

# STAGES OF GRIEF

Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

## **1. Denial**

“No, not me.” This is a typical reaction when a patient learns that he or she is terminally ill. Denial, says Doctor Ross, is important and necessary. It helps cushion the impact of the patient’s awareness that death is inevitable.

## **2. Rage & Anger**

“Why me?” The patient resents the fact that others will remain healthy and alive while he or she must die. God is a special target for anger, since He is regarded as imposing, arbitrarily, the death sentence. To those who are shocked at her claim that such anger is not only permissible, but inevitable, Doctor Ross replies succinctly, “God can take it.”

## **3. Bargaining**

“Yes, me, but . . .” Patients accept the fact of death but strike bargains for more time. Mostly they bargain with God — “even among people who never talked with God before.”

## **4. Depression**

“Yes, me.” First, the person mourns past losses, things not done, wrongs committed. But then he or she enters a state of “preparatory grief,” getting ready for the arrival of death. The patient grows quiet, doesn’t want visitors. “When a dying patient doesn’t want to see you any more,” says Doctor Ross, “this is a sign he has finished his unfinished business with you, and it is a blessing. He can now let go peacefully.”

## **5. Acceptance**

“My time is very close now and it’s all right.” Doctor Ross describes this final stage as “not a happy stage, but neither is it unhappy. It’s devoid of feelings but it’s not resignation, it’s really a victory.”