

The Discomfort I Feel in a World of Change!

By Pamela Brooks

The world has changed in less than a month. Our day-to-day activities and focus have shifted so drastically that we may not be able to remember what our old normal was like. We have been so busy adjusting, pushing forward on adrenaline, that we are not sure how to label the feelings and emotions in the present. Sometimes it may be disbelief and shock, sometimes it might be anger, and other times we may just feel off or more down than normal but cannot seem to describe it. We may even be coming down now from the adrenaline rush we were used to living in and now we almost feel let down or where is the treadmill we can get back on. The reality is we are at a loss of normal and realize we are not in a sprint but a long-distance change. So how do we make sense of it all, what are we experiencing... GRIEF. Grief is a universal experience that we all go through when we feel a sense of loss. We feel different things, at different times, and in different ways. The positive in all of it is that feeling means we are still alive and very human and when we can name our emotion, we can tame it and move on.

Grief is the natural reaction to loss and is a universal feeling and yet a personal experience. Everyone is in some stage of it now and if they say they are not, they are still in the first stage – denial! The original 5 stages of grief were identified by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*. Kübler-Ross identified the 5 stages as 1. Denial or isolation; 2. Anger; 3. Bargaining; 4. Depression; and 5. Acceptance. It is important to note is that we do not necessarily go through them in the same order and we can often move in between stages or feel a couple of the stages at the same time.

It is important to understand that grieving has no time limit, no right or wrong way to go through it and it is extremely personal. However, **two things can help people get through it. First is to understand the five stages and the second is to understand your natural behavioral and emotional tendencies.** The more we understand ourselves, the easier it is to name what we feel and why, and then we choose how we want to move forward in more productive ways, and it will even help us in understanding those around us better, to provide the kind of support they need.

The 5 Stages of Grief:

1. **Denial**, which is also known as isolation. This is usually the first defense mechanism and is recognized when people say, “this isn’t real”, “this can’t be happening”. There can be a flood of emotions that words cannot seem to express. We may even feel that profound sense of meaninglessness and loss. This is especially true for those who have had changes in employment or responsibilities. Role shifts can be extremely difficult to deal with. Isolating can be a natural way to buffer ourselves through the first wave of emotional pain that is almost too difficult to feel all at once.
2. **Anger**, the natural response to push out emotional pain. When we can no longer deny what has happened and still feel strong emotional pain, we must release it or redirect it, which is often expressed as anger toward something or someone. If not managed correctly it can be destructive. When we feel angry there is a natural response to get rid of the feeling by projecting it someplace else. Blame is a common method for discharging this pain on situations, other people, or ourselves.

3. **Bargaining**, that feeling of helplessness and vulnerability. We may attempt to avoid the inevitable by bargaining or make a deal with God or a higher power in our minds. We may wish we could or would have done something else. We can often feel a profound sense of guilt because we blame ourselves for not doing the right thing or falling short of our abilities.
4. **Depression**, it is the mourning over the practical differences and changes due to the loss of what was or who was in our life. Depression will take on two forms, one is related to the practical implications of loss which is felt like the sadness of what is gone and/or regret of not doing something we could have done in the past. Taking time to gain clarity or get reassurance during this time can help. The second, more subtle form of depression, is more private to us and involves the bidding of farewell to the person we loved, or the something we loved to do. The best form of support during this time is just a hug of acknowledgment. To know someone else is still there that loves us despite all that has happened.
5. **Acceptance**, this stage is about accepting the reality of what has happened. It does mean that everything is the same as it was before, or that we are perfectly OK with all that has happened. It just means we have learned to live with it and have reached a new norm. It is the acceptance that things cannot stay the way they were. We know your needs, we change, we grow, and we evolve.

Recent research on brain types has documented the validity of the four behavior types from the work of Dr. Helen Fisher on the traits tied to neurotransmitters or hormones, or the extensive data sort by Northwestern University (1) that revealed four clusters of types. To understand your main type, your triggers, your fears, and your behavioral response can prove to be very helpful, especially in our current times of crises. When we know our triggers, we can acknowledge them and choose our response. When we know our reflexive behavior responses, we catch ourselves in the act and then chose a more productive response if needed.

