

Coping with Loss:

“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal” - A headstone in Ireland

By Liggy Webb

Loss is the most painful of all human experiences and is a very natural reaction. It is the process which allows people to come to terms with the loss and resulting change in their lives. Loss can take many forms, from the obvious death of a partner, relative or friend, to divorce or the loss of a job.

Grief is a very personal and individual experience and is composed not of just one feeling, but of many. However, though we may experience different feelings at different times, grief usually follows a general, recognisable pattern. Losing someone or something you love is very painful. After a significant loss, you may experience all kinds of difficult and surprising emotions, such as shock, anger, and guilt. Sometimes it may feel like the sadness will never end. While these feelings can be frightening and overwhelming, they are normal reactions to loss. Accepting them as part of the grieving process and allowing yourself to feel what you feel is necessary for healing.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. However, there are healthy ways to cope with the pain. Grief that is expressed and experienced has a potential for healing that eventually can strengthen and enrich life.

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. You may associate grief with the death of a loved one – and this type of loss does often cause the most intense grief.

Everyone grieves differently

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and the nature of the loss. The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried – and there is no “normal” timetable for grieving.



Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced what became known as the “**five stages of grief.**” These stages of grief were based on her studies of the feelings of patients facing terminal illness, but many people have generalised them to other types of negative life changes and losses, such as the death of a loved one or a break-up.

The Five Stages of Grief

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

“Perhaps they are not the stars, but rather openings in Heaven where the love of our lost ones pours through and shines down upon us to let us know they are happy”
 Author Unknown

The Five Stages of Grief

Denial - In the denial stage we refuse to believe what has happened. We try in our mind to tell ourselves that life is as it was before our loss. We can even make believe to an extent by re-enacting rituals that we used to go through with our loved one.

Anger - We get angry. The anger can manifest itself in many ways. We can blame others for our loss. We can become easily agitated, having emotional outbursts. We can even become angry with ourselves.

Bargaining - This can be with ourselves or, if you are religious, with your god. Oft en we will offer something to try to take away the reality and pain of what has happened.

Depression – This is a very likely outcome for all people that grieve for a loss. This is what I would consider the most difficult stage of the five to deal with. There can be a feeling of listlessness and tiredness. You may be wandering around in a daze, thinking that you are feeling numb, or feeling guilty, as if everything is your own fault. You may find you feel like you are being punished.

Acceptance - The final stage of grief. It is when you realise that life has to go on. You may still have thoughts of your loved one, but less intense and less frequent. You can here accept your loss. You should now be able to regain your energy and goals for the future. It may take some time to get here, but you will.

Coping with Grief - Useful Tips

- Turn to friends and family members
- Draw comfort from your faith
- Join a support group
- Talk to a therapist or grief counsellor
- Avoid alcohol and stimulants
- Face your feelings
- Express your feelings
- Look after your physical health
- Don't let anyone tell you how to feel
- Plan ahead for grief "triggers"

Life is what YOU make it!



The above article is an extract from *The Happy Handbook - A Compendium of Modern Life Skills*

by Liggy Webb which is out now.

Liggy Webb is widely respected as a leading expert in the field of *Modern Life Skills and Workplace Wellness*.

As a presenter, consultant and author she is passionate about her work and improving the quality of people's lives. She is the founding director of The Learning Architect a consortium of niche industry experts. Liggy has developed a range of techniques to support individuals and organizations to cope more effectively with modern living and the demands and challenges of life in the twenty tens and beyond.

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