

I Couldn't Make Sense of the Cents

Danielle Artale

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Have you ever been the “laughingstock”? (See the definition below.) Use it in a sentence.
2. What happens to you when you are trying to learn something, and the person teaching you is impatient or rude?

In 2007, I got a job as a hostess at a diner in Brooklyn N.Y. When I started my two weeks of training I felt humiliated. I didn't understand coins and their value. The person who was training me

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was very rude and made me feel overwhelmed. She yelled at me saying, “It’s not that hard. How do you not know how to give change back?”

One day, the bill for a customer came to \$35.65, and I had to give back \$4.35. I didn't have a problem giving back bills, but I was struggling with the cents. I now know that I could have given the customer three dimes and one nickel or a quarter and a dime.

Laughingstock (n):



someone who is ridiculed, laughed at, or made fun of.

But at the time, I didn't know how to calculate the math quickly and efficiently. Also, the rude trainer increased my anxiety.

For those two weeks of training I was the laughingstock at that place, and everyone was

treating me as if I was incompetent. The boss ended up firing me and he deducted my pay.

Looking back at this experience, I've learned to take my time and make sure I have the right cents that I need. I practiced at home by creating different values with coins. For example, I figured out how many ways I could make \$0.55 cents with coins and which way would use the least amount of coins. I also would try to predict which coins I would receive back from the cashier as he or she gave me my change.

Now that I'm much older I can definitely say I understand the concept of coins and their values. One strategy I use is to start with the largest coin that is less than or equal to the value needed and work down to the smallest coin value as necessary.

I will make sure that my son will never feel the way I felt. I will make sure my son understands the concept of coins and their values. I will use actual coins or play coins to practice counting values. I have also given him a piggy bank. As we put coins into the piggy bank, we add the values of each coin.

AFTER YOU READ: Use real or fake money to practice making change. Try the strategies that Danielle mentions in her article. See p. 54 for another change-making strategy.



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