

STAGES OF GRIEF

Grief is a highly individual process. No two experiences are the same. Variances exist from one person to another, and, also within our own experiences as we grieve after the loss of still another loved one. It is helpful to understand that we might find ourselves in more than one stage at any given time. In addition, we might sense that we are moving forward and then suddenly feel as though we are struggling once again. This is all normal!

One of the ways to understand the grief process is to examine tasks associated with various stages of grief. In doing so, we may be able to determine how we are moving ahead plus identify tasks we continue to work on. When we grieve well, we allow the process whatever time is necessary for our healing. There is no rushing grief.

Depending upon the source, the stages may vary in number and name. Here, we review a sampling of the tasks associated with five stages of grief.

SHOCK/STAGE ONE

With difficulty or some degree of ease, we may be trying to

- Tend to daily chores
- Look through our loved ones' clothing and personal items
- Write thank you notes
- Go back to work
- Accept support from others and be of support also

ADJUSTMENT/ACCEPTANCE/STAGE TWO

We might struggle, or find the grace to

- Allow ourselves to cry, be angry or sad
- Accept that our loved ones are gone
- Be patient with ourselves
- Join a grief support group
- Take on new responsibilities

COPING/STAGE THREE

In this stage of our grief we work toward

- Keeping our emotions in check
- Understanding how the death has affected our lives
- Beginning to go out with friends and relatives
- Finding support in people who understand

STAGE FOUR/REBUILDING

As we rebuild our lives, we may

- Make new friends and find new interests
- Speak of our loved ones with ease
- Find it easier to tell people of our loved one's death
- Look forward to tomorrow

STAGE FIVE/RECOVERY

In this last stage of grief we

- Become comfortable with family members and old friends
- Are social and allow joy back into our lives
- Understand that our loved ones are with God
- Enjoy telling and hearing stories of our loved ones
- Make long term decisions or look into the future
- Know that we will be okay again