

Healthcare workers and grieving

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Health Providers's Compassion for the Grieving If health providers are to be truly compassionate, one critical aspect of compassion is the capa to give comfort to those grieving. The ones in grief may be a terminally sick person or members of the family the patient leaves behind. And in compassion for the grieving, it is important to understand the grieving process. In this regard, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has contributed ideas on the stages of grieving (Bear, 2011). And in this paper, these stages shall be compared with those experienced by Job in the classical biblical story of the Old Testament. After an analytical comparison, certain comments and a conclusion shall be made.

Stages of Grieving in Kubler-Ross and Job

Kubler-Ross presents 5 stages of grieving, which can graphically be presented side-by-side with the stages of grief experienced by the biblical Job:

Kubler-Ross 5 Stages of Grief Job's Stages of Grief

Denial Resigned denial

(not happy, but sad) (not happy, sad but resigned) 1: 21

Anger Anger

(" why is this happening?") (He " tore gown, head") 1: 20

Bargaining Bargaining

(" If. . . I'll be a better person") (" grant me justice, relent") 6: 7

Depression Depression

(" I don't care anymore") (" I am reduced to entreating") 19: 16

Acceptance Acceptance

(" I'm ready, whatever comes") (" I retract all I said") 42: 6

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Analysis

Today's psychologists recognize the grieving process, and the need to respect it. On a wide perspective "grieving is part of living. . . life and death are a mixed bag of joy and sadness" (Padovani, 2010a). Ross-Kubler's 5 Stages of Grieving can therefore be helpful, and this finds a concrete application in the story of Job who grieved but experienced relief and healing, as well as reconciliation with the Divine Being. In a stage-like fashion, the story of Job presents role players: the devil, three counsellors (Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar), and Jahweh the object of understanding in life's mystery of evil in the world. Job plays the role of the man in great grief—feeling not only sad, but depressed. Psychologists see depression as a condition "which arises from situations in the person's life and an inability to cope with problems" (Padovini, 2010b). Underneath depression are inherent factors the most significant of which are anxiety, anger and negative thinking. All these are manifest in Job's condition. The three counsellors did not display compassion, but instead they accused Job of sin, as the cause of his misfortunes. Nonetheless, their presence was helpful as it prevented Job from wallowing in passive, solitary and passive depression. This showed that depression can be treated, but it needs to be expressed, and listened to by friends or counsellors. And combined with enlightened faith in oneself, in life and in a Wise Creator, the patient can overcome obsessive grief.

Conclusion

Health providers can be typified by the three counsellors of Job who didn't play their roles well. In the biblical story, Jahweh blamed them for "not speaking truthfully" (Job 42: 7) in the presence of Job. Their fault was not stated in specific terms, but it can be deduced that they were overzealous

for Jahweh, and judged Job to have sinned thus deserving evil as a punishment in life. This is a view which reflects a religious bias which the story of Job wants to correct. To impute sin on those who suffer is not right; the existence of evil is a mystery most difficult for man to understand.

Resignation to God's plan and designs— the acceptance stage of Ross-Kubler —is the key to grapple out of one's sufferings and misery.

As for health providers, it is important to know that it is difficult to find a short-cut to the healing process. The process usually undergoes stages as illustrated by Ross-Kubler. In the process, the show of compassion is a manifestation of humanness. Simple presence with the patient is good, but this presence can either be negative or positive. It is negative when we show indifference or lack of proper care. It is, however, positive when it is displayed in a manner that is emotionally nourishing. Active and attentive listening, also exercising medical functions with caring touch, warmth and closeness will help the patient, even lead him to finding God through the compassion of human care.

References

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