

Death and dying – assignment

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Death is a normal process of life. From the moment we are born we begin to age until we die. Kubler-Ross formulated a series of stages that a person goes through when they die. First is denial, according to Kubler-Ross it is, “ people’s first reaction to news of a terminal diagnosis is disbelief” (Boyd & Bee, 2006, pg 526). Then there is anger, “ once the diagnosis is accepted as real, individuals become angry” (Boyd & Bee, 2006, pg 526). From there comes bargaining, “ anger and stress are managed by thinking of the situation in terms of exchanges” (Boyd & Bee, 2006, pg 526).

Next there is depression, “ Feelings of despair follow when the disease advances despite the individual’s compliance with medical and other advice” (Boyd & Bee, 2006, pg 526). Finally there is acceptance, “ grieving for the losses associated with one’s death results in acceptance” (Boyd & Bee, 2006, pg 526). Many researchers have found that Kubler-Ross’s stages may not necessarily go in the exact order or have all of the stages (Boyd & Bee, 2006, pg 527). The movie *Wit* is a perfect example of the how a person may cope with an impending death.

The main character Vivian Bearing played by Emma Thompson has been diagnosed with terminal ovarian cancer. She decides to go through experimental treatment and notices that her life is declining. Vivian in my opinion does not go through all of Kubler-Ross’s stages of death. She does go through the denial stage. In the beginning of the movie she seems to not quite accept her illness. That is probably why she decided to undergo experimental treatment. She did not take time to think about how it would affect the remaining months that she has to live.

She also does not consult anyone about her illness so that she could weigh the options and begin the grieving process. Once this stage is complete she does not go into the anger stage but rather begins the next stage. Vivian bargaining stage is not very noticeable through out the movie. She subjects her self to undergo radiation and chemotherapy that is making the remaining months of her life miserable. In one scene she is up in the middle of the night and vomits and does not understand how she could if she has not eaten anything in days.

She seems very unhappy but still goes through every treatment at full dose with out questioning her physician. She does not say to her self that if she completes the treatment she will live or even live longer than expected. However she has not come to grip with her illness and believes that this treatment will cure her and that when it is over she will resume her normal life. Vivian is unlike many people who have some kind of support system. She is an only child and has no children of her own.

She is unwed and may not have contacted anyone about her illness because she may not have had any close friends that she felt comfortable enough to share the news with. A vast majority of this stage is seen within her actions and how she reflects within her self. Next Vivian goes through the depression stage of grieving. She has lost her hair and much of her identity. She daydreams a lot about her life one such example is when she remembers when she had her first love for literature.

She also reflects on moments in her life that she wishes that she could relive. One example is when she is lecturing a class and a student asks for an

extension on the deadline for an assignment. Vivian shamelessly mocks him and tells him that maybe his grandmother had passed away when indeed she has. She has no pity for his grieving and informs him that his assignment is due. She reflects on the impact that that has on her now that there is no one to grieve for her. She also daydreams about normal days in her life when she was in her prime.

She remembers lecturing to her students without notes or note cards and this mental game seemed to be a norm for her to help her cope with her illness on a day to day basis. She was once in full control of her life, now she must listen to when others tell her where she needs to go and do what they tell her what to do. Her mental thoughts are all she has left that they can not control. Finally Vivian goes through the acceptance stage. Vivian has lived her whole life for words and their meaning. When she started to get ill she looked up every medical term that she could.

She knew what the doctors were telling her about her illness even when they used medical jargon. When talking to her nurse she explained that she understood that her death was nearing. She had lived her life in control of every aspect and confessed that she was scared of death. She had many regrets about her life but knew that it did not matter anymore because she could not change it. She showed many signs of this stage when she did not question her medical treatment and just tried to get through one day to the next.

Vivian was a strong powerful woman and hand quickly turned into a frail, weak person. She knew that her life was nearing its end and had come to

accept it and was ready to cross over. In one of the final scenes of the movie Vivian's nurse tells her that she has one last choice that she can choose. After not having much control of her life anymore she is given the option of being a DNR patient. DNR stands for do not resuscitate, which is a common choice given to people who's end is nearing. Vivian chooses to be a DNR patient which angers her doctor.

I believe that she had made the proper choice in her situation. She did not have much of a life left. She could not eat or sleep properly and was always in pain. I feel that everyone should be able to choose if they want to be resuscitated or not. If a person feels that their end on this earth is coming to an end they may feel that it is against their God to try to undo what he has planned for them. When viewing Kubler-Ross's stages it is important to remember that not everyone is going to react to death in the same way.

Many people might skip a stage or go through them in a different order. Death is something that every one takes slightly differently based on cultural, moral, and personal experiences. Death is portrayed in movies and televisions shows but does not truly affect us until we are face to face with its impending doom. People must understand that is it a process of life that must go its course and we should enjoy the ride. References Boyd, Denise, and Helen L. Bee. Lifespan Development. Allyn & Bacon, 2005. ?