

Dealing with Loss

Month: May

Week #: 35

Day: b. Tues. Time: 30 min.

Accepting Loss in Five Stages

Life Tree Learning Systems ©

Objectives/Aims

The students will: understand the 5 stages in accepting loss as purported by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.

Materials

a broken toy (a doll with the head broken off works great for a male teacher)

Illustration

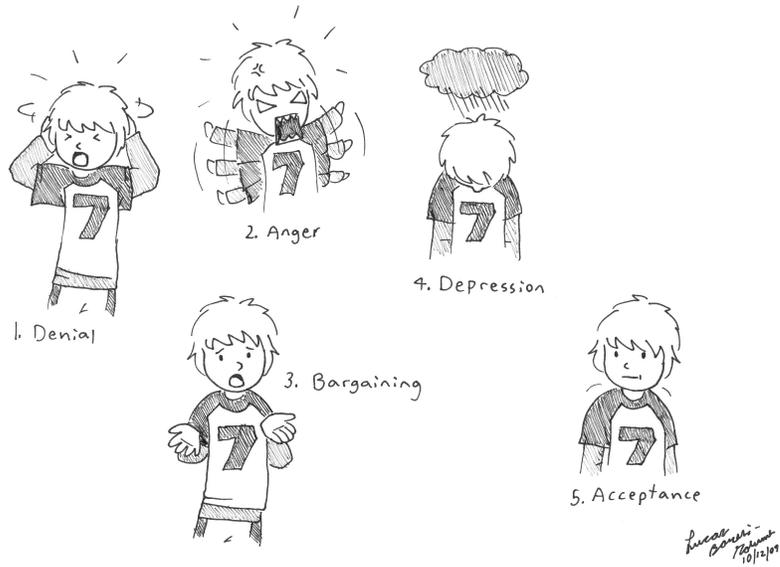
Number 7 has learned that he will be moving and leaving his home, relatives and friends. What are the five stages he is going through as he deals with this loss?

Background

The following direct quote is from: *Counseling for Loss and Life Change*, "Beware the 5 Stages of Grief" <http://www.counselingforloss.com/article8.htm> (02/02/01)

"In Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's book "On Death and Dying", Macmillan Publishing Company, 1969, she presents five stages terminally ill persons may go through upon learning of their terminal illness.

She presents them as "an attempt to summarize what we have learned from our dying patients in terms of coping mechanisms at the time of a terminal illness". These stages were not originally the 5 stages of Grief but better: The Five Stages of Receiving Catastrophic News. Over the next 28 years, healthcare professionals, clergy, nurses, doctors, caregivers, students, and other readers of the book somehow mutated the stages into 'The 5 Stages of Grief'."



In order to make this understandable for the students, I will call these five stages "The Five Stages of Accepting Loss." To me, this is the first step in dealing with loss. The second step, which will be dealt with after this lesson, is what counselors call "Grief Work."

Group Activity

1. Say, "I'm going to put on a skit for you. While I'm performing the skit, I want you to observe it very carefully to see if you can pick out the five stages Elizabeth Kubler-Ross believed a person goes through when they first learn of a loss. Remember all of those losses we listed on the board yesterday? Today I've chosen to deal with the loss of a favorite toy."

Note: I've kept the skit purposefully light, as dealing with such for a 'heavy' topic for five days can get a bit depressing for students.

1. **Denial:** "Oh no! My favorite toy is broken! My grandpa gave it to me for my birthday last year! No, it's not really broken! [Try to fix toy by pushing parts together and then have it fall apart in an exaggerated way.]

Group Activity (continued)

[Pause between each stage.]

2. **Anger** [Stomp your feet and yell.]: Stupid piece of junk! My toenails are tougher than this cheap plastic! I hate this petroleum-derived piece of putrefied junk! (Have the students repeat the last sentence three times quickly for a good laugh! :)3. **Bargaining** [Put finger to your temple as if thinking.] What can I do... What can I do... I know! Hey toy fairy! If you'll fix my toy I won't bite my brother's ears anymore! And I'll brush my slimy teeth more than once a month! I'll even start wearing clean underwear!
4. **Depression**: Oh man, am I sad. Now I won't have this toy to hit my brother with anymore... Geez, and I'll have to ask grandpa to buy me another one. I'll probably have to wait at least a couple of hours to get the new one.
5. **Acceptance**: Well, this toy really is broken. [Allow broken part to fall to the floor with a 'clunk'.] Time to get on with my play day. I have another 100 toys to play with. I'll deal with this again later.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Go through each stage of the play, repeating the words of the script if necessary, and have the students guess the name of each stage. Paraphrase and define each stage.

Some other points to remember when going through this process (from same source as cited above):

- Any Change Of Circumstance can cause us to go through this process.
- We don't have to go through the stages in sequence. We can skip a stage or go through two or three simultaneously.
- We can go through them in different time phases. The dead battery could take maybe 5 to 10 minutes, the loss of a parking space 5 to 10 seconds. A traumatic event which involves the Criminal Justice System can take years.
- The intensity and duration of the reaction depends on how significant the change-produced loss is perceived.

Variations/Extensions

1. Have a student act out the play.
2. After viewing the toy play, invite the students to write and perform their own skits.

Conclusion

Say, "Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are the stages Kubler-Ross surmised that people go through when first learning of a loss. This loss can be fairly trivial, like the loss of that silly toy in the skit, or it can be as catastrophic as learning about the loss of a loved one. In any event, this is just the first step in the loss and grieving process. As you all know, there are losses that can lead us to TEARS, which we will deal with tomorrow. Don't worry, it can have a happy ending!"

Dealing with Loss: Accepting Loss in Five Stages



1. Denial



2. Anger



4. Depression



3. Bargaining



5. Acceptance

*Lucas Bonetti -
10/12/09*

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