

THINK-TANK

Education, population, poverty, tax...getting views on topics like those in Jersey isn't the difficult part – but have you ever noticed how many people sound eminently credible when talking about them, even though they may actually be basing their views on conjecture, false facts and blind guesswork?

There is a real danger in making the 'facts' fit the opinion, rather than the other way around – which is exactly the point at which someone with an eye on the latest buzzwords will smugly insert the phrase 'post-truth' into the conversation, imagining its actually helpful.

So, we've asked the Jersey Policy Forum to add some robust material to those crucial local debates – the point is not to provoke agreement or acquiescence; it is to provide reliable material on which others can build their views.



Grief, constraints and creativity

By Gailina Liew, Executive Director, Jersey Policy Forum



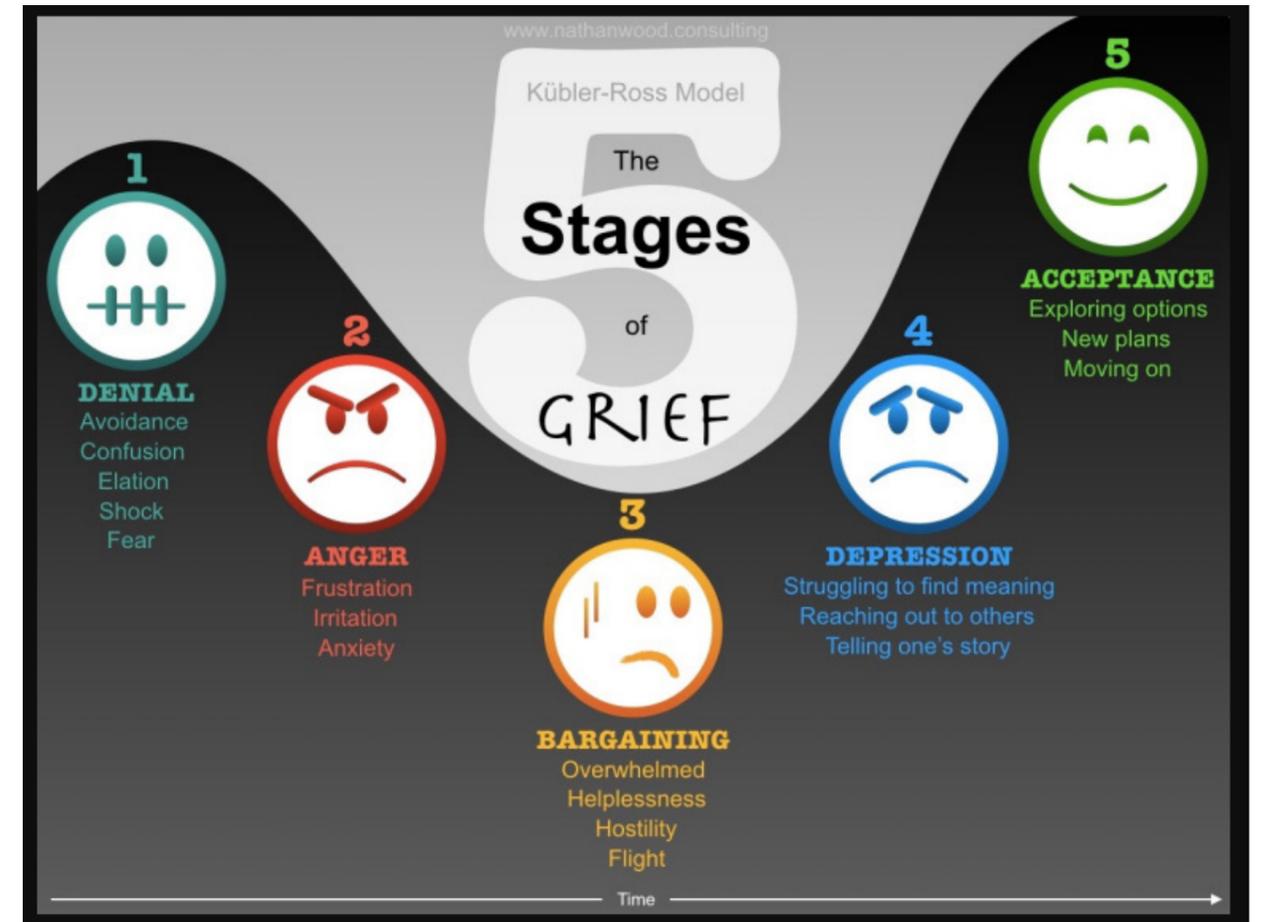
Summer is officially behind us, as we open the door to September. Those with responsibilities for children would normally be scrambling to get back into the school routine and the roads would become more congested with school runs and commuters returning to work after a summer break. But this is not a year like any other in our collective living memories. We are now approaching the six-month anniversary of the first covid-19 lock-down in Jersey, and other nations are proceeding on their own timelines. Are there any common aspects of this globally shared experience?

