

The Five Stages of Grief -Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

(0:00 - 0:16)

If you're watching this on Moodle or are floated by on YouTube, a very warm welcome. My name is Rory Lees-Oaks and in this presentation we're going to look at key ideas in therapy. An introduction to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and the five stages of grief.

(0:18 - 3:50)

Little introduction to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, she was born July the 8th 1926 in Zurich, Switzerland. She died August 24th 2004 in Scottsdale, Arizona in the United States of America. Her nationality was Swiss-American.

Her field was psychology and thanatology, which is the study of death and dying and the key ideas were how individuals process their own mortality. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross spent a lot of time around the death and dying, people who are dying, and she also helped found what we now know as the hospice movement. She's a big contributor towards it.

I think this is a lovely quote, she said the most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and they have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity and an understanding of life that films them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen and I think what Kubler-Ross was saying was that maybe when people have had to look at their own mortality or had to accept a loved one's mortality then maybe they look at the world in a slightly different way and appreciate the living a little bit more.

The historic development of her ideas, well she started a career working with refugees at the end of World War II and in 1958 she moved to the USA to train as a psychiatrist. After qualifying she went on to teach at the University of Chicago's Pritzker School of Medicine before training as a psychoanalyst. It was during this time that she undertook research with terminally ill patients.

Her extensive work led her to write a book entitled On Death and Dying and you can see one of the the face covers on on the left hand side of the book. She concluded that women are more likely to go through the five stages of grief than men, however most people go through at least two. So the five stages of grief they're also known by an acronym of DABDA.

So the first is denial, the second is anger, the third is bargaining, the fourth is depression and finally the last stage or the fifth stage is acceptance. The first stage, denial, when people are told they have a terminal illness or maybe they've been told that a loved one has a terminal illness or has even been killed they may say things like there's been a mix-up, if it's an individual who's been told they have a terminal illness they may say things like I feel fine, the tests are someone else's. These are common responses where people deny what's being told to them

and in this stage individuals may come a little preoccupied with possessions.

It's possible that as it starts to sink in individuals are thinking about maybe they might not have time with the things they have, also it might be they're considering who's going to get what, what they're going to pass on. The second stage is at some point an individual accepts they are going to die and denial cannot continue. Why me? It's not fair, how can this happen to me? Who is to blame are some of the common responses.

(3:52 - 6:04)

Misplaced feelings of anger and envy can make individuals hard to help at this stage and in counselling we use the term projection where someone projects their feelings of anger onto somebody else. So it might be that if you're working with or you're close to someone who has a terminal diagnosis they may be quite cruel sometimes to you because they're projecting their anger. The next stage is bargaining.

Now at this stage it's not unusual for individuals to say things like I'll give my life savings for a cure or if I change my diet I'll take more exercise and sometimes individuals may start to pray to a higher power, they may even find faith and try bargaining with their god. What happens then is that depression hits and quite often you hear individuals say things like what's the point, I'll be dead soon. You might say do you fancy going out for a walk or do you fancy going out to see a movie or go to the pictures and sometimes people say if they're well enough to do that they might just say well there's no point I'll be dead anyway and then they might think I'll miss my loved ones there's no pointing going on.

Sometimes individuals refuse to see visitors and spend their time crying grieving or just being silent and in the theory would say that this allows a process of the beginning of disconnection from the love and affection of people around them and the movement to acceptance, the idea that they can accept either the loss of a loved one or alternatively the fact that they are eventually going to die. It's important that if someone's in this stage that you're supportive but don't try to cheer people up. I think that when people go down the path of cheering people up perhaps they're in denial of what's happening but being supportive and listening and just being around somebody can be a really good help at this particular stage.

(6:06 - 7:40)

The final stage is acceptance. Now in this stage individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality of that of a loved one or another tragic event. Typical of this stage is statements such as it's okay no one lives forever.

It can also be a time when individuals try to make peace with relatives and friends as well in as well as helping loved ones come to term with their end of life and in my experience I've known loved ones in my own life say things like I'm not afraid of death, nobody lives forever. I've heard this on a number of occasions and I guess that part of that is to try and allay the fears of their

loved ones trying to not make it any more difficult than it is. If you're going through grieving or you need assistance or any support with grief there's two organisations that may be useful.

The first is Cruise Bereavement. They offer a wide range of support for people who are in the process of dying not to put too fine a point on it or for those who have been left behind the bereaved they can be contacted in the UK on 0844 477 9400 or if you need more immediate support you can call the Samaritans again in the UK on 0845 790 9090 and it's always worth checking the costs. I think possibly it costs more for mobile phones.

(7:41 - 8:06)

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