

5 Stages of Grief—Kübler-Ross Model

	Shock	Denial	Anger	Bargaining	Depression	Acceptance	Testing
How to recognise it	Initial reaction to the change. Often paralysis, uncertainty and or emotional numbness.	Refusing to accept the situation, insisting that the previous situation is still the “real” situation.	Aggressive outbursts, hurtful behaviour that harms self or others, looking for someone or something to blame.	Making deals with professionals, with friends, with god(s). Doing unusual acts of service.	Feeling down, crying, being withdrawn, having no energy, no desire to do things, ruminating on loss.	Feeling a sense of peace, a realisation of how the world has changed and that it isn’t all bad.	Making new plans and taking new actions.
Why we feel it	This is the pause your system makes to take in the new information and start to work out what to do and also what not to do as a consequence.	Rather than adjust life to suit the change, deny the change has occurred. The hope is that the world will return to “normal” and no “change in the self” was needed.	A belief that things must happen for a reason requires someone to be responsible for the change: either the self, another person or a system. Anger is blaming that entity.	If there is a power over the situation and it isn’t the self, then perhaps by making a bargain with the powerful entity the situation can be changed back to how it was.	An inability to focus on the present as it is either too painful or the mind is contemplating the lost opportunities of the future.	Accepting that the change has happened and that the world is now different because of it. This recognises the validity of the change, even if it is not pleasant, and the need to adjust plans to suit.	The new conception of how the world has changed needs to be tested as the individual tentatively begins to resume life.
What it means	The standard human response to potential danger is freeze, flight, fight and reproduction. Shock is an indication of the freeze response as the mind and body evaluate the change. Flight and fight are also common versions of “shock”, but transitions into denial or anger.	A conflict exists between how you think of the world before the change and what the world must be like now that the change has occurred. Rather than adjust, the mind simply denies the change.	Anger is the feeling of powerlessness and aggression is the attempt to regain that power. This change has happened regardless of us and our sense of importance in the world has been damaged. An aggressive response is used to re-assert our power and importance.	This is an aspect of denial and an inability to accept the consequences of change. The individual attempts to return to the world model before change by purchasing or offering service from an entity perceived to be powerful enough to do so .	When feelings become too intense, your system shuts down to avoid damage. The individual can also spend time reviewing what is no longer possible or going to happen.	Enough processing of lost opportunities, new possibilities and how this change affects the world has occurred that some plans for the future can be made. The change is no longer frightening or inconceivable. Acceptance doesn’t mean the change was or wasn’t good .	A working model of the world now exists with the change. The individual explores different boundaries for how this change will affect their life. Several versions of adjustment may be needed before a working plan can be found.

Kübler-Ross state that the 5 middle stages can appear in any order and can repeat. Not all people experience all the stages. This chart gives an idea for common emotions and stages of grief, how to recognise them and what they mean. If a stage lasts for too long professional help should be sought to help process grief.