

Possible Manifestations of Grief

Stage & Duration	Thoughts	Feelings	Physical Responses	Social Relationships	Coping
SHOCK <i>Hours to a week</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slowed &/or disorganized thinking • Blocking • Suicidal thoughts • Wish to join the deceased • Seeming unaffected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychic numbness • Blunting • Outbursts • Euphoria • Hysteria • Unaffected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical numbness • Feeling of unreality • Feeling of being outside the body • Hypoactivity • Hyperactivity • Talkativeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passivity in relation to other people • Lack of awareness of other people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denial • Intellectualization • Depersonalization
PROTEST <i>1st week to 3 months</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased • Searching • Rumination • Dreams of the deceased • Misperceiving stimuli to image deceased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness • Fear • Anger • Relief • Irritability • Guilt • Yearning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distress • Chest pains • Sleep disturbance • Fatigue • Nausea • Change in appetite • Weight change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence • Seeking help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regression to earlier patterns • Projecting anger on others • Putting anger inward towards oneself
DISORGANIZATION <i>3 to 6 months</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion • Aimlessness • Slowed thinking • Loss of interest • Lowered self esteem • Focus on memories • More prone to accidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness • Loneliness • Depression • Meaninglessness • Apathy • Feeling of unreality • Intense anguish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deceased felt inside self • Deceased traits & mannerisms adopted • Restlessness • Decreased resistance to illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawn • Others avoided • Lack of initiative • Lack of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regression to earlier patterns • Projections • Introjection
REORGANIZATION <i>6 months to 2 years</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic memory of the deceased is developed • Pleasure remembering experiences with the deceased • Return to previous level of functioning • New meaning in life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sadness & happiness experienced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to previous level of physical functioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or renewed relationships • New or renewed interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former coping mechanisms resumed &/or new ones added

N.B.: Categories are not as sharp and distinct as this chart suggests. Stages, time periods, and manifestations vary greatly among individuals.

Compiled by Patricia Baker, GEI. Revised by ASD and JSD
Grief Education Institute, Englewood, Colorado