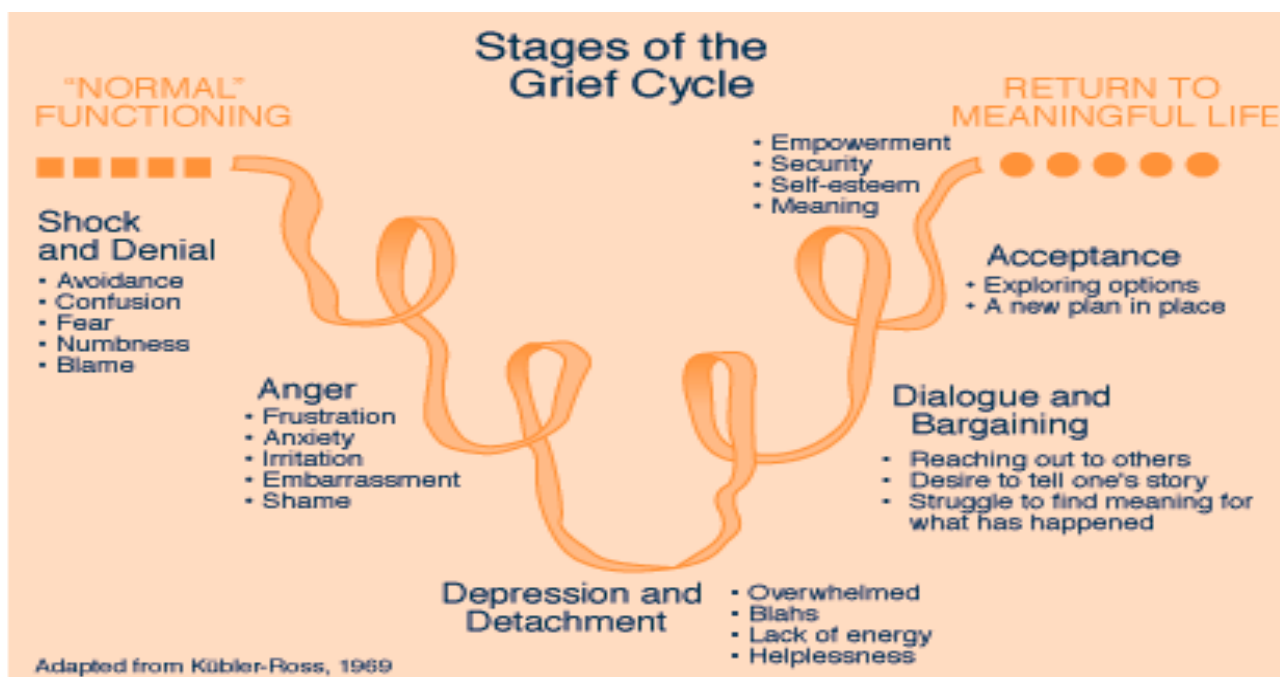


Separation and the Loss & Grief

Grieving the loss is essential to the emotional divorce from the former partner. Separation ranks just above death in the severity of stress and is often combined with other tensions, serious financial problems, a move, single parenting, multiple losses and the prospect of family court, all at once. Dr Robert Emery describes loss & grief after separation as worse than if the partner had died. He says 'grief and anger are both natural and appropriate responses to separation. It can take 2 years or more to work through the grief.'

Separation is a life crisis that presents a crucial period of increased vulnerability and anxiety. However, with consciousness, the process can be enriching. Although not easy, it can be extremely rewarding, because, in the long run, you feel better and learn from the experience, so you don't have to repeat the same mistakes.

