

# Stages of Grief

There are six recognized stages of the grief process, which most people experience.

The stages are borrowed from the works of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. Understanding these stages as patterns of adjustment and knowing what to expect seems to assist in recovery. The stages are not always linear and may fluctuate. You may experience each of them on separate days, or they may present all within a five-minute period. They are as follows:

1. **Denial** is the normal defense, which serves to buffer from some unbearable news or shock. It can be experienced as numbness, or someone actively refuting the loss.
2. **Bargaining** is experienced as conscious or unconscious attempts to control the situation or reverse the loss.
3. **Anger** can be direct or indirect, specified or generalized. Anger often appears, especially in pet loss, in the form of guilt.
4. **Depression** is the actual “grief.” It can be the most painful part of the process because you are “letting go.”
5. **Personal Growth** is the prelude to the recovery and is the recognition of meaning or growth in the overall experience and/or from the pet’s life.
6. **Acceptance and Resolution** is when the loss and your growth from the experience is accepted.