

Tool 10 – DABDA (*in the Workplace*)

TOOL: **DABDA** is the acronym for the five stages of the grieving process (**D**enial–**A**nger–**B**argaining–**D**epression–**A**ceptance).

WHEN: The **DABDA** model was first postulated in a book entitled, "*On Death and Dying*" written by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, published in 1969. At the time, Dr. Kubler-Ross was an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Chicago. Her book was the result of a seminar on death and dying meant to foster an understanding of the dying process and assist the professional medical staff, the patients and their families in coping. The **DABDA stages** identified by Dr. Kubler-Ross were soon adopted by other disciplines in order to understand the "grieving process" – other than facing death.

For example many in the **workplace** face traumatic events:

- Layoffs
- Corporate mergers
- Major re-organizations
- Project suddenly terminated

Managers and supervisors need to understand the grieving process because, while there is the nurturing element in management, employees in the stages of DABDA are often very inefficient and costly.

HOW: The **five stages** of grief, formulated by Kubler-Ross are:

Stage 1: Denial - the patient denies the forthcoming loss of life, and react by withdrawing from routine and social contacts. **Workplace equivalent:** The employee does not acknowledge the coming event – "*I wouldn't worry about it – it's just talk.*"

Stage 2: Anger - the grieving patient becomes furious at the person who inflicted the hurt (for instance, who transmitted the disease) or at care-givers (doctors misdiagnosed the malady). **Workplace equivalent:** The employee gets very angry at management - this is personal. Maybe some thoughts of retaliation are suggested. – "*I wonder what they would do if the entire database was erased!.*"

Stage 3: Bargaining - the patient then makes bargain with the God, pleading like 'If I repent for the sins, will you allow me to live a little longer?'. **Workplace equivalent:** The employee does not acknowledge the coming event – "*If we get this release out on schedule they won't lay us off.*"

Stage 4: Depression - During this stage, the patient gives up hope of survival, though undercurrents of anger and sadness still persist. . **Workplace equivalent:** The employee stops working on job related tasks, takes excessive sick leave, applies for disability – "*I just don't feel well.*"

Stage 5: Acceptance - The final stage of grief, during which anger and sadness prevailing in stage 4 tapers off, and the patient learns to accept the impending reality of death. **Workplace equivalent:** The employee shows new life, new resolve. – "*Well, we need to move on. This isn't the end of the world.*"

NOTE: #1. Kubler-Ross tells us that each individual moves through the process at their own pace. And people can seem to occupy multiple stages at the same time. It also *does not* appear that someone (a doctor/Chaplin, a manager/supervisor) can move a person from one stage to the other. The single 'hope' seems to be that people all along the process cling to some level of hope that the situation will improve. It would seem a good manager / supervisor should allow for hope to exist. Not to offer false hope, but not to extinguish hope when it surfaces.

#2. One web site applied DABDA to a world happening. *"I remember the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Later it dawned on me that not only people but even nations or states can die, for which history provide many examples. When states are in such a moribund condition, the citizens of such states also pass through Kubler-Ross formulation of five stages of grief. The current Sri Lankan state is a good example."*

We used this writer's (Sachi Sri Kantha) definitions of the five stages in this abstract. <http://www.sangam.org/PIRABAKARAN/Part11.htm>

TIPS: #1. "On Death and Dying" written by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, published in 1969 is very easy read and highly recommended for managers and supervisors.

https://www.amazon.com/s?k=on+death+and+dying+by+elizabeth+kubler+ross&crd=12YEFS1936YL0&sprefix=%E2%80%9COn+Death+and+Dying%E2%80%9D+%2Caps%2C222&ref=nb_sb_ss_i_1_19

#2. Career finding sites often mention DABDA as a means to support their clients seeking new jobs.

This "tool" is from **Tom Adams' Problem Solvers Toolbox** which he compiled over his years of working as an Information Systems Analyst. These Problem Solving Tool Abstracts are *NOT* copyrighted; please share them. They are based upon the concepts of other problem solvers.
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