

Understanding the Grief/Resentment Process When Caring for Parents/In laws

Lorna Adams, RN MA
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- 1. The 5 stages of grief (Elizabeth Kubler Ross)**
 - A. Denial
 - B. Anger
 1. Anger and resentment usually R/T sadness with the situation
 - C. Bargaining
 - D. Depression
 - E. Acceptance

- 2. These stages apply to any loss- not just to death.**
 - A. Both sides are grieving this change
 1. The parent may be grieving the loss of his/her spouse, loss of home, change of plans, change in relationship with children, and loss of independence, etc.
 2. The caregiver may be grieving the loss of a parent, loss of own family plans, change in pattern of household, loss of room in their home, loss of time spent with friends or activities in order to care for the parent, etc.

- 3. These stages are not linear- they spiral**

- 4. Resentfulness is expected especially during the first year as part of the grieving process for this major lifestyle change.**

- 5. Resentfulness can be decreased**
 - A. Get help and support
 - B. Give and receive acknowledgment, compassion, and endorsement for what is happening (Jacobs).

- 6. Expect that any buried unresolved issues will resurface as roles change, so try to resolve them beforehand or ASAP.**
 - A. Communication by and with the entire family re: expectations, misunderstandings, and past hurts.
 - B. Family therapy as needed to help resolve issues as they surface.

Resources

Delehanty, Hugh & Ginzler (2006). *Caring for Your Parents: The Complete AARP Guide*. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, Inc.

Jacobs, Barry, PsyD (2006). *The Emotional Survival Guide for Caregivers: Looking After Yourself and Your Family While Helping an Aging Parent*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth, M.D. (1969). *On Death and Dying*. New York: Scribner.

McLeod, Beth Witrogen (1999). *Caregiving: The Spiritual Journey of Love, Loss, and Renewal*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.