

These 4 Forms of Neglect Can Inflict Serious Damage on Your Children

Our culture is finally recognizing neglect as equally damaging as the traumas and abandonments that we have already discussed. Neglect is defined as the parents' irresponsibility for the child's development in any area.

Spiritual Neglect: Spiritual neglect is an absence of spiritual information and development. A child who is spiritually neglected often is not encouraged to connect with the concept of God, and discussion about God may be totally absent from the home. This can leave a child feeling incomplete. Spiritual neglect can cause a child to feel unaccountable to God or even to himself.

Physical Neglect: Not having physical needs met can set the child up for pain that will eventually need medication. Forms of physical neglect can include a child being humiliated by others because he or she does not have appropriate attire for school, not getting enough food to eat or not receiving adequate nutrition.

It can be in the form of being physically abandoned by the parents for several days at a time. A physically neglected child can be deprived of necessary medical treatment. These physical neglects can be just as traumatizing as some of the physical abuses, and in some cases, both neglects and abuses are occurring at the same time. The combination of neglect and abuse only compound the pain many addicts experienced growing up.

Emotional Neglect: The following is a metaphor that is useful in understanding what emotional neglect can do, especially in one's early development.

I believe the human being has a sponge inside that needs water on a regular basis. This sponge is their individuality, personhood and the way they see themselves. The water the sponge needs is approval, praise, encouragement and affirmation. Many who have grown up in dysfunctional families can quickly conclude that their sponge was never watered. They have a sense of emotional deprivation. Their sponge just got drier and drier because they didn't know how to ask for their needs to be met.

They were not the adult in the situation. Now, as an adult, there is an internal ache in their inner being, and it stems from the emotional neglect. One or both parents may have been distant or emotionally absent. Recovery can actually be the very first experience they have in receiving praise, affirmation from someone. Everyone needs to hear praise, affirmation and encouragement—and we don't need to be ashamed of this need.

If you were emotionally neglected, as you move along in your recovery, you will realize that you don't need to be ashamed that you need to receive emotional support and encouragement. The dryness inside that needs to be medicated in your addiction has been set up early in life.

Sexual Neglect: American literature has little to say about sexual neglect, even though it is a very common phenomenon. Many of us have experienced growing up in a family where we received little or no sexual information from our parents. Research shows that most sexual information adults received when they were children came from peers who knew just as little about sex as they did.

Sexual neglect is the old rule where we don't talk about it even though most are experiencing it. Sexual neglect can breed confusion and unnatural inquiry while trying to identify and relate to an expression of our own sexuality.

One sex addict said that he grew up where sex was a dirty and bad thing, and you were to save it for the one you love. This is quite an ironic message: The person you love the most, you give the most disgusting gift to. This is a message that many of us received in our growing-up years.

Others reported learning from other sources. Some have said they received pornography as their sexual education from one of their parents. The bottom line in these situations is, someone who is deprived of sexual information has only their own childlike investigative procedures to solve their internal development problems.

It is very important in recovery to gain back appropriate information a person has been deprived of earlier in life—even though many addicts may think they have a lot of information. Sexual neglect can set an addict up to medicate the absence in their development. If pain goes untreated over time, it will become more intense and will drive an addict to find solace somewhere.

These psychological issues can be the primary cause of an addiction for some, and for others, it can be a secondary cause. I believe the psychological aspects of addiction are very important for each addict to consider and investigate during their recovery journey.

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