If your initial **next knee jerk reaction is anger** or you feel a strong desire to do something or blame someone for what was not done, you need control and are highly task-driven to make things happen. You can lose what you really may be feeling by “doing” or by making yourself busy. This emotional and behavioral style is typically called **Dominant or Decisive**. You may have been a survivor at an early age or had to take on adult-like responsibility early. You learned that by controlling your environment, life is better. Your trigger is a potential loss of control or chaos and the driving behavior is to take control and make things right. Many dominant people may not acknowledge the fear initially because their fight response is so quick. There is often anger for what is gone or not being done. One of the best outlets for the dominant style is physical activity as it can release the adrenaline allowing your brain to slow down and eventually acknowledging what you cannot control, what is out of place, or what is missing while at the same time not displacing your anger on others. Use the emotional drive to take charge and focus on what you can control and making that happen. You can become the rock in a difficult situation because people like others to take charge. Just be sure you are in check and not overtly taking charge and running over those around you in the process.

If your initial reaction was a profound **sense of disconnection** or **being alone** or your strong need to call someone to just talk about it all, you are extroverted, and your style is often called **influence**. You may have many feelings going on all at the same time, but not realize what they are. You may avoid your feelings by attempting to help or rescue others who are in need. If this is you, you were partially born with your strong need to connect and you continued to learn over time that by working with others you

can perform better and feel better about who you are. Your fear is triggered by disconnect or not being accepted. Your response to the fear initially is to talk it out, but when that does not work shame might rear its head and you may withdraw from everyone, as the pain of rejection is too great. The best way to be brave is to make the effort to connect with people regularly and create a safe place to talk. While face-to-face may be preferred, there are still many ways to connect. Do not forget that by helping others, you will help yourself as well, so find other ways you can help others at this time.

If your initial response to the chaos is **no response, internalizing your thoughts, or avoiding the news** about the pandemic, or feeling out of sorts because your routines have been disrupted, then your style is called **steady** for the steady-state you like to maintain. You may not show your fear to others as much as you internalize it and worry about things or become anxious. You may even lose a little sleep. Your fear is fueled by chaos and the people around you, so it makes you want to retreat. Your response comes from years of being able to have a well-structured and predictable world. You were never very emotional or were told to not display your emotions. While ignoring what is happening or your emotions, in general, can work for a while, you need to remember that we all need to connect, at some point emotions will come out, even if it is at the expense of your health. Your best response is to create some order and routine in your new world. To be brave for you will require you to speak up about what you know that can help. You may have some amazing solutions, but do not feel like sharing them, either because you are afraid of rejection or SHAME. At some point, it will be good to connect with a confidant or old friend that is willing to listen and bounce ideas off of.

If your fear is caused because there is **not enough information in some areas, too much in others, or no ability to get others to comply with the current rules**, then you are a **compliant or conscientious type**. Your attention to detail comes from a want to be right and accurate. You may have grown up knowing what the consequence of missing details and not following the rules were. To be brave for you is to breathe deep and let go of the things you cannot control. There is no state of perfect right now, that goes for you and those around you. You are an asset through with your attention to detail; just chose wisely to focus on the details you can control and prioritize what is most important so you can stay focused. The world needs you now more than ever, as it is the attention to detail that will help us find a cure and keep our economy running.

If you resonated with more than one of these, you are not alone, we often have two styles that impact our behavior. We can also find ourselves adapting at times in one of these ways and it is not our natural style, that is to be human and attempting to meet the needs of your environment. The key is to catch the emotion tendency, take time to reflect. Where are you in the grief process? How can you find a way to relax and reflect so that you can connect with your emotion, accept it, and then choose your best response?

Take a moment to reflect on your emotional state right now:

What do you feel in your body? Is your heart raising, chest tight, hands sweaty? **What are your thoughts?** Is your mind is wandering around and around on a problem without moving to the solution? Do you feel a bit of panic, like you are at fault? Or do you feel the need to blame others for what is not working? **What are the actions that follow your feeling and thoughts?** Do you jump quickly into action, do you attempt to appease everyone around, do you blame, or do you run away hoping you never have to face the pain of what triggered you?

