

**ROB GRELLMAN, PSY.D.**

3880 S. Bascom Ave. San Jose Ca 95124

Voice Mail & Fax (408) 486-6711 – Google Voice & Text (408) 320-8568 - [drrdbg@comcast.net](mailto:drrdbg@comcast.net)

**FIVE DYNAMICS OF GRIEF & CHANGE**

As originally influenced by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross:

**What are the Dynamics of the Grief & Change process?** Why is Change included?

With Change, there is Loss.

A grief and change experience involves the following five dynamics: (1) Denial, (2) Bargaining, (3) Anger, (4) Depression, and (5) Acceptance.

These five dynamics can occur in any sequence; there is no right order.

The dynamics can recur during any grief and change experience.

One stage can last for a long or short period of time, uninterrupted.

These dynamics of grief and change are normal and are to be expected.

It is healthier to accept these dynamics and recognize them for what they are rather than attempt to fight them off or to ignore them.

Working through each dynamic of the grief and loss response allows for better potential a return to normal emotional health and adaptive functioning.

Getting outside support and help during the grieving and change process will assist in gaining objectivity and understanding.

**Denial**

We deny that the loss and change that has occurred.

We ignore the signs of the loss and change.

We begin to use:

Magical thinking: believing this loss will go away.

Excessive fantasy: believing that nothing is wrong; this loss is just imagined; when I wake up everything will be OK.

Regression: believing that if we act like a child others will reassure us that nothing is wrong.

Withdrawal: believing we can avoid facing the pain and avoid those people who confront us with the truth.

Rejection: believing we can reject the truth and those who bring us the news of our loss.

**Bargaining**

We attempt to negotiate a deal with God, ourselves, or others to make the pain go away.

We promise to do anything to make this pain go away.

We agree to take any measure in order to make this pain disappear.

We lack confidence in our attempts to deal with the grief and loss, looking elsewhere for answers.

We begin to:

Shop around believing if we look hard enough for the “right” answer we’ll find the “cure” for our loss.

Gamble believing we can take chances on “cures” for our loss.

Take risks by putting ourselves in jeopardy financially, emotionally, and physically to get to an answer or “cure” for our loss.

Sacrifice believing in our pursuit of a “cure” for change; we can ignore other needs.

### **Anger**

We become angry with God, with ourselves, or with others over our loss.

We become outraged and incensed over the steps that must be taken to overcome our loss.

We pick out “scapegoats” on which to vent our anger, e.g., the doctors, hospitals, clerks, helping agencies, rehabilitation specialists, etc.

We begin to use:

Self-blaming ways for our loss.

Switching blame to others for this loss.

Blaming the victim for leaving us.

Believe we have a right to vent our blame and rage aggressively on the closest target.

Believe our hurt and pain is justified to turn into resentment toward others involved in our loss event including the victim.

Anger is a normal stage. It must be expressed and processed; if it is suppressed and held in, it will become “Anger in” leading to a maladaptive condition of depression that drains our emotional energy.

### **Depression**

We become overwhelmed by the anguish, pain, and hurt of our loss; we are thrown into the depths of despair.

We can begin to have uncontrollable spells of crying, sobbing, and weeping.

We can begin to go into spells of deep silence, morose thinking, and deep melancholy.

We can begin to experience:

Guilt believing we are responsible for our loss.

Loss of hope believing that because the news of our loss becomes so overwhelming that we have no hope of being able to return to the calm and order our life held prior to the loss.

Loss of faith and trust believing that because of this loss we can no longer trust our belief in the goodness and mercy of God and mankind.

We need support to assist us in gaining the objectivity to reframe and regroup our lives.

If we are not able to work through our depression, we risk experiencing events such as mental illness, divorce/separation, suicide, inability to cope with the aftermath of our loss, rejection of the family member who has experienced the loss, and detachment, poor bonding, or unhealthy interaction with the parties involved in our loss.

### **Acceptance**

We begin to reach a level of awareness, understanding and make sense of the nature of our loss.

We can now:

Describe the terms and conditions involved in our loss.

Fully describe the risks and limitations involved in the treatment or rehabilitation for the loss involved.

Cope more effectively with our loss.

Test the concepts and alternatives available to us in dealing with this loss.

Handle the information surrounding this loss in a more appropriate way.

We begin to use:

Realistic thinking believing we are able to refute our irrational beliefs or fantasy thinking in order to address our loss from a rational perspective.

Adaptive behavior believing we can begin to adjust our lives to incorporate the changes necessary after our loss.

Appropriate emotion believing we begin to express our emotional responses freely and are better able to verbalize the pain, hurt, and suffering we have experienced.

Patience and self-understanding believing we can recognize that it takes time to adjust to the loss and give ourselves time to “deal” with it.

We set a realistic time frame in which to learn to cope with our changed lives.

Self-confidence believing, as we begin to sort things out and recognize the stages of loss as natural and expected, that we gain the confidence needed for personal growth.

We can be growing in acceptance and still experience denial, bargaining, anger, and despair.

To come to full acceptance we need support to gain objectivity and clarity of thinking.

It is often useful to gain such assistance from those who have experienced a similar loss.

Peer support from others is often a very helpful way for a person to deal with the grieving process.