

The Kübler-Ross model

The **Kübler-Ross model** describes, in five discrete stages, the process by which people deal with grief and tragedy, especially when diagnosed with a terminal illness. The model was introduced by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book "*On Death and Dying*". The stages have become well-known as the "Five Stages of Grief".

The stages are:

1. **Denial:** The initial stage: *"It can't be happening."*
2. **Anger:** *"Why ME? It's not fair!"* (either referring to God, oneself, or anybody perceived, rightly or wrongly, as "responsible")
3. **Bargaining:** *"Just let me live to see my child(ren) graduate."*
4. **Depression:** *"I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"*
5. **Acceptance:** *"It's going to be OK."*

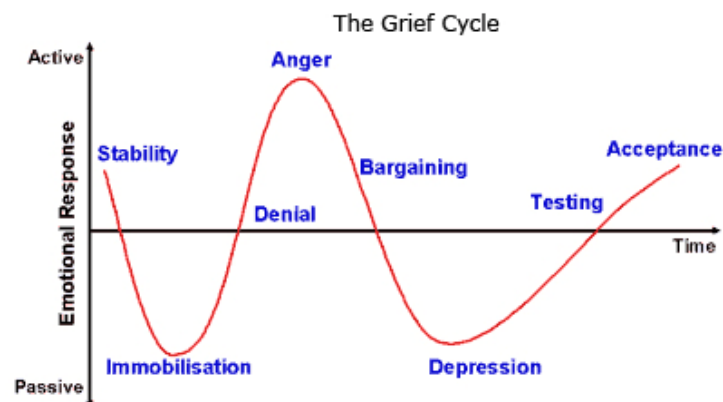
Kübler - Ross originally applied these stages to any form of catastrophic personal loss (job, income, freedom). This also includes the death of a loved one and divorce.

Kübler-Ross also claimed these steps do not necessarily come in order, nor are they all experienced by all patients, though she stated a person will always experience at least two.

Others have noticed that any significant personal change can follow these stages. For example, experienced criminal defense attorneys are aware that defendants who are facing stiff sentences, yet have no defenses or mitigating factors to lessen their sentences, often experience the stages. Accordingly, they must get to the acceptance stage before they are prepared to plead guilty.

Additionally, the change in circumstances does not always have to be a negative one, just significant enough to cause a grief response to the loss (Scire, 2007). Accepting a new work position, for example, causes one to lose their routine, workplace friendships, familiar drive to work, even customary lunch sources.

In 1974, "The Handbook of Psychiatry" defined grief as "...the normal response to the loss of a loved one by death," and response to other kinds of losses were labeled "Pathological Depressive Reactions." This has become the predominant way for counselors and professionals to approach grief, loss, tragedy and traumatic experiences. Kubler-Ross also viewed the various stages as equally valid coping mechanisms, allowing an individual to work through their disease process or loss over time.



References

- Kubler-Ross, E (1973) *On Death and Dying*, Routledge, ISBN 0415040159
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- Scire, P (2007). "Applying Grief Stages to Organizational Change."

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