Regardless of your style here are 10 more things you can do to address your fear and anxiety today:

1. Be willing to feel the grief, loss, sadness, or pain. It is human, it is not wrong or bad and it is OK to feel the way you feel without rushing through it.
2. Face your emotion, unpack it, and name it.
3. Realistically assess your situation and get support from others.
4. Attempt to connect with the delights around you and what is still good from a flower, a friend, or activity.
5. Be proactive and take care of the things you can.
6. Take care of yourself, take time for mindfulness and exercise breaks.
7. Be okay with telling people you need space or time.
8. Take time to connect with others experiencing the same thing as you, online or in-person can be extremely helpful and reduce the feeling of being alone.
9. Be grateful for something every morning and evening (I mean truly grateful!)
10. Treat yourself with the same love and kindness you would treat a close friend or family member.

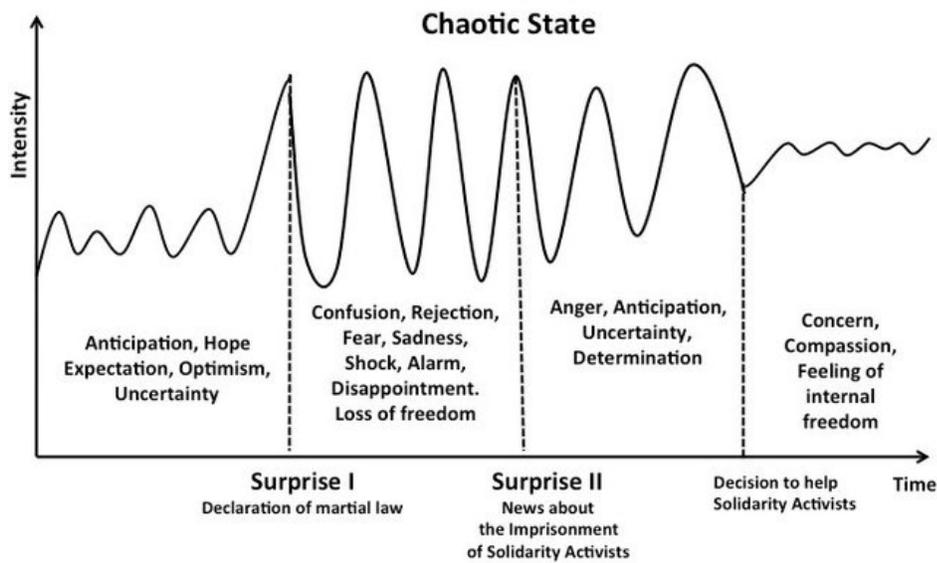
For more information about the styles or to get an in-depth report on yourself or others

