

Derek Nuttall writes:

A RIDDLE: What do football fans, prizes and Elizabeth Kubler Ross have in common? Probably not much, for most of the time, but I wonder whether there is at least one thread.

Football fans

Several theories are offered to explain why some football fans cause trouble. I want to suggest another, maybe a minor factor—that it has something to do with the way we handle loss. The idea may be shot down immediately because some fans cause trouble when their team wins!

But let us pursue it a little further. If youngsters are not helped to see loss as part of life, and given support in dealing with the feelings it creates, then the expression could be aggressive, targeted on others or on property. If victory is all, and defeat seen as failure, this could be a factor in behaviour. I recall talking to a sixth form group, and a comment from one of them that the difference between your favourite team losing and the death of someone you love is that the team can try again next week—there is another chance—but the death is final. If we helped our youngsters cope better with loss, or at least did not give them an inflated expectation that life is all about gain, might we be helping towards reducing violent behaviour? Unemployment and poor job prospects are called up as other reasons for bad behaviour. They are losses and need our attention.

Prizes

What about prizes? Am I alone in wondering whether we are trying to give too many prizes? Minor football competitions, pressure over examinations, awards galore in entertainment and industry. I am all in favour of appropriate reward, reinforcement and not letting people feel rejected or undervalued, but I wonder if we are becoming afraid that no one must lose, that loss has to be avoided. Afraid because we think a loser may not cope, or because the rest of us cannot? Coping with other peole's losses can be very difficult for us.

Dr. Kubler Ross

This brings me to Dr. Kubler Ross. I recall her saying in a television interview something like "We keep people alive on machines, not so much because we want to let them live, but because we cannot cope with their dying."

Losses are very much part of life. Some go unnoticed at the time, although later we may see their significance. Others have gain attached to them; whilst some grief may be experienced, more positive things dominate. Then there is the major loss which plays a part in the rest of our life. Without wanting to turn life morbid, or have us looking over our shoulder all the time, I feel more attention to and support for losses that are minor and in the ordinary run of things may better equip us to deal with failure and disappointments.

That brings me to another kind of riddle—for is there not a sense in which, when someone close dies, the aim is not to encourage us to "cope well" (in the conventional sense of not showing feelings, being brave, etc.) but rather to "cope badly"—by letting the pain and grief out?

Whatever the level of loss the real point is the need for more understanding of its effects and consequences, and the availability of more support when needed. Those of us who care for the bereaved are on a frontier line, involving our personal growth through loss, and assisting others with theirs. The learning works both ways. Understanding minor losses we get closer to the deep significance of major ones. Working with the bereaved can also give us insight into how other losses could be handled better.

POSTSCRIPT

The following paragraph appeared in *The Times* Diary Column on 17th March under the headline "Grand Sham":

A sad tale: John Hickey, a rugby fullback, arrived late for the first XV match between Clifton and Warminster and was rebuked by his captain. Hickey explained that he had suffered a sudden family bereavement which put a different complexion on things. The captain explained to the referee, and, on a cold and windy day, the two teams stood in silence for two minutes. After the match, someone asked Hickey if the deceased was a very close member of the family. "Certainly was". Hickey replied. "It was my cat". He is now playing for the third XV.

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Cruse News

TORY SPOKESMAN

The four main political parties are all represented in Cruse. Recently our Tory spokesman, Paul Dean, had to resign when he became Deputy Speaker, although remaining a Patron. We welcome Mrs. Jill Knight, MBE, as his successor.

AREA ORGANISER

We have a new Area Organiser for the Midlands Area (covering Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Lichfield, Worcester, Cheltenham, Derby, Nottingham, Melton Mowbray, Coventry, and Leicester). She is Mrs. Caroline Bernasconi, Blue Cedars, Ashow, Kenilworth, Warwicks CV8 2LE. Tel. 0926 55669.

AREA CONFERENCE

Cruse Scottish Area Conference is being held on Saturday, 14th April. Delegates are due to hear a talk by Dr. Bertram Levy on *A GP's View of Bereavement*, followed by open discussion. Dr. E. C. Nelson is speaking on *The Effects of Bereavement on Children*, Rev. Peter Sampson on *Nobody Told Me* (the dying & their families), and Jane Balderston on *Loss & Bereavement—a Hospital Social Worker's Viewpoint*. There are also workshops planned to tackle the practical problems encountered in offering a counselling service.

CRUSE ACADEMIC PAPERS

Cruse Academic Papers are available at £1 each (inc. p&p) from Cruse House:

SUICIDE

Academic Papers No. 1 comprises a reprint of the article on The Risk of Suicide following Bereavement by Dr. C. Murray Parkes (originally published in *Bereavement Care*, Vol. I, No. 1), together with A Review of the Literature on Bereavement following Suicide by Dr. S. Henley.

SUPERVISION

Academic Papers No. 2 is a reprint of the article on Supervision and Consultant Care —Counselling the Counsellors by Gill Parker, Family Therapist, from *Bereavement Care*, Vol. I, No. 2.

CRUSE BADGES

We have small metal lapel badges for sale, featuring the Cruse logo design. The badges are about ½ inch across, in red, blue & silver, with a brooch pin behind. Send 75p to Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey.

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Printed by E. H. Baker & Co. Ltd., 86 Lower Mortlake Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2JH.

EHB 73467