

“The experience of loss and grief is highly individual and intensely personal, reflecting a unique interaction of person, loss event, and the multiple contexts in which that loss and grief occur,” says Keren M. Humphrey, author of “Counseling Strategies for Loss and Grief.” Because every case is different, no technique for handling grief and anger can be universally prescribed. However, there is some conventional wisdom in the field of psychology on how to get a patient or client to work through these feelings and start the road to recovery.

## **Five Stages of Grief**

One tool grieving people have found very helpful is to acknowledge and work through the five stages of grief described in Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' “On Death and Dying.” These stages include denial, a refusal to believe that the loss has happened to the patient; anger, when the patient becomes upset and feels targeted when he begins to acknowledge the loss; bargaining, where the client makes hypothetical statements hoping to reverse the loss, such as promising a higher power to be a better person or appreciate the deceased person more if she could be alive again; depression, where the client becomes apathetic about the loss, the grieving process and perhaps even his own life; and acceptance, the realization that the loss did occur and that there is nothing that can be done about it but to move forward.

## **Criticism and Another Model of Stages**

Judy Bear of the website Cancer Survivors likens Kubler-Ross' list of stages to emotional behaviors, saying, “I believe we may certainly experience some of these behaviors. But, I believe just as strongly, that there is no script for grief, that we cannot expect to feel any of our emotions in a particular set pattern. I do agree that acceptance is probably the last emotion felt, and in some instances it may be the only one.” Bear points to another list from the book “Living With an Empty Chair,” by Dr. Roberta Temes. Temes' stages include numbness, explained by Bear as “mechanical functioning and social insulation”; a stage of feeling generally disorganized from the pain associated with loss; and reorganization, a re-assimilation into a lifestyle more like the person lived before the loss.

## **Tailoring to the Individual**

Humphrey explains that taking into account the unique elements of the loss and the person experiencing it means that “her or his particular manner of adapting to loss” should inform “the importance of tailoring counseling strategies to client needs.” She stresses that because each person experiences loss and grief differently, counseling must address the individual's needs first.

## **Anger Strategies**

One technique for helping cope with anger associated with grief is to identify anger triggers. These can be thoughts, people, situations or locations that set the patient off into an anger spell. By identifying these anger triggers and coming up with alternative responses to these stimuli, many grieving patients have been able to curtail their anger. Other anger management techniques the client might find helpful include taking “time-outs” to reflect on the situation that caused the anger while examining the mindset of anyone contributing to the anger. This reflection shifts the focus of anger from identifying why the person is mad to how the person might offer a solution to the problem that made him mad, and may include practicing any number of relaxation techniques.

## Key Concepts

- teaching anger grief
- counseling activities anger
- anger grief counseling

## References

- [American Counseling Association; "Counseling Strategies for Loss and Grief"; Keren M. Humphrey](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=7&ved=0CE4QFjAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.counseling.org%2FFFiles%2FFD.ashx%3Fguid%3Df6bb42f8-e08d-4ed7-9c0b-8590ef3052a6&rct=j&q=Counseling%20Activities%20for%20Teaching%20Anger%20and%20Grief&ei=tWXITdrEOMLW0QHcpIjABw&usg=AFQjCNElyO6qGfzXgb3KmCix1gkb05bTrw&sig2=xZ24-wl4_5Ct2BBCgV01A&cad=rja) [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=7&ved=0CE4QFjAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.counseling.org%2FFFiles%2FFD.ashx%3Fguid%3Df6bb42f8-e08d-4ed7-9c0b-8590ef3052a6&rct=j&q=Counseling%20Activities%20for%20Teaching%20Anger%20and%20Grief&ei=tWXITdrEOMLW0QHcpIjABw&usg=AFQjCNElyO6qGfzXgb3KmCix1gkb05bTrw&sig2=xZ24-wl4\_5Ct2BBCgV01A&cad=rja]
- [Cancer Survivors: Grief Stages](http://www.cancersurvivors.org/Coping/end%20term/stages.htm) [http://www.cancersurvivors.org/Coping/end%20term/stages.htm]
- [Mayo Clinic: Anger Management Tips](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102) [http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102]