<https://bit.ly/DiscomfortArticle>

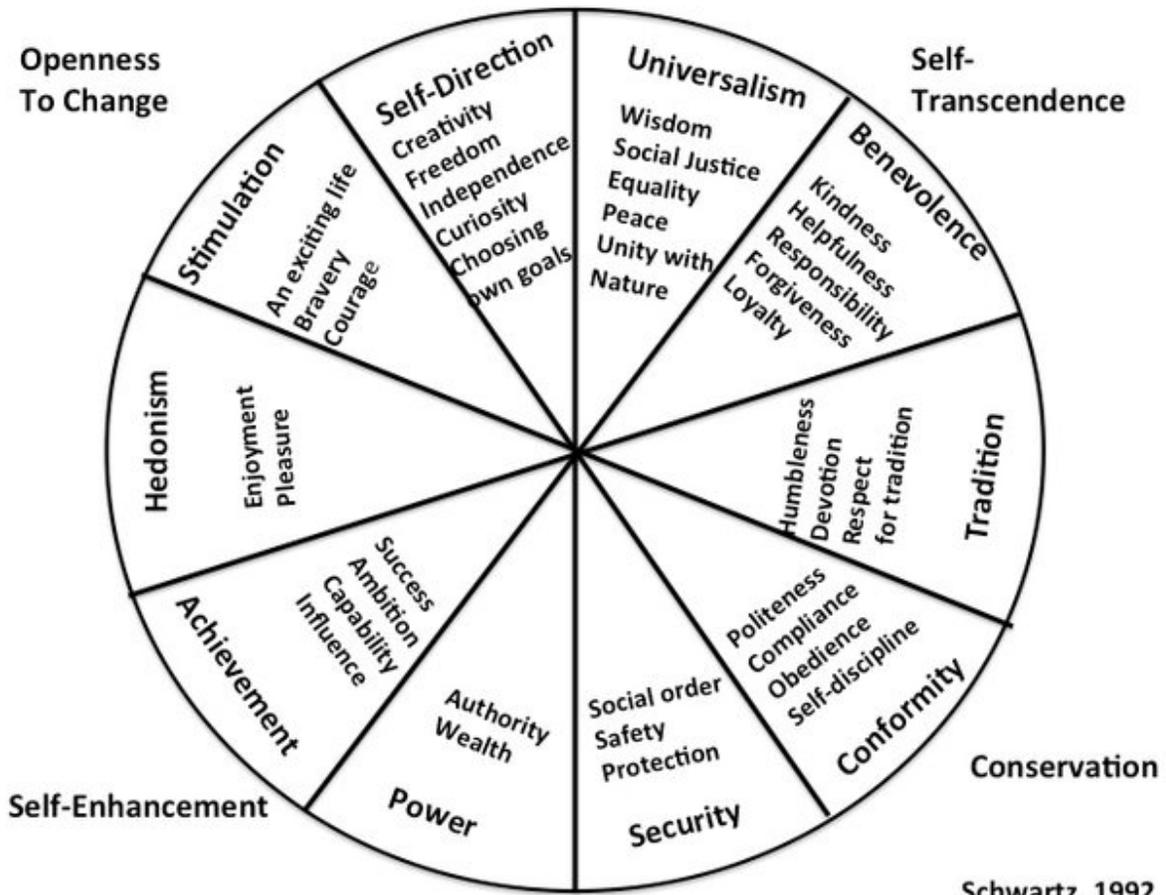
1. Northwestern University. "Scientists determine four personality types based on new data: Comprehensive data analysis dispels established paradigms in psychology." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 17 September 2018.
2. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/09/180917111612.htm>
3. <https://bigthink.com/philip-perry/this-biological-anthropologist-is-mapping-the-human-personality>

100

	NEGATIVE EMOTION	SPIRITUAL NEED	ANTIDOTE
Fight Emotions Rooted in Desire to Seek Power	Pride	Community	Humility
	Extreme Desire	Honor	Respect
	Anger / Frustration / Lashing Out	Love	Patience
	Extreme Need for Pleasure	Joy	Self Discipline
	Unwilling to Accept Responsibility	Life Lessons	Responsibility
	Complaining	Life Work	Charity
	Envy / Jealousy / Resentment	Faith	Trust in Divine
Flight Emotions Rooted in Desire to "Vent Off" Power	Lonely	Community	Friendship
	Guilt / Shame	Honor	Courage
	Hurt Feelings / Loss	Love	Compassion
	Blue / Down	Joy	Present Living
	Hopeless / Helpless / Victimized	Life Lessons	Responsibility
	Dissatisfied / Worthless	Life Work	Perseverance
	Anxious / Worried / Stressed	Faith	Trust in Divine



Why People Change:



Decisions	Frankl's Values	Schwartz's Values	Emotions
Decision of returning to Poland from Canada	Experiential value	Openness to Change Stimulation Self-direction	Excitement, novelty, challenge, courage, curiosity, optimism, uncertainty, confusion
Decision of organizing school in Warsaw	Creative value	Openness to Change Self-direction Stimulation Benevolence	Acceptance, anticipation, joy, vision, excitement, curiosity, novelty, courage, resourcefulness, satisfaction, friendliness, companionship
Decision of coming back to Canada	Attitudinal value	Conservation Security	Rejection, surprise, anger, disappointment acceptance, joy, friendship, optimism
Decision of opening international school in Calgary	Creative value	Self-Enhancement Self-direction Power Achievement	Anticipation, resourcefulness, vision, curiosity, courage, joy, surprise
Decision of marrying Brian and moving to the ranch	Experiential value	Self-Transcendence Benevolence Self-direction	Acceptance, joy, love, friendliness, imagination, excitement, curiosity, novelty, creativity, choosing own goals