Grief and Loss Issues

With ALS, there is a grief and loss process with each activity that can no longer be accomplished. The person with ALS and each member of the family will most likely go through these stages and may experience different stages at different times.

*The stages of grief and loss do not occur in order, as people often skip stages, or can cycle back through them, even after reaching acceptance.*

**Stages of Grief and Loss – as outlined by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross**
*(Not in a particular order)*

1. Denial – “This isn’t happening”. Self preservation; detrimental when one does not move out of this phase.

2. Anger – “Why me?!” Lashing out at self, family, healthcare professionals, God, or anyone who may be seen as responsible. May surface as guilt. “I shouldn’t have…”

3. Bargaining – “What if...” or “If only...” “Let’s make a deal”

4. Depression – “Why bother?” This profound sadness may turn into clinical depression. Symptoms include change in appetite or sleep patterns, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, decreased motivation, suicidal thoughts, and difficulty concentrating. May manifest as anxiety.

5. Acceptance – Acknowledging their fate, appreciating each day they have.

*(1) Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (Simon & Schuster/Touchstone, 1969)*