5 Stages of Grief

Emotions: Making Sense of What You Feel After a Loss

The five stages of grief are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross described them in her 1969 book On Death and Dying. They are not a fixed order. Many people move back and forth between them, feel several at once, or never go through some of them at all. Use this worksheet to put words to what you feel, without judging whether you are grieving the right way.

1 The five stages

Stage	What it can feel like
Denial	*Shock or numbness. The loss does not feel real, or you keep expecting things to go back to how they were.*
Anger	*Frustration or rage at the loss, at other people, at yourself, or at how unfair it is.*
Bargaining	*"What if" and "if only" thoughts. Wishing you could undo it, or making deals in your head.*
Depression	*Deep sadness, emptiness, or tiredness as the loss sinks in. You may want to pull away from people.*
Acceptance	*Learning to live with the loss. The pain can still come, and there is room for other things too.*

Why does this work? *Grief can bring feelings that seem strange or frightening, like anger at someone you loved. Putting a name to a feeling can make it easier to understand and to talk about. The stages are one way to name what you feel. They are not a path you must follow or a test you can fail.*

Kübler-Ross first described these stages in people who were facing their own death, and they were later applied to grief after a loss. Grief researchers caution against treating them as steps everyone goes through in order. Grief often comes in waves, and there is no correct timeline.

2 What you are feeling now

You can grieve any loss, such as a death, a breakup, a job, your health, or the life you expected to have.

The loss I am grieving:

Right now, the stages or feelings that fit me best are:

Example: Mostly anger, and on some days it still does not feel real.

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

© 2026 Choosing Therapy, Inc. All rights reserved.

Scan or click here to learn more about the five stages of grief:

5 Stages of Grief

Emotions: Making Sense of What You Feel After a Loss

3 Notice how it shifts

Grief often changes from day to day, or even hour to hour. For one week, jot down what you felt most each day and anything that helped.

Day	What I felt most	What helped, even a little
Monday	*Numb at work, then very sad at night*	*Calling my sister before bed*

4 Caring for yourself while you grieve

One person I can talk to about my loss:

One small thing I can do for myself this week:

Example: Eat one proper meal a day and take a short walk.

Something I want to remember about who or what I lost:

Grief is a normal response to loss. If it feels unbearable, makes it hard to get through your days for a long time, or brings thoughts of not wanting to live, reach out to a grief counselor or therapist. If you are in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

© 2026 Choosing Therapy, Inc. All rights reserved.

Scan or click here to learn more about the five stages of grief: