The 5 Stages of Grief

(Kubler-Ross)

The 5 stages of grief take the grieved through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Individuals can enter a grief state during any major event that results in a loss. Death does not have to be present to experience loss. Individuals can find themselves grieving when experiencing any major event such as, the breakdown of a relationship, redundancy or losing a home. The grieved will experience different thoughts and emotions throughout each stage of grief. These thoughts and emotions are normal. The grieved may enter in and out of the 5 stages and not in any particular order. They may revisit previous stages and the length of time spent in any stage is individual. Grief is a natural healing process and has no time limit however, prolonged states of grief and negative coping strategies can result in individuals developing depression, anxiety, and substance addictions. If you are concerned about yourself or others, please seek further advice from a professional.

The grieved can refuse to acknowledge a loss has occurred and can present with avoidance and negative coping strategies. For example:

Busying themselves with many tasks to avoid their reality. Disassociating/distancing themselves from the person who has died; refusing to talk about them or reducing the strength of the relationship. Taking part in negative behaviours including drinking alcohol, using drugs and gambling.

**Denial** - refusal to accept a loss

The grieved may make attempts to change the situation in their mind by seeking out what could have been done different to prevent the loss. Would the situation be different if they had got a second medical opinion? What if they had taken them to the doctors sooner?

They may negotiate with a higher authority pleading to be a faithful follower if they bring their loved one back to health.

The grieved accepts their loss. They can reason and logically make sense of the event. They have emotionally accepted that the loss cannot be changed. The grieved has accepted a future exists for them without their loved one and they now must take responsibility of that reality.

**Depression** – sadness when faced with reality

**Acceptance** – a loss has occurred, but it is going to be okay

The grieved recognises the reality of their loss. Sadness occurs and the grieved experience diminished energy. They may prefer to be solitary, isolating themselves from friends and family so they can reflect and grieve alone. Emptiness is felt as reality is faced up to.

**Bargaining** – attempting to gain back control of a situation

Bargaining to try and gain back control of a situation.

The grieved may experience feelings of anger towards themselves and others.

Loss changes lives forever, plans involving the person who has died now become obsolete creating confusion, fear and a deep sense of unfairness.

Blame for their loss may be placed on others, they may blame medical staff, God, friends/family, themselves and even the person who has died.

**Anger** – realisation of a loss results in anger anger

The realisation of a loss results in anger.