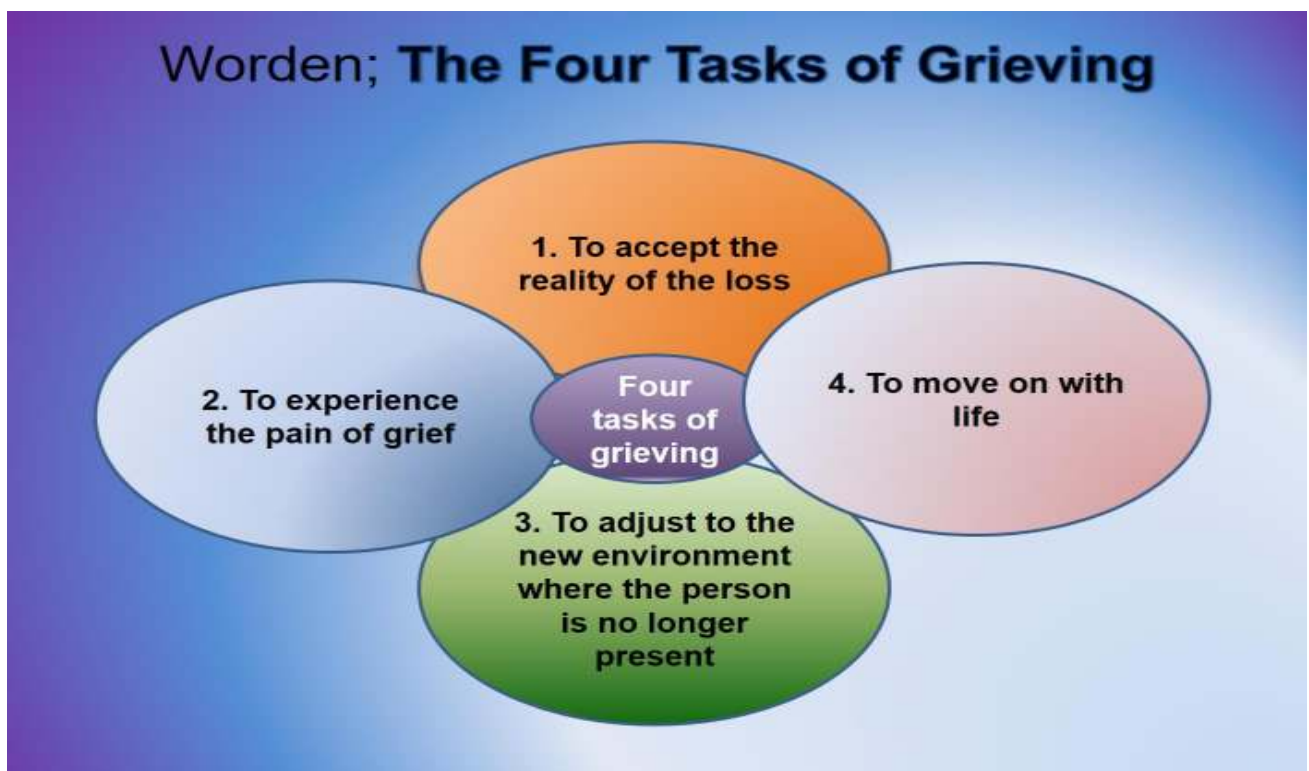


The 'Five Stages of Grief' is probably the most commonly used model to explain the grief process. Following a separation, a person may experience:

1. **Denial** – 'This can't really be happening'. Because loss is usually an unexpected and unwanted change, it often takes time to let it 'sink in'.
2. **Anger** and guilt- 'Life's unfair!' – 'If only I did what I was supposed to do'. You may feel angry or take the blame for their separation. Or blame your former partner for the separation.
3. **Sadness** (may lead to depression) – 'Life's so different now, I don't think I'll ever be happy again'. During this stage, you may begin to 'see' the reality of the situation. You may feel withdrawn from family and friends and spend most of the time crying. This is an important time for grieving that must be processed. If after a considerable time, you are still avoiding people or still finds it difficult to do the things that you normally enjoy, you may be suffering from depression and may need professional intervention.

4. **Bargaining** - thinking that the 'loss' can be reversed by doing something different is common. Deep inside, a person may say, I know you don't love each other anymore, but can you please...; 'I promise I can change, just take me back'.
5. **Acceptance** - That's life. 'I can't do anything to change it'. Feelings of sadness and pain start to lessen. This is the stage where the young person begins to come to terms with the loss.

The five stages of the grief process are not always experienced in the order in which they are listed above. Some people may not go through all the stages; whereas, others may go back and forth between two stages before moving onto the next. Because each person is unique, we grieve in our own way and time.



Dr William Worden describes that there are four tasks of grieving that must accomplish for 'the process of mourning to be completed' and 'equilibrium to be re-established'. He says these are in no particular order, though there is some natural order in that completion of some tasks follows the completion of another task. He acknowledges that people may need to revisit certain tasks over time, that grief is not linear, and that it is difficult to determine a timeframe for completing the grief tasks

See information sheet; **When Your Relationship is on The Rocks**