



*Christian Counseling*

*Equipping People for Life...*

## **GRIEVING**

By Mary Anderson

Grief is a reaction to loss and a process that needs to develop over time. The grief cycle involves various stages, although they are not necessarily experienced in a linear fashion, as the person grieving often has many varied and quickly changing emotions. And, it is not uncommon for people trying to help and support someone experiencing loss to go through their own grieving process.

There are no fixed answers to the question of how long it takes for the pain over loss to subside, but it is certain that the process of mourning cannot be sidestepped through rapid moves toward revenge, forgiveness, or compensation. In fact, if rushed, these things can actually keep us from facing the full reality of our loss.

Denial is a common first reaction to the trauma of loss. It isn't unusual for a person to not want the loss to be true or as bad as it is. A person trying to help someone in denial can also react to their own denial by talking about it or exploring it.

Bargaining is often a way for a grieving person to process their confusion and pain. People trying to help can also slip into bargaining through attempting to rescue the grieving person or giving simple answers for a complicated quest — all in an effort to avoid pain and help make the person grieving "feel better fast."

Anger is a normal emotion for a grieving person to feel and can often energize a person who has become overwhelmed and immobilized by their loss.

Depression is predictable throughout the grieving process. The symptoms of depression might include low energy, difficulty sleeping and/or eating and a sense of guilt. Blaming themselves for the loss can be a way to develop a sense of power and control and can feel better than admitting vulnerability and powerlessness. This belief, along with the depression, will pass as a person is supported and empowered by connection with supportive friends. There is tremendous restorative power in listening to a grieving person's thoughts and feelings. The raw expression of their thoughts and feelings is essential to the grieving process and they should never be hurried, judged, or suppressed in this endeavor. Acceptance comes when a person can incorporate the loss into the fabric of their lives. As they choose to live well, they do it with the recognition that they will never be the same, but they will be all right.

### **Tasks Identified with Healthy Grieving**

- \*Face reality of death
- \*Seek support
- \*Express feelings and thoughts clearly and honestly
- \*Experience pain and stay with it for a while
- \*Be unique in your grief
- \*Allow yourself time
- \*Adjust to changes in your life
- \*Say goodbye to the past as it was
- \*Choose to live well