

Stages of Grief

Identified by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross & David Kessler

Denial

Shock, disbelief, & numb feelings about the loss; pretending the loss isn't happening

Examples: "She's not gone. I'm sure she'll walk around the corner any moment."

"They didn't really mean to let you go. I'm sure it's all a misunderstanding."

Anger

Intense anger often masks any other feelings; anger is often misdirected emotion

Example: "If she cared about herself more, this wouldn't have happened."

"They're terrible bosses. I hope they fail." "Why me? Life isn't fair."

Bargaining

All the what-ifs and regrets in an attempt to regain control

Example: "If only I had visited her the other day, she wouldn't be gone."

"If only I hadn't messed up on that project, I would still have my job."

Depression

Sadness from the loss; often including hopelessness, emptiness, and withdrawal

Example: "I don't know how to go after this." "Who am I without my loved one?"

Acceptance

Acknowledging the reality of the loss, but it doesn't mean being okay with the loss

Example: "I'll be able to find my way forward after the loss of my job and take on a new adventure."

Meaning

Making sense of the grief; stage where the healing often resides and emotions stabilize; learning to remember the loss with more love than pain

Example: "I lost my job, but I'm going to be okay." "My spouse died, but I'm finding ways to move on."