How Can a Lizard Help You?

An interview with Lenny the Lizard

KATHY B. DEMPSEY

What can we learn from a lizard?

Lizards grow by shedding their skin. If they don't grow, they die. Humans grow physically, mentally and spiritually. If they don't shed, they die. My mantra to the human race is SHED or YOU'RE DEAD®!

What is shedding?

Shedding is a two part process. The first part is letting go of the old; all those things that are unhealthy or are no longer serving you. The second part of shedding is taking on the new; all those skills/knowledge or healthy habits that will nurture your growth. Shedding is about letting go of the loss in order to gain something new. Lizards teach us we must shed.

Why do humans suffer so much?

Great question! The foundation of shedding roots back to two of life's necessities; attachment and detachment. The core of most human suffering is an inability to detach. They try to hold on to things, relationships, jobs, roles and beliefs. The more they hold on, the more painful and intense the suffering becomes.

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What is the first shedding experience that humans have?

Being born. Most were blissfully happy living in their amniotic-fluid world. All of the sudden, 9 months later, reality struck and they were traumatically jolted from their serene environment and forced out. The doctor grabbed scissors and cut the cord. Humans were physically attached to their mothers and someone "detached" them!

What can humans learn from being detached from their mothers?

From the time humans are born, to the time they will die, they will continuously experience a series of attachments and detachments over and over again. Now, the attachments and detachments won't be like the "physical" ones that they experienced when the doctor cut their cord but life will continue to be a series of "emotional" attachments and detachments. Success and happiness in life is directly correlated to a human's ability to navigate through these emotional attachments and detachments.

What perplexes you most about humans and shedding?

I am shocked that there is no formal school for shedding. To me, if you had to deal with something continuously from birth to death, doesn't it make sense to know how to deal with it? But where do most humans learn? Are they required to take a SHEDDING 101 course in high school? I've observed that most humans never learn how to shed in a healthy way. They watch others like parents, teachers, bosses and friends, who may or may not have developed the healthiest coping skills.

What causes humans to SHED?

CHANGE is the biggest catalyst. So whether it is birth or death, marriage or divorce, loss of job or getting a new job, ending a relationship or starting a new relationship, financial hardship or financial gain, getting sick or getting well, life is all about change. And change is about shedding. And shedding is all about letting go of the old to take on the new.

Lizards remind us how important detachment is for survival. If a lizard didn't detach its tail, it will most likely die. Sometimes it is necessary for humans to separate themselves from others or things that may ultimately destroy or inhibit their growth. As leaders, sometimes it is necessary to SHED things or even people in our organization that are inhibiting the health and growth of our business.

In your observation of humans, what is the biggest barrier to shedding?

Fear. A staggering 95% of humans indicate that fear is the number one reason that they don't passionately live life.

How can humans move past the fear?

Courage. Courage is having fear and moving forward anyway.

Fear + Action = Courage

What are the three biggest fear based questions that executives and business leaders need to be able to respond to when dealing with any change in an organization?

1. Why do I have to change? I like what I am doing now.

2. Do I have the necessary skills and talents to deal with the change you are requiring of me?

3. Are you going to need me anymore?

Why do lizards self-amputate their tails?

Lizards self amputate their tails for protection. When a predator comes, the lizard snaps his tail, it detaches and falls off. The tail continues to wriggle for several minutes which holds the attention of the predator while the now tail-less lizard makes its escape. Believe it or not, but lizards will actually grow a new tail!

What can business leaders learn from a lizard's self-amputation?

Lizards remind us how important detachment is for survival. If a lizard didn't detach its tail, it will most likely die. Sometimes it is necessary for humans to separate themselves from others or things that may ultimately destroy or inhibit their growth. As leaders, sometimes it is necessary to SHED things or even people in our organization that are inhibiting the health and growth of our business.

What is your biggest piece of advice for humans?

"In times of change, those who shed will grow and prosper; those who refuse to shed will find themselves well-equipped for an organization (and life) that no longer exists."

SHED OR YOU'RE DEAD®!
What do you need to SHED today?

Kathy B. Dempsey is author of Shed or You're Dead™: 31 Unconventional Strategies for Growth and Change, (Writers Digest International Book Award.) Kathy and her partner, Lenny the Lizard, help organizations "shed" whatever is holding them back and ignites groups to visualize the possibilities. Get proven strategies for your personal and professional success at www.KeepShedding.com

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