

There's a Hole in My Sidewalk: Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

I.

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost.... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes me forever to find a way out.



II.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in... it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is *my* fault.
I get out immediately.

IV.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V.

I walk down a different street.

TEACHER OUTLINE

WATCH YOUR STEP: An activity for teens

The presentation can be done in class or online. The activity can easily be adapted for teachers, parents and community partners.

Give each student a copy of *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters*.



Journal entries:

Suggest students keep a journal, with perhaps daily entries. This could be a part of the therapeutic journey where thoughts and feelings can be understood more clearly and dealt with. The journal could be hand-written or kept in a computer file. The journal is helpful to de-stress and wind down. It is one aspect of a healthy lifestyle. (Free journal resource: <http://www.schools4health.com/wellness-journal/>.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Read *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters*.

2. Suggested symbolism for teacher information only:

- The street = life
- Hole = struggle or trouble
- Another street = change
- Beginning = ignorant, unaware
- Middle = self-aware, addictive, recognition of the problem
- End = wise/responsible - related to the hub of the [Wellness Wheel - Personal Responsibility – http://www.schools4health.com/resources/wellness-a-question-of-balance/](http://www.schools4health.com/resources/wellness-a-question-of-balance/)

3. Introduction for student activity

Suggested questions for discussion:

- a. What is a metaphor? What is the symbolism for the street, the hole and the different street?
- b. How does the person react the first two times? Shock, denial, ignoring, coping
- c. What change occurs the third time? Recognition of a problem
- d. In what way does he/she react differently the 4th time?
- e. What is the importance of the choice made the 5th time?
- f. If the street is a metaphor for your life, what do you think the hole represents?
- g. Where are the holes in your sidewalk? Have you ever had, or presently have, a hole in your sidewalk?
- h. Is there a theme in the *Autobiography*?

Hand out the Student Worksheet.

After the completion of worksheet:

The Autobiography can be related to the stages of grief. Self-forgiveness might be part of the process. Sometimes forgiveness of others is not possible but letting go is.

Follow-up activity:

Self-Forgiveness: Steps to Take to Forgive Yourself

For teachers, students, parents and community partners

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-forgive-yourself-4583819>

The activity includes the 4 R's of self-forgiveness - Responsibility, Remorse, Restoration, Renewal.

Some examples of topics on <https://www.verywellmind.com>:

- **Happiness fact-checked and reviewed articles:** How to Get Out of a Rut, Self-Compassion Makes Life More Manageable, Things to do Alone: The Benefits of Being by Yourself ...
- **Self-Improvement topics:** Meditation, Stress Management, Spirituality, Holistic Health, Inspiration, Brain Health, Technology, Relationships

Student Worksheet

Where do you fit in? Where is your hole in the sidewalk?

Please respond to the following questions:

1. What similarities can you see between the person in the poem and the choices you or some of your friends have made in life so far? Perhaps you have seen this in your family.

2. What can we learn from doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results? (keep struggling - anger, depression)



3. Where is/was your hole in the sidewalk? What was your beginning? How did you progress through the stages?

4. Did you reach the “different” sidewalk? Give examples of any changes made, e.g., let things out, come to a point of forgiveness of self or another and/or let go, **choose** to walk down a different sidewalk ...

5. Where does personal responsibility take over? (take another sidewalk = change direction)

6. What message could be related to the metaphor - can't change the past, let it go, move on. What was the best you could do at the time?

Reflect on your responses.

7. Do you presently fit in to any stage? Perhaps you fit into several stages?

Conclusion:

8. After you work out where you fit, what is your conclusion? Write a letter to yourself. You could respond artistically using drawings, collage, photographs - whatever strikes your imagination.

The past cannot be changed so it is important to let it go.

Where to go?

**Be proactive, watch your step!
Don't look back, you aren't going that way.**

Schools4health.com
Resources for a whole school health & wellness curriculum

