where you are ready to fully move forward. If you did not experience all of the stages listed above, or experienced them in a different order, that's okay. Grief does not have to follow any particular order. Remember that the above tactics may or may not work for you. Also, a tactic listed under one stage may help you to better cope with another stage. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, as long as you do not harm yourself or others. If you feel like nothing works, it might be time to seek outside help. Our Trilogy campuses offer monthly support groups so you can talk to people who understand what you are going through.