

3 Types of Deprivation Keeping You From Intimacy With Christ

The enemy will utilize any weapon afforded him to keep an addict trapped in his addiction. One of his most powerful weapons against us is deprivation.

Deprivation is a state that an addict keeps himself in which deprives him from having legitimate needs met. An addict will often have several areas of deprivation in his or her life. This is an essential element to identify for a healthy recovery.

Deprivation can sometimes push the addict deeper into their addiction. Because their needs are not being met, they believe they deserve to act out. This is one of the ways the addict stays in pain, so he or she can rationalize his or her acting out behavior. This is a subtle area you want to address early in recovery; otherwise you will be in pain, which is the beginning of the addiction cycle.

Although there are more ways of deprivation, in this article, I will outline three of the biggest. We will look at deprivation and learn how to prevent it so that recovery can be much more successful. (The full list of ways addicts deprive themselves can be found in my book, *Recovery for Everyone*.)

Social Deprivation

When an addict isolates himself or herself from others, it is social deprivation. An extreme case would be someone who has no friends and plods through life with his or her addiction. This usually happens in a later stage of the addiction. Most addicts who do this have low social skills because their

social and emotional needs are being met only by their addiction. Social deprivation will keep you from having friends and getting your needs met by people. It robs you of good feelings about yourself and keeps you in a state of constant pain.

Social isolation can be a way of life for some. I have clients who never developed socially because of their addiction. It is necessary for them to work hard in this area of their recovery so that they will not be socially deprived and remain in the cycle of using addictive behaviors to compensate for this loss.

Spiritual Deprivation

Many addicts have difficulty spiritually because it is necessary to be intimate and to have a spiritual relationship with God. God is not afraid to interact with us. However, we may feel we should be afraid to interact with him. The guilt and shame of where they have been or what they have done makes it difficult for some addicts to relate to God in an intimate way.

Religion is easy for the addict to maintain because it serves as their front to keep others from questioning their lifestyle. Spiritual deprivation can leave the addict feeling alone and disconnected from others. This deprivation often makes the addict question what he or she is supposed to do, and even why he or she is here. This deprivation is important to work on in recovery because otherwise, the addict can say, "God doesn't want me" or "God can't use me."

These are rationalizations. If you believe these rationalizations, you can disconnect because there are no consequences for your behavior. You won't have to face a loving God who grieves at your underdevelopment, pain and abuses. You won't be able to sense His love and compassion because of your spiritual deprivation.

This is important to look at as you go through your recovery. As one person said, "God hasn't moved; we did." Don't fall into the trap of spiritual deprivation. Spiritual deprivation can be a way to rationalize addictive behavior.

Love Deprivation

Being deprived of love is a painful experience. Because of their core belief, *If you knew me, you wouldn't love me*, most addicts don't believe they are lovable. Sometimes they loathe themselves. When someone doesn't feel lovable and has convinced themselves they are not lovable, when real love comes around, they discount it.

A few years into our marriage, after a discussion with my wife one night, I asked her if she loved me. When she said she did, it was the first time I genuinely realized that she loved me. Though she had married me and we had a good marriage, I just couldn't let myself believe she loved me.

Such deprivation can keep addicts in trouble. If we don't believe we are genuinely being loved by others (whether family, friends, boyfriends or girlfriends), we keep ourselves empty, even if others try to pour gallons and gallons of love into us: we've got the door closed. No matter how much love is around us, as long as our door is closed, we can't experience it. Without experiencing it, we don't believe it is true. Once we come to that conclusion, we are in a lot of pain because we are living without love.

Living without love is lonely, boring and can be painful. These feelings and experiences lead us to a point of deprivation where we say, "Nobody cares, and I don't either." In response, addicts abandon themselves to their addiction. They do whatever the addiction pleases because in their addiction, they can believe they are loved. In the altered state or fantasy world, they have conditioned themselves to believe they are loved unconditionally. This has nothing to do

with reality.

Importance of Deprivation Knowledge

The reason deprivation is so important is because unawareness blinds many addicts. This blindness sets them up for a great amount of pain. When they are in that overwhelming sense of pain without knowing what they are feeling, they get confused. In that confusion, their addiction becomes the way out. The addict feels entitled to act out and is tempted to do so. Then he or she is filled with guilt and shame from the consequences of the behavior, which sets them up again in the addiction cycle.

The deception of deprivation is that if you stay in pain in major areas of your life, you will tend to believe the deception of negative rationalizations: *You deserve it, nobody cares, you're not loved anyway*. These are all lies, but you can't see this early in recovery because you have believed them for so many years. I can say now that I know I am loved and I don't have to hurt myself or my family, or be a victim. You can too.

Look at this deprivation early in your recovery because the blindsiding effect of your deprivation can hurt you. Identify it, take responsibility for it and make a plan. Get accountable to the plan, and you will find yourself in a better place.

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