The psychological recovery process follows a grief cycle. Researchers found that anytime we experience a major change in our life, we grieve for the old in order to make room for the new. Let’s look at how that relates to quitting smoking.

**Denial**

Denial is our mind’s first way of protecting us from a sudden change or loss. People who lose a friend or family member say they feel numb. This is what we call a psychological defense mechanism, and all mentally healthy people have this. For a smoker, this means that though we now know the importance of quitting, we don’t want to believe it.

Here are some denial statements:

- I know I should quit, but I’m not sure I want to.
- Cigarettes don’t affect my health like they do others. I’m not huffing and puffing.
- This quitting thing is easy; I can do it anytime.
- I’m not addicted.
- I’ll switch to a low-tar cigarette.
- Cigarettes haven’t proven harmful.

**Anger**

When we begin to accept a loss, we often feel anger. Smokers are angry about change. They’re angry about the uselessness of the loss of their friend. They’re angry about anything.

Some typical feelings:

- Angry about everything . . .
- Why me? I’m mad I started, I’m mad I quit. I’m mad cigarettes are harmful.
- I’m mad it’s so hard. I’m mad that things aren’t going my way.
- Anger at Facilitator, and other non-smokers.
- Anger at company.
- Anger at nonsmokers.

Remember that anger is a part of the process. Don’t try to resist it. Accept it, safely vent it, and take some time to feel it. You feel angry and testy. You don’t have a reason to feel that way, you just do. It will subside. Sometimes naming the feeling lowers the intensity of your anger.

**Depression**

When we acknowledge and accept the loss of our “friend”, the cigarette, it’s natural to experience some sadness. This is especially true when no one else seems to know our loss. People often experience this in one of two ways. They feel either a deep sense of sadness or a deep sense of deprivation.

Some typical comments during the depression stage:

- I feel so emotional.
- I feel so deprived.
- Why can’t I have this one little habit?
- Life without cigarettes is awful.
- I feel lonely.
This is the “ain’t it awful” stage. You feel like you’ve lost your best friend. Don’t resist this stage or think it’s crazy to mourn the loss of a cigarette. We might suggest you be as direct with this stage as with the anger stage. Accept it. Vent it. Take some time to just feel sad. Then move on and focus on the benefits of what you’re doing.

**Bargaining**

This is the stage where smokers want to postpone the inevitable. They may change brands, smoke only a home or only at work. They try to make deals and empty promises.

Some typical comments:

- *I think I have the worst licked. If I just have one cigarette, I’ll get right back on track afterward and I won’t do it again.*
- *I’ll just smoke on vacation.*
- *I’ll just light your cigarette.*
- *I’ll quit as long as my weight stays down.*
- *I’ll try, but I’m not making any promises.*

Everyone is tempted to bargain. Realizing that it is a natural part of the process of quitting sometimes helps to move past it. Laugh it off and have a heart-to-heart talk with the “child” inside you. Make a strong commitment to be in control of the cigarette. If you give in to bargaining, the cigarette is once again in control. Use the statement, “Nothing or no one controls me.”

**Acceptance**

A healthy person who has suffered a loss eventually accepts its reality, and goes on living life. In this stage, you begin to realize your former smoking lifestyle is over. You are finally resolving your sense of loss or grief. You can get on with living your new-found, healthier lifestyle. A new and better life begins.

Some typical comments of acceptance are:

- *I think I’m going to do this. I still don’t like it a lot, but I think it will stick.*
- *I’d still like to smoke sometimes, but I choose not to.*
- *I am going to teach myself to like my new nonsmoking lifestyle. I’ll do it gradually and positively.*

The key to moving through the psychological recovery is your attitude toward quitting. Continue to look at these symptoms as part of the process. Move through them with a sense of challenge, expectation, and excitement over what lies ahead for you. You will continually make discoveries about yourself. Reject the feeling that you have given something up. It’s quite the opposite – you have gained something – your freedom and self-mastery. This is not an exercise in self-denial, but self-determination. You are giving a gift to yourself and to those near you.

*Source: American Lung Association*