

## Kübler-Ross Stages of Grief

The Kübler-Ross model, commonly known as the five stages of grief, was first introduced by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*.

The progression of states is;

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**1. Denial – “I feel fine.”;** “This can’t be happening, not to me.” Denial is usually only a temporary defense for the individual. This feeling is generally replaced with heightened awareness of situations and individuals that will be left behind after death.

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**2. Anger – “Why me? It’s not fair!”;** “How can this happen to me?”; “Who is to blame?” Once in the second stage, the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue. Because of anger, the person is very difficult to care for due to misplaced feelings of rage and envy. Any individual that symbolizes life or energy is subject to projected resentment and jealousy.

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**3. Bargaining – “Just let me live to see my children graduate.”;** “I’ll do anything for a few more years.”; “I will give my life savings if...” The third stage involves the hope that the individual can somehow postpone or delay death. Usually, the negotiation for an extended life is made with a higher power in exchange for a reformed lifestyle. Psychologically, the individual is saying, “I understand I will die, but if I could just have more time...”

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**4. Depression – “I’m so sad, why bother with anything?”;** “I’m going to die... What’s the point?”; “I miss my loved one, why go on?” During the fourth stage, the dying person begins to understand the certainty of death. Because of this, the individual may become silent, refuse visitors and spend much of the time crying and grieving. This process allows the dying person to disconnect oneself from things of love and affection. It is not recommended to attempt to cheer up an individual who is in this stage. It is an important time for grieving that must be processed.

**5. Acceptance – “It’s going to be okay.”;** “I can’t fight it, I may as well prepare for it.” In this last stage, the individual begins to come to terms with their mortality or that of their loved one.

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Kübler-Ross originally applied these stages to people suffering from terminal illness, later to any form of catastrophic personal loss (job, income, freedom). This may also include significant life events such as the death of a loved one, divorce, drug addiction, the onset of a disease or chronic illness, an infertility diagnosis, as well many tragedies and disasters.

Kübler-Ross claimed these steps do not necessarily come in the order noted above, nor are all steps experienced by all patients, though she stated a person will always experience at least two. Often, people will experience several stages in a “roller coaster” effect—switching between two or more stages, returning to one or more several times before working through it.

Significantly, people experiencing the stages should not force the process. The grief process is highly personal and should not be rushed, nor lengthened, on the basis of an individual’s imposed time frame or opinion. One should merely be aware that the stages will be worked through and the ultimate stage of “Acceptance” will be reached.

However, there are individuals who struggle with death until the end. Some psychologists believe that the harder a person fights death, the more likely they are to stay in the denial stage. If this is the case, it is possible the ill person will have more difficulty dying in a dignified way. Other psychologists state that not confronting death until the end is adaptive for some people. Those who experience problems working through the stages should consider professional grief counseling or support groups.