

## REACTIONS TO LOSS

### Denial:

“I just can’t believe it”

- Can’t tolerate emotional impact immediately
- More traumatic loss—more likely to deny reality
- Go into shock, feel numb, robot-like, forgetful, confused
- Don’t believe it until better able to cope

### Anger:

“Oh God! I never knew I had so much hatred inside!”

- Painful reality sets in—we get angry
- Feel helpless, out-of-control—this makes us angry
- Losses are unfair; we have regret, frustrations, and rage

### Powerlessness:

“I feel like I’m a prisoner of my fear”

- Life can’t be counted on to be fair; helplessness evolves
- Realize that nothing we do will change the loss or prevent further losses
- Forced to take on an unfamiliar role/tasks—feels awkward, uneasy

### Guilt:

“If only I had...”

- Regret and self-blame—a way of trying to gain control over painful event
- To blame ourselves sets up clear “cause and effect”

### Depression:

“I just wish I could roll over and die”

- Sadness and depression involved in the loss of anything which has meaning and value
- Significance of loss generally correlates with intensity and duration of sadness

### Acceptance:

“Now I have hope for the future”

- Acceptance does not mean forgetting
- Does mean feeling better without feeling guilty for it
- Renewed energy, accepting reality of what happened, restoring self esteem, finding meaning in life again