

## The Four Stages of Grief

*There are four noticeable stages which everyone has to navigate before the grief process is complete.*

*They can take different amounts of time for everyone and progress can sometimes move backwards for a time before moving forwards again.*

- 1. Denial (you can't quite believe it's happened, you feel you will wake up one day and find it's all been a dream)*
- 2. Anger (you become angry with both the person who has gone and left you alone to fend for yourself and with the world in general)*
- 3. Adapting to the changes the loss has brought (a gradual acceptance that this is the way things are going to stay from now on—that you can't put the clock back)*
- 4. Moving on and letting go—this final stage leaves you free to invest in new relationships and carry on with life. You will never forget the past but it won't pre-occupy you as before.*

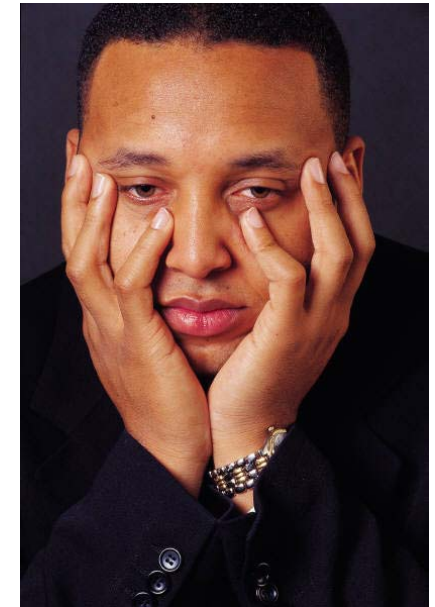
If you are overwhelmed by feelings of loss for someone or something dear to you that may have happened many months or even years ago, it may help you to contact me for some supportive counselling where we can look at what issues about your loss are unresolved for you.



**An e- leaflet prepared by  
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## Coping with Loss



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## Coping with Bereavement and Loss

When someone close to us dies we may feel a lot of powerful and confusing feelings.

If we have watched them die from a terminal illness we can feel relieved because their suffering is over; or a sense of calm that they are no longer struggling with life.

But we may also feel unaccountably angry that they have left us alone in the world (even though we had been preparing for this for some time). Or we may displace our anger on to the medical profession or whoever was in charge of our loved one's care, we want to blame someone for what's happened.

Sometimes we try and carry on as normal, pretending that nothing significant has happened. We go back to work, often burying ourselves in it, to avoid being alone with our thoughts. After a few weeks, everyone around us seems to have forgotten about our loss and we can feel very isolated and unsupported (particularly if we have shrugged off friends' well-meaning offers of help earlier).

And in addition to these difficult and confusing feelings we still have to adapt to the practicalities of living without them.

### Some Suggestions about how to deal with the Early Days and Weeks of a bereavement.

1. Expect to feel disorientated and unable to concentrate as you would normally—at least in the early days.
2. You may feel angry at the beginning and want to find someone to blame for what has happened. In time, this strong feeling will diminish.
3. Take one day at a time, don't try and make long-term plans.
4. Don't make hurried decisions such as moving house.
5. Don't push other people away. Keep in touch with your friends and relatives. They want to know how you are feeling. Some may hang back not wanting to intrude or not knowing how to approach you.
6. Don't expect to 'get over it' in a few days or weeks. You will probably feel vulnerable and lonely for some months and the anniversary of days that were special for both of you will be particularly poignant in the first year.
7. Take time to decide what items to remove (such as clothing and possessions) which belonged to the dead person. Don't be hurried by other people who are anxious for you to 'move on'.
8. Make use of your friends and relatives for company, support, practical assistance. You'd do the same for them if circumstances were reversed.

### When Counselling May Help

Some people who experience a significant loss can remain in a state of grief for months or even years after the event. The people around them can become less sympathetic to their grieving state because they believe it has gone on for too long.

When this happens, the bereaved person feels isolated and alone with their grief, misunderstood and at odds with their friends and relatives.

Having some counselling can help relieve the burden of the loss by re-examining it with someone who is concerned and ready to listen.

I encourage people who are burdened like this to write about their loss in a way that is useful to them.

- Sometimes it helps to write a letter to the dead person, which can release some of the strong feelings they have about what's happened.
- Sometimes it is helpful to assemble memories and photographs in a book which celebrates the life you have shared together.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of loss with me please contact me at the address below.

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