



Beginning Again

Whether divorce or death, we all go through a thing called grief. Grief is a process more than one particular emotion. No matter what we lose – a job, a spouse, a child or even a pet, grief is normal process in human existence.

Depending on the health and depth of the relationship involved, grief will affect you. It may be deep or almost unnoticeable. It may be a short-lived process with hardly any discomfort. It may feel debilitating and appear you may not be able to bear it. Either way, it will come.

Grief has been studied for years and it seems that no matter what we are grieving, there are some similarities. Dr Kubler-Ross, in her book “On Death and Dying” found these similarities as she researched death in a hospital setting. They have been called “stages” but you need to understand they do not necessarily happen in order or once you get “through” one stage then the next kicks in. Life is a lot more messy than that! The following are common steps or processes of grief:

- **Denial:** In this stage, it is hard to believe that your loss is really happening. “There must be some kind of mistake! I can’t have cancer! I can’t possibly be losing my job! I have put too many years in this company for them to do this to me! I can’t believe they would leave me like this!” These are common statements or feelings in this stage. Our minds are trying to protect us from feeling the deep sense of loss in this stage. If we deny it, then it might not be true.
- **Bargaining:** This is where many people attempt to change the reality of the situation by attempting to bargain their way out of the issue. “What if I get another medical opinion? Maybe if I become a better person, God will change the situation miraculously! If I promise to stop ... will you come back to me?” This stage is an attempt to regain some sense of power in a powerless situation. Our sense of mortality smacks us in the face and with it goes our feeling of power in our life. We want to escape the situation so maybe there is something we can do to make it different.
- **Anger:** Our sense of lack of power and facing the loss yields to the emotion of anger. Anger is a natural result of feeling a loss of power because anger is a powerful emotion. It is a valid emotion but often hides us or protects us from some other real emotions that are more painful to feel, i.e.: abandonment, fear, hurt, shame, guilt, etc. Anger is a more “comfortable” emotion to express. We might experience this by anger outbursts at the person who left us or at the medical doctor who made the diagnosis. A child may become angry at the parent who stays, thinking the parent who remained must have done something wrong to make the other parent leave. Anger is hardly rational at times.
- **Depression:** In this stage, we begin to experience the reality of the loss. We look over and see the chair empty where I loved one used to sit at family gatherings. We begin to feel depressed at our upcoming demise. We allow the incredible weight of being jobless to settle on our shoulders. The empty house feels so hopeless and huge. “I can’t make it

without ...! I can't go on! How can I ever live without ...!" These are all statements that one might think or say in this stage.

- **Acceptance:** In this stage, we begin to come to peace with the reality of the loss. Our faith helps us with the sense of there is hope beyond the grave. We will have eternal life with God. We discover we can move on, albeit painful. Some grief will never on this side of the grave be completely healed over, such as the loss of a child. Our hope comes from finding out there is life that needs to be lived out in the here and now. Others in our family need us and we still have their relationships to comfort and be there for us. We find others desire to have a relationship with us and we can begin to live and maybe even laugh again on occasion.

One last thought – there is no set time you have to be “through” your grieving. Everyone does grief different. Just because someone else seems to have worked through it easily doesn't mean you should be “over it.”

If you find that your grief is overwhelming to the point that it interferes with work or just your overall functioning in life, it might help to talk with a trained counselor. If we can be of help please contact us at (239) 220-9912 or mike@swflacounsel.com.