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## The Stages of Grief

The Kübler-Ross model of grief (the five stages of grief) describes five primary responses to loss. These stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Someone who is grieving may go through these stages in any order, and they may return to previous stages.

The stages of grief can be applied to a number of losses such as the death of a loved one, dealing with terminal illness, the loss of a relationship, children dealing with their parents' divorce, or the loss of a substance for a drug user.

### Denial - "This can't be happening"

Individuals may refuse to accept the fact that a loss has occurred. They may minimize or outright deny the situation. It is suggested that loved ones and professionals be forward and honest about losses to not prolong the denial stage.

### Anger - "Why is this happening to me?"

When an individual realizes that a loss has occurred, they may become angry at themselves or others. They may argue that the situation is unfair and try to place blame.

### Bargaining - "I will do anything to change this."

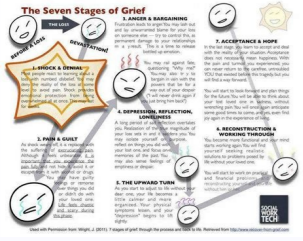
In bargaining, the individual may try to change or delay their loss. For example, they may try to convince a partner to return after a breakup, or search for unlikely cures in the case of a terminal illness.

### Depression - "What's the point of going on after this loss?"

At the stage of depression the individual has come to recognize that a loss has occurred or will occur. The individual may isolate themselves and spend time crying and grieving. Depression is a precursor to acceptance because the individual has come to recognize their loss.

### Acceptance - "It's going to be okay."

Finally, the individual will come to accept their loss. They understand the situation logically, and they have come to terms emotionally with the situation.



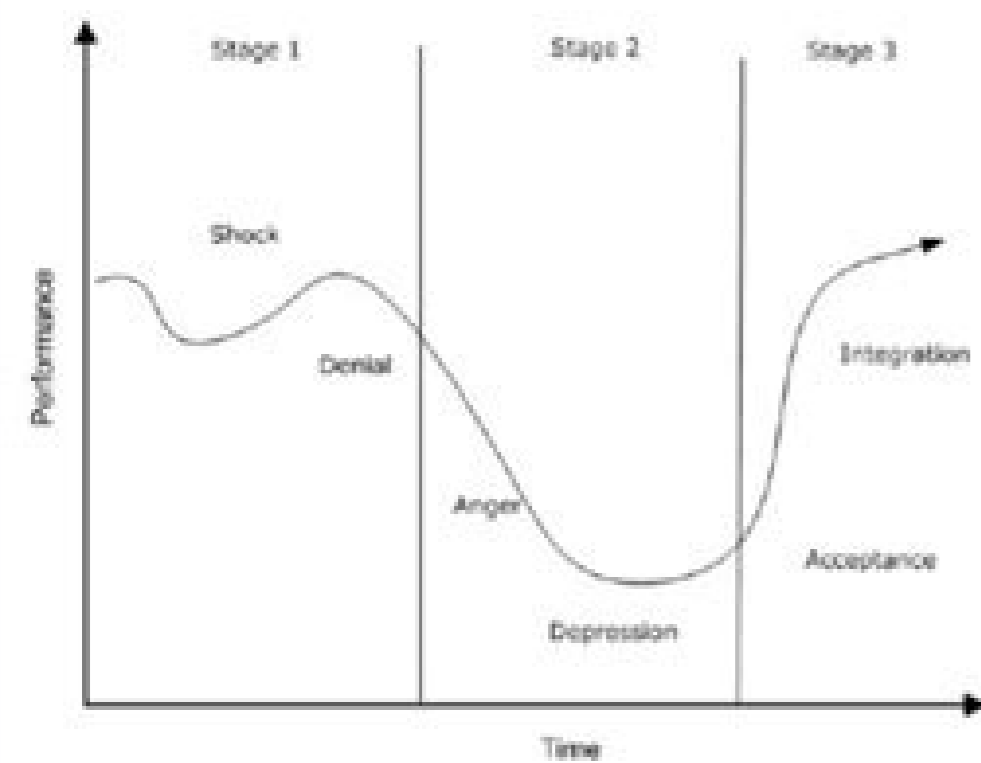
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## The Change Curve

The Change Curve is based on a model originally developed in the 1960s by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross to explain the grieving process. Since then it has been widely utilised as a method of helping people understand their reactions to significant change or upheaval.

Kubler-Ross proposed that a terminally ill patient would progress through five stages of grief when informed of their illness. She further proposed that this model could be applied to any dramatic life changing situation and, by the 1980s, the Change Curve was a firm fixture in change management circles. The curve, and its associated emotions, can be used to predict how performance is likely to be affected by the announcement and subsequent implementation of a significant change.

### The Change Curve



The original five stages of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance – have adapted over the years. There are numerous versions of the curve in existence. However, the majority of them are consistent in their use of the following basic emotions, which are often grouped into three distinct transitional stages.

#### Stage 1 – Shock and denial

The first reaction to change is usually shock. This initial shock, while frequently short lived, can result in a temporary slow down and loss of productivity. Performance tends to dip sharply, individuals who are normally clear and decisive seek more guidance and reassurance, and agreed deadlines can be missed. The shock is often due to:

- lack of information
- fear of the unknown
- fear of looking stupid or doing something wrong

After the initial shock has passed, it is common for individuals to experience denial. At this point focus tends to remain in the past. There's likely to be a feeling that as everything was OK as it was, why does there need to be a change?

Common feelings include:

- being comfortable with the status quo
- feeling threatened
- fear of failure

Individuals who have not previously experienced major change can be particularly affected by this first stage. It is common for people to convince themselves that the change isn't actually going to happen, or if it does, that it won't affect them. Performance often returns to the levels seen before the dip experienced during the initial shock of the change. People carry on as they always have and may deny having received communication about the changes, and may well make excuses to avoid taking part in forward planning.

At this stage, communication is key. Reiterating what the actual change is, the effects it may have, and providing as much reassurance as possible, will all help to support individuals experiencing these feelings.

#### Stage 2 – Anger and depression

After the feelings of shock and denial, anger is often the next stage. A scapegoat, in the shape of an organisation, group or individual, is commonly found. Focussing the blame on someone or something allows a continuation of the denial by providing another focus for the fears and alleviates the potential impact is



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