

# The 5 Stages of Mitt

✘ The last time I wrote in this space I concluded my column with this: The fat lady may not be singing, but she's warming up in the wings. I wrote that right after Mitt Romney won Florida – my way of saying, the GOP race is almost over. Since then he won Nevada. And he won both by big margins. So ...

It's over. Fatso is singing. I don't care how many more races there are in how many more states. Romney, unofficial as it may still be, has won the GOP nomination.

I don't expect real conservatives to be happy with the news. Romney is not a reliable conservative, a point I have made in this space more than a few times. What bothers a lot of us about Romney isn't so much that he's moderate. It's that he doesn't seem to have any core values.

Deep down, I suspect, Mitt Romney is a fiscal conservative and a social moderate. So is Rudy Giuliani. But Rudy didn't change his mind on abortion or gay rights four years ago just to win over social conservatives. This is who I am, he told primary voters. They didn't want that kind of Republican and Rudy said, I get it – but I'm not going to become somebody I'm not. Romney gives the impression that he'll become whomever he has to be in order to win.

So, of course, conservatives aren't going to be happy with the news that he will be the nominee of the party. And no, they won't be enthusiastic about his candidacy. But it's time for the anti-Romney Republicans to start to come to grips with reality. It's time for them to acknowledge the obvious: He's better than Barack Obama. And they have to acknowledge one more thing: if their lack of enthusiasm leads them to stay home on Election Day, they might as well cast a vote for Obama, and four more years of the kind of politics they claim

to despise.

In 1969, a medical doctor named Elizabeth Kubler-Ross came up with what has come to be known as the five stages of grief – stages that we face when having to accept some kind of very bad news, like death. The first stage is “Denial” – a stage that many of you are in right now. “This race isn’t over,” you’re telling yourself and anyone who will listen. Except, it is.

After “Denial” comes “Anger.” This is the “It’s not fair” stage. Get over it. Life’s not fair. Move on to stage three.

This is the “Bargaining” stage. In instances when people know they’re going to die, the “Bargaining” stage is about trying to figure out how to postpone death. The victim says something like, “I understand I will die, but if I could do something to buy more time ...” In politics, the “Bargaining” stage goes something like this: “Okay, I know my guy isn’t going to win this thing. But there’s still hope. Mr. X, whom I like a lot, can still jump into the race and make everything right. Or maybe there can be a brokered convention – and everything will be OK.” Bad news coming: There will be no Mr. X and no brokered convention.

This leads us to stage four: “Depression.” This is the stage where we start to understand the certainty of things – in this case the certainty that Newt isn’t going to get the nomination and neither is Santorum or Paul. I’m sorry you’re depressed. When you’re not, read what comes next about the final stage, stage five.

Stage five is “Acceptance.” This is the part where we say, “I can’t fight it. I have to accept it” – *and this is the important part* – “It’s going to be OK.”

The sooner the Anti-Romney Republicans get to stage five the better. Getting there won’t be easy. But perhaps they can

take comfort remembering how much harm they believe this president is doing to the country; how much they believe he is nothing more than an old school Chicago politician hiding behind a million dollar smile; how he talked about bringing the country together but has made a conscious decision to divide us just so he can win re-election; and how often they've said, Anybody would be better.

Anybody is here. His name is Mitt Romney. Accept it.