

## **Kubler-Ross' Five Stages of Grief** **Laffranchini, Instructor**

Swiss-born psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has counseled hundreds of patients and their families through her research into death and dying. She described the classic pattern of the coping strategies of patients who know their diagnosis is terminal. *This may be used at the end of a relationship or to adjust to a significant loss, also.*

- **Denial and Isolation** - You deny the reality of the loss, and you may withdraw from family and friends. You can't or won't believe that this person is actually gone. This stage may last only a few moments, or it may go on for weeks.
- **Anger** - You may become upset and angry. The anger may even be focused on the person who died for leaving you. Or, you may blame yourself and turn the anger inward. This anger is not rational, but can be very strong and long lasting.
- **Bargaining** - You may try to bargain with the supernatural. "I will do anything if you just take away my loss." This may be related to your own feelings of guilt, the belief that you could have done more, or that you could have done something to prevent the loss.
- **Depression** - You feel numb, down, and totally discouraged. Life without your loved one doesn't seem worth living. It may seem like you'll never be happy again. You have few interests and little energy.
- **Acceptance** - After a period of time, months or even years, you come to accept the reality of the loss and get on with your life.

You may or may not go through every stage. The important thing is to eventually get to the Acceptance stage. During the grieving process you may have strong and conflicting feelings such as sorrow, anger, loneliness, shame, anxiety, and guilt. All of this is normal and usually passes. Trying to deny or hide your feelings can make the grieving process more difficult.

### Kubler-Ross' Grief Cycle

- • [Shock stage](#): Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.
- • [Denial stage](#): Trying to avoid the inevitable.
- • [Anger stage](#): Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.
- • [Bargaining stage](#): Seeking in vain for a way out.
- • [Depression stage](#): Final realization of the inevitable.
- • [Testing stage](#): Seeking realistic solutions.
- • [Acceptance stage](#): Finally finding the way forward.