



# GRIEF

## What is grief?

Grief is the experience of loss. Many people associate grief with the death of a person or a pet, but someone can experience grief following any loss (e.g. loss of a job, a break-up, announcement of a diagnosis/illness, etc.).

There are many ways in which people can grieve. There are some steps that can help us better understand the different phases of grief (and where we are), and therefore, help us pass through it.

Generally, grief lasts only a short time, but it sometimes drags on, resulting in mental and somatic disorders that are often chronic and may justify a specialized medical consultation.

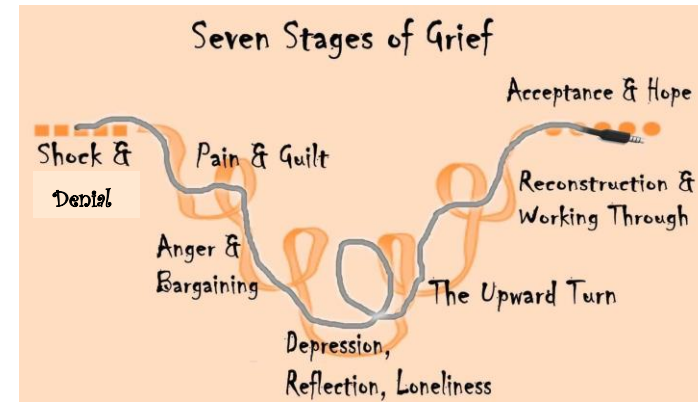
*Reference: Canadian Mental Health Association*

## Stages of grief?

**Shock:** Moment when the announcement of the news is made. This triggers a state of very strong emotional distress, a trauma (adrenaline peak). This announcement leaves the person without apparent emotions.

**Denial:** Denial is a defense mechanism, it's the refusal to believe what happened. This phase may be short, but some people may keep themselves in this state of denial for a longer period.

**Anger:** The person can get mad. The person is faced with the impossibility of going back. They can go through many emotions: feelings of injustice, guilt, accusations, remorse, resentments, disgust, repulsion or rage towards others or the situation, etc.





**Sadness:** a state of hopelessness that can sometimes lead to depression. Sadness can be caused by:

- An awareness of the consequences of loss
- A feeling of loss of control over life
- A loss of meaning and reference points
- Uncertainties that generate fears and worries (disorientation)
- A feeling of incomprehension by the people around us about our feelings and needs
- A negative self-image caused by the changes generated and/or the feeling of perceived social uselessness
- Isolation, loneliness, exclusion

**Resignation:** the abandonment of the struggle. This abandonment is necessary to evolve and rebuild.

**Acceptance:** appropriating the loss. It's necessary to know our limits, to become aware of them, to accept them and to analyze/determine the possibilities and opportunities.

**Reconstruction:** a new life is considered. Acceptance alone is not enough, we must rebuild gradually, have new projects, aspirations, etc. The feeling of vulnerability gives place to new energy and healing.

### What can I do to get better?

- Take time for yourself, take care of yourself
- Take things one moment at a time
- Be patient
- Give yourself the right to express your emotions
- Surround yourself with people who make you feel good

### When to ask for help?

After the announcement, the following reactions are common:

- Loss of appetite
- Sleep difficulties
- Need to be alone or isolate, loss of motivation
- Variable emotions (ups and downs)

However, you should consult if symptoms persist, or if:

- You have a loss of self-esteem
- You have negative thoughts or behaviors for yourself or others
- You have suicidal thoughts

Équipe Santé Mentale Jeunesse  
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- **PalliAmi Foundation** – [www.palliami.org](http://www.palliami.org)  
Follow-up of grieving with volunteer accompaniment  
(514) 413-8777, Ext : 27434

• **The children and families lighthouse** - [www.phare-lighthouse.com](http://www.phare-lighthouse.com)  
Support offered to grieving families following the death of their child, in a context of illness, before the age of 18  
(514) 787-8818

• **Suicide Action Montreal (follow-up of grieving)** – [www.suicideactionmontreal.org/je-vis-un-deuil](http://www.suicideactionmontreal.org/je-vis-un-deuil)  
1-866-277-3553

• **Info-Deuil** – [www.infodeuil.ca](http://www.infodeuil.ca)

• **NOVA West Island** - [www.novawi.org](http://www.novawi.org)  
(514) 695-8335

• **Canadian Virtual Hospice** – [www.mygrief.ca](http://www.mygrief.ca)

• **Maison Monbourquette** - [www.maisonmonbourquette.com/](http://www.maisonmonbourquette.com/)

- **Grieving Children Canada** - [www.grievingchildrencanada.org](http://www.grievingchildrencanada.org)

