

# How To Grieve

From *The First Responder Healing Manual*<sup>1</sup> – by Chris & Rahnella Adsit

**BE AWARE OF THE PROCESS.** It is a process, for sure. But it's not a *precise* process. Everyone will process their grief a bit differently than the next person. However, there are some generalized descriptions that are useful – kind of like milestones along a journey – to let you know that you are making progress. Or not.

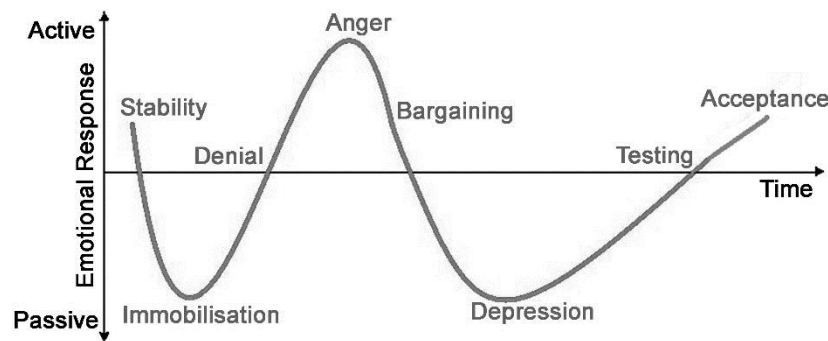
Elizabeth Kübler-Ross was a Swiss physician who did groundbreaking research in the area of grief. Her book *On Death and Dying* has been a classic for decades. In her studies she found that there is a pattern that most people experience after a life-changing trauma or crisis.

This cycle of emotional states is shown on the chart on the next page. It demonstrates the roller-coaster ride of activity and passivity as the hurting person wriggles and dodges in their desperate efforts to cope with the trauma, avoid change and finally be reconciled to it.

The person starts out in a state of relative stability and then the bomb goes off. Over unspecified periods of time, he or she progresses through these stages:

- **Immobilization stage** – Shock; initial paralysis after being exposed to the crisis or trauma. It takes a while for the enormity to register and sink in. Jaw drops, breath catches, can't decide what to do next.
- **Denial stage** – Trying to avoid the inevitable. *No! This can't be happening! Or, It didn't affect me; it wasn't that bad. Or even, It never happened. You just imagined it.*
- **Anger stage** – Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion. *Life sucks!!* Rage seething below the surface at all times; lashing out at anyone for the slightest reason; blaming others; sometimes cold, icy anger; self-isolating to avoid blowing up.
- **Bargaining stage** – Seeking in vain for a way out. Making promises to God if He'll fix things; setting conditions for healing, like: *When the perp that raped and killed that little girl is behind bars, then I'll get well.*
- **Depression stage** – Final realization of the inevitable. A very sad time, but also the turning point, because the griever is finally resolved to the fact that he or she won't be able to restore life to the way it was. It's the staging area for victory.
- **Testing stage** – Seeking realistic solutions. *Maybe I should try getting out more. Maybe I should talk with someone about my situation. Maybe I should start exercising again. Maybe I should join that Bible study I heard about.*
- **Acceptance stage** – Finally finding the way forward. They are now fully acknowledging the trauma or crisis. *It was bad – real bad – but I survived. I'm going to make it. My world changed, but I can live in this new world. I could even prosper.*

## THE KÜBLER-ROSS GRIEF CYCLE:



**A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE PROCESS.** As mentioned before, it's not precise. You may not hit all of these stages. You may skip a stage and then go back to experience it later. You may whiz through one stage and sit in another stage for a long time. You may find yourself going back and forth between a couple of stages, or looping around to various stages willy-nilly. No one can say for sure how you will deal with your unique trauma, given your unique wiring. For you it may be less of a nice, neat "cycle" and more of a "scribble."

Therefore, don't give in to the temptation to compare your grief process with someone else's. If you will keep your connections with God strong during this process, He will take you through it in a way that will maximize every stage and bring you through to the final stage as soon as possible.

How long will it take? Honestly, probably a lot longer than you'd like. In fact, if the trauma you experienced is severe enough, some grief will always be there. It won't be dominating your life like it currently is, but there will always be that hole where the lost person or thing or dream used to be. That ache won't go away completely. But that's not all bad – consider it a memorial to the depth of the love, attachment and value it (or they) held before the loss. And God will use it.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

**– 2 Corinthians 1:3,4**

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<sup>1</sup> Adsit, Chris & Rahnella, *The First Responder Healing Manual* (Eugene, OR: Branches of Valor, Int'l, 2015). Pp 72, 73.