

5 STAGES OF GRIEF

FOR THE ASD PARENT

DENIAL DISBELIEF SHOCK

- initial diagnosis
- suspicious there is something wrong
- may feel physically ill
- fear and anxiety
- detachment from reality
- memory, appetite, sleep disturbance

TIPS

- Allow yourself time to process the news
- Don't make decisions until your body stops reacting
- take time for yourself the next few days
- talk to someone

BARGAINING PROTEST

- "This can't be happening."
- "Why me? Why my kid?"
- Disbelief starts to dissipate
- What does this mean for me and my identity?

TIPS

- Gather info to learn more about autism.
- Talk to other parents.
- Realize there is not a magic bullet, but that doesn't mean there's no hope.

ANGER DEFIANCE

- "I can fix this."
- Anger toward those who don't understand / at God.
- Obsessive/anxious reactions.
- Feeling between 2 worlds but a member of neither.

TIPS

- Give yourself permission to feel angry.
- Don't take out your anger on others.
- Refocus your energy.
- Never make a decision while anger is active.

CONFUSION DEPRESSION POWERLESSNESS

- Needing to rely on the expertise of others.
- Sadness/despair
- Feeling of not knowing what to do or having too many options.

TIPS

- Cry
- Sleep
- See a counselor or join a group.
- Take time away for yourself regularly.
- Learn as much as you can.

ACCEPTANCE INTEGRATION

- More of a sense of balance.
- My child can have autism and live a full life.
- Realization of how this has helped you grow and change.

TIPS TO STAY IN ACCEPTANCE

- It's ok to vacillate between stages.
- Your grief is cyclical and nonfinite.
- Anxious, guilty and negative feelings serve no purpose, long term.
- Let the feelings come and feel them, but don't live there.
- Self-care is key.