

COVID-19 STAGES OF GRIEF

The discomfort you're feeling is grief. The loss of connection, anticipated plans, and memories yet to be made is painful. Take some time to explore which stage you find yourself in, acknowledge why certain feelings may come up for you, and understand these feelings are expected and normal. While some move through these stages as numbered, it is also possible to start, regress, or progress to another stage at any time.

1

DENIAL

Sounds like: *"This whole thing is blown out of proportion"*

Denial is the intellectual and emotional rejection of something that is clear and obvious. Interestingly, denial is actually a much-needed survival mechanism. Evolution has created in humans the ability to deny both physical and emotional pain for a short period of time in the service of self-preservation.

Sounds like: *"Forget what they told us. I am having friends over."* **ANGER**

2

The feeling of anger is empowering. We move toward anger in an attempt to gain control over our fears. Rather than accepting and dealing with the problem, we turn hostile, blaming others, engaging in power struggles, externalizing the issue, and, sometimes, refusing to comply with the rules.

3

BARGAINING

Sounds like: *"I know when people look sick. I will be fine as long as I stay around people who are healthy."*

Bargaining occurs when denial breaks down and we start to acknowledge reality but we're not ready to give up the illusion that we still have control. Basically, we try to compromise to find an easier, less painful way out.

Sounds like: *"This epidemic is the new normal. I can say goodbye to my hopes and dreams."*

DESPAIR

4

Despair and depression occur when reality fully sets in, when there is no more room for denial. There is a sense of hopelessness, a feeling that we are fully disempowered and all is lost. We engage in self-pity. We think that nothing can help now, despite evidence to the contrary. We rue the fact that our attempts at bargaining haven't worked.

5

ACCEPTANCE

Sounds like: *"I can't control the pandemic, but I can do my part by sheltering in place."*

Acceptance occurs when we finally acknowledge and surrender to the facts, whatever those facts happen to be. When we reach this stage, we can stop denying and fighting reality, and we can start dealing as effectively as we can with what has happened and what is happening.