

## Coming to Terms with Diagnosis

Topic : #202

Category: Medical-Therapy



*I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.  
Phil. 4:13, New Living Translation.*

Accepting a mental illness can be difficult for both the person and family. At one point you will probably experience all of these stages, not necessarily in this order.

1. **Relief or Denial:** The initial response to a diagnosis can be either “That’s just not true” or “Finally, an explanation”. When the person and family member disagree the tension can escalate and it becomes hard to move forward.
2. **Grief:** Along with a diagnosis, may come the feeling that life will always revolve around the illness. There may be a sense of loss for a life that won’t be like you’ve planned. Remember, God has good plans for you.
3. **Blame:** The person may blame family for not dealing with their own illness, or providing an environment which contributed to the illness. Family may think the person is just weak, making excuses, or using the diagnosis to escape responsibility. The sooner everyone realizes that the real enemy is a brain disorder, the sooner everyone can work toward recovery.
4. **Shame:** You may loathe the name of the illness, or even the term “mental illness” itself. There is still a stigma attached to mental illness. It is improving and will continue to improve. Remember, you are not your illness!
5. **Guilt:** The flip-side of blame. Families may wonder if they had provided a different environment or taken better care of themselves if it would have made a difference. The person wonders if they just didn’t try hard enough.
6. **Acceptance:** Without acceptance, there is no progress. Acceptance leads to understanding, education, and change.
7. **Advocacy:** You will survive this experience and your story will matter to someone else. You will be in a position to help others and support efforts to bring change.

### **The Hope for Everyone:**

You are loved by God. You have support.  
You **will** have abundant life despite the diagnosis.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How can you help a family member who is stuck in one of these stages?
2. In which stage are you currently? What will help you move forward?

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1. Relief or Denial: Important to get everyone on the same page.
2. Grief: sadness that life won't be as planned.
3. Blame: Everyone must realize the real enemy is a brain disorder.
4. Shame: Remember, you are not your illness!
5. Guilt: flip-side of blame.
6. Acceptance: where change begins!
7. Advocacy: sharing your story, helping others, working for change.

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1. How can you help a family member who is stuck in one of these stages?
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