

Working Through the Stages of Grief

* **Denial** – Common characteristics- “Active Coping”; Seeking information’ Problem-solving efforts; Deciding to fight
  + Suggested responses :
    - Provide facts – Accept and acknowledge the issues. Be mindful and accepting of emotional attachment to the loss.
    - Dissolve blame – Reach out to for support and accept it. Seek other positive perspectives. Avoid isolation.
    - Review and develop positive communication about the relationship- Be patient, respectful and focus on positive expressions
* **Anger** – Common characteristics- “Self-Distraction/Self-Affirmation”; Encouraging oneself; Seeking Success; Distancing oneself; Lashing out at others.
  + Suggested responses:
    - Recognize irrational thinking –There will be adjustments to the “new normal”.
    - Normal anger – To be angry is a normal emotion that can be managed. Be prepared to set strong limits and boundaries with positive alternative expressions. Be prepared to seek assistance with expressions of extreme anger or rage.
    - Make room for adjustment – Support self-awareness (temperament) and self-control to think things through. Forgive and be forgiven. Stay open to transition. Look for opportunities to transition the emotions.
* **Bargaining** – Common characteristics- “Search for Meaning”; Accepting as fate; Consoling oneself with religion
  + Suggested responses:
    - Be mindful of “If only” statements – Those grieving will try rationalizing in their mind other options to change the finality or outcome of the loss.
      * “If only we could have…, If only they had…, If only I would have…”
    - Religious or spiritual questions – Those grieving will often question God, the afterlife, and sometimes the purpose of life. Be willing to seek professional assistance when applicable.
    - Next Step – Bargaining is the actual step from anger toward acceptance. Remain patient and sympathetic to the natural process.

* **Depression** –“Minimizing Importance”- Denying; Dissimulating impact; Wishful thinking
  + Suggested responses:
    - Normal Depression - Remain patient and supportive – Feeling alone and sad is a normal response to loss. This form of depression may not be a mental disorder. Support open communication and avoid isolation.
    - Relationship and cause of death - These factors will often determine how long those grieving will feel depressed. Avoid painful reminders, expect to manage setbacks, and support those grieving’s personality.
    - Professional Assistance – Be willing to seek professional assistance for extreme setbacks, major behavior changes, symptoms of continual struggles after a substantial period of time laps and/or (statements of self-harm)
* **Acceptanc**e –“Depressive Coping”- Pitying oneself; Brooding; Withdrawing from others
  + Suggested responses:
    - Accepting reality – This stage is not feeling-based. Those grieving may not currently feel ok, good, or right about the loss. The goal is to accept the facts about their new reality that will not change.
    - Accepting not ignoring – This stage is not just forgetting. Avoid reverting into denial or pretending there was not a loss. The goal is to accept the now be it good or bad to establish a positive and stable future.
    - Accepting responsibility - This stage is for those grieving to work toward a personal resolve independently. The goal is for those grieving will take ownership and responsibility for their behavior and efforts toward normal functionality.