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10/18/16

A Change in Time

Back then, getting your mental health treated was very hard and you treated as if you were a different species, which people had a hard time with. Like Charlie Gordon, from “Flowers for Algernon”. “Flowers for Algernon” is a fictional short story written by Daniel Keyes. In the story, Charlie Gordon is a determined 37-year-old man who has a learning disability, but wants to get smart. Dr. Straus and Dr. Nemur, the doctors that change Charlie’s life, have an intense argument about who they should operate on and enhance their intelligence. They thought long and hard and end up using Charlie because he wants to have the capacity to hold knowledge, like other people. Throughout the story, Charlie has to go over various difficulties like his mind thinking pessimistically, but he finds a way to make it okay. In this story, the theme is that if a person faces a big alteration in their everyday life, it might change that person for better or for worse. The situations in the story that Charlie faces is what make him change over time, this is shown by three reasons that are his behavior in the beginning and towards the end, his competition with Algernon, and the way he writes his reports in the beginning and after the surgery.

First of all, Charlie Gordon’s behavior in the beginning of the story is very different from his behavior after his surgery and towards the end of the story. In the story, Dr. Straus, one

of the doctors who performed surgery on him, tells him to write down reports that talk about what he thinks and how he acts throughout his day. On Charlie's second progress reports he writes down, "I dint see nuthing in the ink but he said there was picturs there other pepul saw some picturs. I couldnt see any picturs. I reely tryed to see. I held the card close up and then far away"(285). This shows that he just does what he is told and he does not want to give any trouble and is oblivious to many things. He wants to please people and he wants to make them proud. As the reports go on his feelings change a little right after the surgery. On his 7th progress report, he elaborates his feelings, "Thse inkblots are stupid. And those pictures are stupid too. I like to draw a picture of a man and a woman but I wont make up lies about people. ...I think writing these progress reports are stupid too"(288). This is after he has his surgery, nothing was happening to him and he thinks he is not improving, so he got angry and frustrated at everything. Even though this is just the reaction because of the surgery, it is a slight change, among others, that happen throughout the story.

Second of all, Charlie competes in a race competition with Algernon, a mouse who already has the operation, for testing before the surgery takes place on Charlie and continues to test them both after the surgery as well. Charlie always writes about Algernon and how he thinks when he has to race him. Charlie says, "Anyway that test made me feel worser than all the others because they did it over 10 times with difernt amazeds and Algernon won every time" (286). This means that Charlie tries so hard to beat Algernon, but obviously has not had the chance to because Algernon has the operation and Charlie did not have it yet. As time passes after Charlie has the surgery. He slowly gets closer at beating Algernon and faster at learning. He expresses in his report, "I beat Algernon! I dint even know I beat him until Burt the tester told

me” (290). This explains that after a little while, Charlie is able to beat him without thinking about it too much. Before, Charlie had a low chance to beat him, but now, he finally can. Because of the surgery, Charlie has the capability to be able to beat Algernon, which he did. It was a huge change and improvement in his life.

Finally, a really big change that Charlie experiences is his grammar and spelling in his reports. Looking back at his old reports and then looking at the ones after the surgery, it is a huge difference because his spelling is not how an average person’s should spell. Now looking at his post-surgery reports, they have perfect spelling and no grammatical errors. The whole story is not just based on what the author wanted to get through with words, but the way Charlie expresses himself with his misspelled words and wrong grammar. Charlie wrote this on his progress report before his surgery, “They said Miss Kinnian told that I was her bestist pupil in the adult nite scool becaus I tryed the hardist and I reely wantid to learn” (286). In this simple sentence, Charlie is talking about his day, but his spelling and grammar is really off. After the surgery had taken place, his writing is slowly getting better with time. Charlie writes this down a while after the surgery, “We went through the cards slowly. One of them looked like a pair of bats tugging at something. Another one looked like two men fencing with swords. I imagined all sorts of things” (294). This reveals that Charlie’s writing, his spelling and grammar, is a lot better which shows that he definitely did improve and change his ways of improper writing after the surgery. Not only has his personality changed but so did all of his knowledge and what he learned after the surgery which explains that his big impact in life did change him for the better.

In the end, Charlie’s life did change because of the surgery, it might not have stayed permanent, but it still changed his life, three ways that changed his life were his behavior in the

beginning and towards the end, his competition with Algernon, and the way he writes his reports in the beginning and after the surgery. This theme is important because it shows that change can continue as a positive effect, or negative one, maybe even both, but it helps us understand that life can change right away and can even have a big impact on the whole world if we happen to face a tragic event. To sum it up, Charlie had a huge opportunity come his way and he took it, but then another problem, where his surgery was not permanent and he has to go back to his old ways, changed the Charlie he acted in the beginning of the story.