

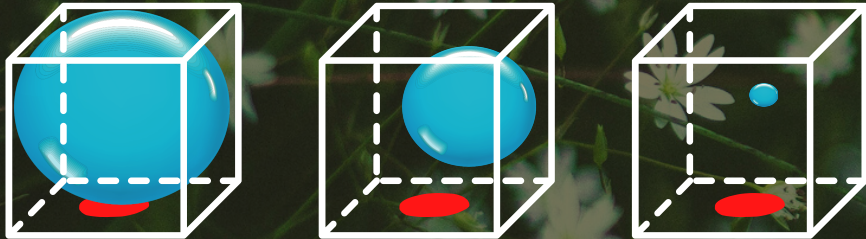
LOSS, RECOVERY & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Our journey from loss, through grief and reaching acceptance

What is Grief?

Grief is the emotion we feel when we experience loss or any change that alters our lives. It's something we all experience and it can be a real challenge to cope with.

Visualise your life as a box. Inside that box is a pain button and a floating ball that represents your grief. When grief first sets in, the ball is huge and as you move through life it bounces into the pain button constantly. Over time, the ball starts to shrink. It still floats around in the box, but because the ball keeps getting smaller, it doesn't bump into the pain button as often. When it does, it still hurts and it can be unexpected, but it's nowhere near as often as when the loss first happened and the ball filled the box.



Everyone grieves differently, but there are some similarities in the stages and the order of feelings experienced during grief - this process is often referred to as the '5 stages of grief'. It's important to remember that grief is very personal. It's not a 'one size fits all' emotion and it doesn't follow timelines, schedules or specific orders. These characteristics make grief a confusing, messy and inconvenient emotion to cope with, or help someone else navigate.

As long as we are supportive and respectful of others' grieving processes, we can help to make their loss a little easier to live with.

Grief is overwhelming, so this is a common defence mechanism that helps numb how intense it can feel. Denial gives you time to gradually absorb the loss and begin to process it. As you move out of the denial stage however, the emotions you've been hiding will begin to surface and you'll be confronted with a lot of sorrow. That is part of the journey but it can be difficult.

Stage 1 - Denial



Stage 2 - Anger

Anger is our protection from being overwhelmingly sad and can hide the pain that you're experiencing. It can be directed at other people or things, while you try to process your loss. Not everyone will experience this stage, or some may stay here for a long time, but as the anger subsides you may begin to think more rationally about what's happening and feel the emotions you've been protecting yourself from.



Stage 3 - Bargaining

We can feel very out of control while we grieve, so trying to find ways to understand what's happened helps us to feel more stable and comforted. In order to feel more in control, you may find yourself creating a lot of "what if" and "if only" statements. From these, it's easy to take on responsibilities that aren't ours - Like someone telling themselves that if they'd gone to the vet sooner their dog wouldn't have died. It's impossible to know this for a fact and thinking these "what if" and "if only" statements can cause a lot of extra pain.



Stage 4 - Depression

This sadness can feel like the quiet stage of grief. By this point, you've journeyed through the loud and distracting emotions and may now be able to embrace and process your loss in a more healthy way. You may also choose to isolate yourself from others in order to fully cope with the loss - this is ok, but if the sadness stays for longer than you're comfortable with, speak to someone (a Dr, friend, family, or a mental health professional) to get some help.



Stage 5 - Acceptance

Acceptance is not necessarily a happy or uplifting stage of grief and it doesn't mean you've moved past the loss. It does however, mean that you've accepted it and have come to terms with what it means for your life. It's accepting that there may be more good days than bad, but there may still be heavy waves of sadness - and that's okay, it just means we cared for who or what we lost.

