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# Angry? Depressed? You Could Be Grieving Over World Events.

*Remy Blumenfeld*

5-6 minutes



Sad or angry? You could be experiencing grief over world events, says leadership coach, Remy Blumenfeld

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If you've noticed that you've been unusually angry, depressed or generally in disagreement with things as they are, you could be experiencing grief. No one needs to have died for you to be grieving. It could be that you feel an important avenue has become

closed off to you, or that something is standing between yourself and your deeply held values. You may be sad, angry or depressed because of world events.

I trained as a grief counselor and if I were to share the two biggest things I learned they would be these:

1. [When we grieve, it is not so much for the person who has died as it is for who we once were with them when they were in our world.](#)

We are grieving the unconditionally loved son or daughter, the dependable wife or husband, the joyful best friend, who we will never be again to the mother, father, partner, child, friend or dog who has died.

2. Grief is not reserved for our feelings of loss towards a person. [We also need to grieve who we once were and will never be again. We can grieve our spent youth or our lost fertility; we need to mourn the opportunities and prospects which time and aging have taken away.](#)

Recently, some of my coaching clients have been sad and angry because of Brexit, climate change or specifically the election of the 45th President of the United States. Their feelings often border on grief. The novelist Ian McEwan still feels a visceral emotion about Brexit, telling the Observer, *"Sometimes, I wake in the morning wondering what is bearing in on me, and then I remember."*

So, what have they lost? In the case of Brexit, it is often the death of a belief about who some clients had previously thought the majority of their neighbors to be. Sometimes it's a part of their identity which they feel has been stolen. *"I valued my concentric set of identities,"* McEwan told Channel 4 News, *"this family, this neighborhood, England, Britain, a chunk of Scotland, Europe. And suddenly a big chunk of it has been removed from me, without my*

*permission."*

In the case of Donald Trump's occupation of the White House, the Psychologist Gary Greenberg suggests that for some *'it was team pride, for others the sense that something precious to them – reproductive rights, racial tolerance, gender equality – was suddenly threatened. For others still, the narcissistic injury of having such a repellent man embody the country in which they had been trained to take pride.'*

I often help clients define their own values by asking them to identify someone whose values they deplore. [Once we can see clearly the particular value \(or lack of a particular value\) in others which we cannot stand, our own values \(mostly the inverse of theirs\) become clear.](#) Many clients have discovered, thanks to Donald Trump, their own values of fairness, truth, humility, inclusion, and grace.

If you're not familiar with the five stages of grief, as defined by Elisabeth Kubler Ross, which occur in no particular order, I have summarized them here. You can see how they match up your own responses to world events.

## **DENIAL**

Denial helps us to survive the loss. In this stage, the world becomes meaningless and overwhelming. Life makes no sense. We are in a state of numbness and shock.

## **ANGER**

Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process. The more you allow yourself to feel it, the more your anger will begin to dissipate and the more you will heal.

## **BARGAINING**

After a loss, the “if only s” cause us to find fault with what we think we or others could have done differently. We may even bargain with our pain. We remain in the past, trying to negotiate our way out of the hurt.

## **DEPRESSION**

This stage feels as though it will last forever. It’s important to understand that this depression is not a sign of mental illness. It is the appropriate response to a great loss. We withdraw from life, left in a fog of intense sadness, wondering, perhaps, if there is any point in going on.

## **ACCEPTANCE**

Acceptance is often confused with being “all right” with what’s happened. This is not the case. Most people don’t ever feel OK about their loss. This stage is about accepting the reality and recognizing that it is permanent.

If you recognize any or all of these feelings and no one has died, it’s interesting to ask yourself, “what have I lost?” “What Am I mourning?”

It may not help you alleviate your feelings, but it could help you explain your seemingly inappropriate feelings to yourself.

"My own mental furniture has been re-arranged," says McEwan.

Whether or not Britain ultimately ends up leaving the EU or the current President is elected to serve a second term, to quote Gary Greenberg "*we must accept its outcome just as surely as we must accept a death.*"