Many statistics have been generated about the direct impacts, including the number of

active and recovered cases, lives lost, rates of infection and the progress on testing and vaccine development. There are also numerous statistics and estimates about the economic impact, job losses and how governments are spending to put economic support in place for both individuals and businesses. Perhaps one area that is still somewhat light on statistics but rich in lived experiences is the impact on our psychological and emotional well-being. And this is where Kubler-Ross and Kessler might shed some light. They might tell us that we are individually and collectively trying to cope with a profound sense of loss about our way of life, and are actually experiencing grief.

Grieving is a natural reaction to the loss of someone we love or something we value. Anticipatory grief can be more complicated as it's about how to cope with impending loss. Some people may find it easier to put the thought of impending loss out of their minds and then feel guilty. Others may worry about impending loss continually and be unable to concentrate on anything else. Still others may try to focus on living in the moment. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' experience. Whatever you are feeling, you are definitely not alone.

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross was an American psychiatrist who is recognised for her work in changing how the medical profession approaches end-of-life care.



Many of the palliative care measures that are in place now stem from her pioneering work in the 1960's when she interviewed and provided care for people who were terminally ill, and shared what she was learning in controversial public lectures that were initially boycotted by the medical profession. Her most well-known book 'On Death and Dying', published in 1969, is still in print today and describes a theoretical framework about how people react to, experience and cope with death. In it, she identifies 5 stages which formed the basis of her life's work. Together with Dr. Kessler decades later, they published her last book – 'On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss.' Her work is now more commonly known as the 5 stages of grief.

Kubler-Ross and Kessler describe these stages and note that each person will have a unique experience. Some people only experience a few stages and others may jump around the stages in a different order than presented in the diagram. Kessler went on after the death of Kubler-Ross in 2004 to define a sixth stage in the process of grieving that he described in his

2019 book – 'Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief'. Kessler's contribution is commonly understood as 'closure' to allow one to move beyond grieving. So why does all of this matter?

The pandemic has disrupted our lives and routines all over the world, often in a sudden way that caught most of us by surprise. Are you wondering when you will be able to see friends and family again? Are you missing school and worried about falling behind? Are you struggling to work from home while balancing home schooling or caring responsibilities? Are you unable to work and uncertain about how you will be able to support yourself and your household? Are you missing the freedom and ability to travel as you did before? Are you living in isolation and lonely? Are you responsible for public health matters and wondering if you are making the right decisions? Are you responsible for the future strategy of your business and worried that you will make the wrong calls? There is an endless variety of experiences that have been generated by the emergence of the pandemic. Regardless of how well off you are, the common universal thread is

that our way of life has been profoundly changed and we anticipate even more change before the comfort and safety of a new way of life can be established.

Maybe giving our experiences and feelings a name and acknowledging them can provide some relief about the impact and uncertainty of our current circumstances. Accepting our sense of loss and coming to terms about the need change our way of life might also help us individually and collectively find our way to that sixth stage where we can look forward to new opportunities and defining new ways of living and doing things. Imposing constraints has always sparked creativity as people work to get around the constraints. Just look at how quickly technology has been embraced and used in different ways, as one broad example, to help people stay in touch, access services, goods and transact business. Let's help each other through the grieving process and use the new constraints introduced by the pandemic to get even more creative about the future.