

# Coping with **Loss & Grief**



M&A McCormack  
FUNERALS

*Peace of mind*



Grief is quite common and is the normal internal feeling one experiences in reaction to a loss, while bereavement is the state of having experienced that loss.

Dealing with death, particularly the death of people close to you, can be one of the most stressful experiences that a person can go through. The death of someone close to you is devastating, and can turn your life upside down. Therefore we have gathered some resources to help those who feel they need additional support – these are set out below.

Are there stages of grief? In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross wrote about the five stages of grief in the book entitled 'On Death and Dying'. These stages, is a series of emotional stages experienced when faced with impending death or death of someone. The five stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Her hypothesis holds that not everyone who experiences a life-threatening or life-altering event feels all five of the responses, due to reactions of personal losses differing between individuals.

### The stages include:

- 1. Denial** – as the reality of loss is hard to face, one of the first reactions to follow is denial. What this means is that the person is trying to shut out the reality of the situation, and begins to develop a false, preferable reality.
- 2. Anger** – “Why me? It’s not fair!”; “How can this be happening to me?”; “Who is to blame?”; “Why would God let this happen?”. Once an individual enters the second stage, the individual recognises that denial cannot continue. Because of the anger, the person can be very difficult to care for due to misplaced feelings of rage and envy. Anger can manifest itself in different ways. People can be angry with others particularly those that are close, or themselves, or a company/institution. It is important to remain detached and nonjudgmental when dealing with a person experiencing anger from grief.

**3. Bargaining** - "I'll do anything for a few more years" etc. This stage involves the hope that the individual can somehow undo or avoid a cause of grief. Usually, the negotiation for an extended life is made with a higher power in exchange for a reformed lifestyle.

**4. Depression** – "I'm so sad, why bother with anything", "I'm going to die soon so what's the point of going on?"; "I miss my loved one terribly, why go on?". During this fourth stage, the grieving person begins to under the certainty of death. The idea of living becomes pointless. Things begin to lose meaning to the griever. Because of this, the individual may go into their shell and not communicate as much, refuse visitors and spend much of the time crying and 'down'. This allows the grieving person to disconnect from things of love and affection. It is quite natural to feel sadness, regret, fear, and uncertainty when going through this stage. Feeling and showing these emotions shows that the person has begun to accept the situation.

**5. Acceptance** – "It's going to be okay."; "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it." "I'm at peace with what happened. During this stage individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality, or that of a loved one. This stage varies according to the person's situation. People dying can enter this stage a long time before the people around them do.

If you are experiencing any of these emotions following a loss, it may help to know that your reaction is natural and that you will heal in time. Contrary to popular belief, you do not have to go through each stage in order to heal. Many people also resolve their grief without going through any of the above stages. As Kubler-Ross once said herself "These are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grieving is as individual as our lives."

**Coping with grief and loss tip 1:** Get support or help as soon as possible – do not grieve alone. One of most important factors in healing from loss is having the support of other people and being comfortable to discuss your feelings. Generally sharing your loss makes the burden of grief easier. Turn to someone you trust. It can be good to work through problems with the help of another person.

**Coping with grief and loss tip 2:** Don't let anyone tell you how to feel. It is important to remember that your grief is your own, and don't let people tell you "It's time to move on". Let yourself feel whatever you feel.

**Coping with grief and loss tip 3:** Ensure that you are caring for yourself through continuing nutritious and regular eating habits and making sure that you are having regular sleep. Don't use alcohol or drugs to numb the pain of grief or lift your mood artificially.

**Coping with grief and loss tip 4:** Set aside regular time for yourself. Consider having time alone, without distractions, to exercise, meditate, or listen to music can really help.

**Coping with grief and loss tip 5:** Build your optimism. Train yourself to think positively about the future even when things go wrong. Look objectively at a situation, making a conscious decision to focus on the good. It can be hard to do, but if you practice, you are likely to see improvement.

Losing someone close can impact in different ways on different people. Therefore we have gathered some resources to help those who feel they need additional support.

Death is often a subject that is rarely spoken about but through discussion we are better prepared to deal with it. We offer professional presentations to groups or schools on the topics surrounding death, dying and bereavement.

If you would like a presentation please contact Ann McCormack on 1800 080 909.

## Support Groups & Organisations

### National Association for Loss & Grief (Victoria) Inc

Telephone: 1800 100 023

Website: [www.nalag.org.au](http://www.nalag.org.au)

### The Australian Centre for Grief & Bereavement

Telephone: 9625 2100

Website: [www.grief.org.au](http://www.grief.org.au)

### The Compassionate Friends of Victoria

Telephone: (03) 9888 4944

Website: [www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](http://www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)

### The Australian Institute for Loss and Grief

Telephone: (08) 8341 5557

Website: [www.lossandgrief.com.au](http://www.lossandgrief.com.au)

### **Beyondblue**

Telephone: 1300 224 636

Website: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

### **Homicide Victim Support Services**

Telephone: 1800 774 744

Website: [www.hvsg.org.au](http://www.hvsg.org.au)

### **Mensline Australia**

Telephone: 1300 789 978

Website: [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

### **Parentline**

Telephone: 1300 301 300

Website: [parentline.com.au](http://parentline.com.au)

### **Kids Help Line**

Telephone: 1800 55 1800

Website: [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

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