

COPING WITH DIVORCE

Many people say that dealing with divorce is similar to coping with a death, depending upon whether or not you initiated the divorce. There is a certain amount of grieving that must be dealt with. A person will go through the following stages:

1. **SHOCK AND NUMBNESS:** This stage may be accompanied by denial. People in this state block out reality and involve themselves in many activities to take their mind off the problem.
2. **REALITY:** In this stage of grieving, deep sadness and a great sense of loss becomes a part of life. Depression and anxiety may be common at this stage.
3. **RECOVERY:** In this stage, people are recognizing that the loss is final. The hopes and plans that were shared with the person are given up. Adjustments are made that help people return to a normal life.

The spouse and children must learn to deal with these stages.

Often families can comfort one another, especially if they realize what is taking place. Some families will need help from a professional counselor to deal with the loss and change.

Children will often change their behavior as a means of coping. Be aware of unusual cues they give to you. Be sure that children understand that the divorce was NOT their fault.

Have students brainstorm some simple activities that families going through a divorce might do to strengthen each other.

(You may also wish to refer to the lesson "The Grieving Process.")