

FATAL ERROR
Discussion/Teaching/Reading Club Guide

Admitting responsibility/dealing with guilt

Sergeant Kindle says the upside of accepting the blame for something is that you can learn from your mistakes, change things, and perhaps prevent it from happening again. The down side is that when you admit that the bad stuff is your fault, you must deal with the guilt.

Katrina was very young and grieving the loss of her parents and grandparents when she took up life on the street. Kindle wants her to accept at least some of the blame for what happened to her in The Traz biker compound. He believes she will not be able to recover from the trauma until she does. However, Shrug thinks forcing her to accept responsibility for what she did will make her even more emotionally unstable.

Questions:

1. How responsible are we for what happens in our lives?
2. At what age should we start taking the credit or blame for the results of our decisions and behaviours?
3. If we don't learn to accept responsibility, are we at risk of feeling helpless and victimized?

Sometimes victims of abuse think the abuse is their fault. For example, they believe if they hadn't made the abuser angry by something they said or did, they wouldn't have got hit. Victims might remain in an abusive relationship because they wrongly believing that since they are responsible for the abuse, they can change things to end the abuse.

Questions:

1. How do we know if we should take responsibility for bad things in our lives?
2. Is taking responsibility for things the same as accepting blame for them?
3. Can we accept responsibility and blame without being overcome by guilt, as Sergeant Kindle seems to do?
4. Can we make our lives better even if we don't accept the blame for the bad things that have happened to us?

Shrug, Syd, Chad, and Sergeant Kindle all admitted responsibility, at least partially, for their roles in Katrina ending up in The Traz biker compound. Katrina and Rusty are reluctant to believe anything was their fault.

Question:

1. In FATAL ERROR, it appears that those accepting blame are able to move past the experience easier. Is that realistic or is it more likely people will be punished, charged, or sued, if they admit they were wrong?

Getting in over your head, beyond your abilities, knowledge, skills, experience

Syd says that Katrina failing the ethic sessions will benefit her in the long run by preventing her from taking a job in Computer Crimes—a position for which she's not ready. He indicates one reason he got in trouble, was that he was too young and not properly trained to be working undercover at the King's Ace bar.

Kindle thinks Shrug got in trouble over Katrina because he was undercover for too long, living in an evil culture.

Questions:

1. How do we know if we are tackling something that's beyond our abilities?
2. What can we do if we find out part-way through that we're not going to be able to complete a task or achieve a goal? For example, if we join a sports team, sign up for a course, or apply for a job and then discover we're not good enough—should we quit? Should we try harder? Should we wait for someone to kick us off the team or fire us? Should we wait until we screw something up real badly? Should we ask for help? Take more training?
3. Kindle and Chad agree to take charge of the new Computer Crimes division even though they don't know anything about computers. Should we accept challenges we're not sure we can complete? Should we try new things and risk failing?

Discussion on consequences:

When we're deciding whether or not to take on something new, we should be aware of what the consequences of failure will be. For example, it might be fine to try out a new sport and not do well but a doctor shouldn't risk a patient's life by performing a surgical procedure for which he's not qualified.

Discuss ways to determine if one should try something new.

- Talk to others who have tried it
- Watch others do it
- Research what is required to be successful
- Complete relevant training and tests. Study your results—did you do well enough to proceed?
- Consult experts

Risks vs rewards

Sergeant Kindle and Shrug discuss whether or not the success of the undercover police sting was worth the danger and emotional trauma they (and Katrina) went through. What is your opinion?

Although we're seldom involved in anything as dramatic and dangerous as the police sting, there are things we do in our lives that we later evaluate. What are some things in your life that you've done or experienced that you wondered if it was worth it?

- Was the birth of a child worth the pain of labour?
- Are our employment opportunities and/or income level worth our years of schooling?
- Was making the sports team worth the exercising, time, and hard work during tryouts?
- Was dieting, quitting smoking, and other lifestyle changes worth the health benefits we experience?
- Is living without domestic/parental abuse worth the guilt, stress and fear of reporting it?

Reasons things happen

Shrug and Sergeant Kindle discuss not only their reasons for doing things but also the Supreme Court's reasons for dismissing the bikers' appeal and the reasons behind the disciplinary review board's decision. Later on, Bailey tells Katrina that if she hadn't accepted a ride with Shrug, nothing bad would've happened—insinuating her decision to ride with Shrug was the reason for Lukas's death. However, we know several factors contributed to his murder. Lukas was selling drugs in The Traz territory and insulted the bikers, Shrug was trying to get control of the gang which put Gator in a

murderous mood, and Gator found out Lukas was Katrina's friend. We also know Lukas may not have been selling drugs if his alcoholic mother wasn't after him for money.

Questions:

1. It seems like many things interweave with our decisions and behaviours to create our lives. How much responsibility can we assume for what we are like?
2. How much responsibility can we take for what our lives are like?
3. How much influence do we have on other people and their lives?

Think in terms of

- Our physical selves such as genetics, hygiene, intelligence, co-ordination, illness
- Our financial lives. Our lot in life, what we inherited, what our ancestors lost, gave up, acquired.
- Our education
- Our relationships at home, at work, socially. Do people help us? Do we help others? Do we get along? Work together? Work alone?

Justice

Our sense of justice and fairness develops throughout childhood and adolescence. There are cultural differences in what is perceived as fair, leading to different laws and legal systems around the world. Canadian laws allows for justice to be tempered by circumstances yet at the same time, nobody is above the law—the same laws are supposed to apply to everyone equally.

In FATAL ERROR the bikers appeal their convictions. In a close vote the Supreme Court denied their appeal.

Questions:

1. In your opinion, did the bikers receive justice?
2. Did Katrina? Should she have been charged for her role in the murder? For her drug dealing? For lying on the stand?
3. Was she adequately compensated for the help she gave the investigators? For the help she gave Shrug and Chad in The Traz?
4. If, as Elizabeth suggests, Shrug hadn't been a cop and Katrina had done what she did, would she have been in worse legal trouble? If so, is it fair that she wasn't charged, since she didn't know Shrug was a cop when she was participating in gang business?
5. Did Shrug receive justice? Should he have faced charges for endangering Katrina? For his drug deals? For withholding evidence? For perjury? For assaulting Katrina? Should he have been fired from the force?
6. Was Shrug adequately compensated for the four years of his life he gave up to bring down the bikers?
7. Those taking Kindle's ethics course often change their mind about Shrug's culpability in recruiting Katrina as the session progresses. Have there been times when you've you changed your mind about whether or not justice was served and if people had been treated fairly? What changed your mind—new information about the crime? About the criminals—their pasts, their motives? About the victim? About those who investigated/prosecuted/or judged the crime?

Thank you for reading FATAL ERROR. The third book in the BackTracker series is coming soon!