

## **An insight Into The Process of Grief**

The thought of grieving the loss of a loved one is a painful and scary imagination, yet many of us who go through this experience know just how challenging it can get. In the recent pandemic, we have witnessed global fatality causing wide spread panic in the general public when the “Death Toll” was tracked by the second, minute and hour. What the statistics didn’t take into account was the number of people experiencing Bereavement, mourning their losses and Grieving the death of their loved ones. The process of coping with loss is personal and intensive, yet we can be aware that there are common factors in the way we grieve. The need for support and care during this process is at its peak, the person must be supported with the right form of help; this article focuses on providing insight and encouraging the reader to use this resource to help themselves and the community at large.

*“Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape”,*  
(Lewis, 1963).

This quote is a glimpse of the unpredictability of suffering, authors like C.S. Lewis who wrestle with their experiences and share their knowledge about the process of grief. Understanding the different events leading to grief provides insight; it can be sequenced as bereavement, mourning and grief, these terms are most often used interchangeably but there are significant differences.

Using the APA Dictionary of Psychology as a guide, the below are the definition of the three individual events:

Grief is the anguish experienced due to the loss of a loved person. The experience often includes physiological distress, yearning, separation anxiety, confusion, obsessive dwelling on the past and uncertainty about the future.

Bereavement is the condition of having lost a loved one to death, signifying the occurrence of the event which leads to the grief response.

Mourning is the process of feeling or expressing grief following the death of a loved one. The process usually involves apathy, dejection, loss of interest and diminution in activity and initiative.

This complex response towards the passing of a loved one has always fascinated researchers studying this phenomenon to formulate a strategy to help the people carrying grief. Through scientific enquiry different theories have been developed, we present a couple of popular theories which have gained validation and acceptance among the scientific community and general public.

Kubler Ross's model of Grief is widely known as the five stage model of grief, which she had formulated through her work with terminally ill patients approaching the end of their lives. The stages are defined below:

**Denial:** The most common defence mechanism used to protect oneself from the shock and difficult reality of facing the situation. This response helps the individual to cope and survive the tragic loss and the drastic change in day to day life. The natural progression of this phase would be to slowly begin to accept the loss and all the feelings that were being denied.

**Anger:** A necessary stage in the process of grief, as it is an expression of the pain being experienced. Allowing oneself to feel the anger and expressing it in healthy ways results in healing as it forms a structure towards the emotions experienced. Focus is developed through the feeling and expression of the emotion, among the other feelings of nothingness and denial.

**Bargaining:** This stage is an attempt to change one's behaviour in the past or future course of action in order to hold on to the person who is dying. After the loss the individual engages in "If only..." and "What if..." thinking patterns in an attempt to restore life to what is was. This may even include bargaining with the pain by staying in the past and reliving the memories in order to not feel the pain of loss.

**Depression:** The next stage is the shift of focus to the present situation which seems grim and uncertain as grief is more significantly experienced. This stage is a very natural and appropriate response to the passing of a loved one, as it is normal to feel depressed due to the life altering event and depression is a step along the process.

**Acceptance:** Often thought of as accepting what has happened and being alright with it, but quite the contrary to this notion is the fact that most people don't ever feel okay about the death of a loved one. This stage in the process is to accept that the person not being around physically is the new reality and is the permanent state. The individual who adapts to the change in needs and dependence forges a new way of living and experiencing new things in a way in which they begin to enjoy life and form new connection and meaningful relationships.

A more adaptive approach was taken by Stroebe and Schut's Dual Process Model of Grief, this is a modern theory on grief which was developed in an attempt to form an approach which is different to the traditional theories. The dual process focuses on two stressors "Loss orientated" and "Restoration orientated" both these stressors need the individual to cope with the changes. Oscillation is another key component of the theory which describes moving forward and backwards between facing and avoiding the loss as a natural part of grief. This approach normalizes the grieving process by reassuring the individuals that they are not alone in this process of facing things and avoiding them. The model also places no judgement on the person's grieving process as this is an inclusive and holistic model exploring the complex area of grief and loss, (Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

Grief is also characterized into different types in order to provide specific attention and care during the process, the below are a few common types are; normal grief, complicated grief, prolonged grief, chronic grief and disenfranchised grief. The types are established based on observed responses and the nature of grief, (Sutton, 2022).

These theories give us evidence based knowledge which we can apply to understand and help people in the process of grief. The responses to grief on the surface may seem extreme and out of character to other people, but it must be viewed as a natural process and it's important that they journey through grief. The grief period and grief work of establishing new bonds with other and transforming the relationship with the person who passed away determines how an individual copes and returns to normal functioning. During this period it is imperative to receive the right guidance, acceptance and professional support in order to process the loss and make changes to face the new reality that is ahead of them.

## References

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