

Stepping Out of Denial

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions, compulsive behaviors and tendency to do the wrong things, that our lives had become unmanageable.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. Romans 7:18 (NIV)



Reality Check: Check all that apply:

I need help. *I am not God.*

I am powerless over my addictions

...my compulsive behaviors

...and my tendency to do the wrong things

My life is unmanageable.

...my life is painful

...I need help.

...that's why I'm here!



What is Denial?

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1. A _____ or _____ to believe the truth.
2. An entirely _____ system of _____.
3. A _____ to self protection, preservation or being _____ that overrules reality.

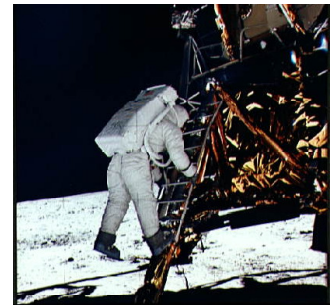
Denial or “Coping Skills”

As a child, I learned and maintained one of these primary coping skills:

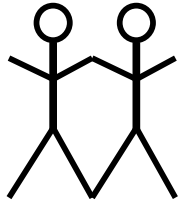
- I _____.
- I _____.
 - I buried it or covered it up.
 - I literally and physically fled.
- I _____.

One small step out of Denial

*If there is pain in my life, then the _____ is...
there is _____ in my _____ and it is likely there
for a _____.*



Between Friends



Pair up with someone and discuss:

Which “coping skills” did I use most in my pre-adult years?

Which “coping skills” do I use most today?

What Denial Looks Like¹

1. _____ **DENIAL:** pretending my problems and/or painful memories don't _____
2. _____ **IZING:** acknowledging a problem, wound or memory, but refusing to see how greatly it has _____ me or its _____ to my present pain and relational dysfunction.

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¹ Various counseling and recovery ministries have their own version of various forms of denial. The labels or terms used here have been borrowed from the web site of CAIP {Community Alcohol Information Program} and the descriptions enhanced by some of Neil Anderson's works and my own ministry experience.

3. _____ **IZING**: making _____ to justify my behavior about my wound, actions or drug of choice.
4. _____ **IZING** or _____ **IZING**: dealing with problems/ memories at a general or intellectual level and resisting becoming _____ or searching a bit deeper.
5. _____ (also called projecting): recognizing a problem or hurtful memory but maintaining that the _____ for my current pain/behavior lies somewhere else, and not with me.
6. _____: changing the subject, telling a joke or “tuning out” when coming too close to facing a memory or problem that is felt to be threatening.
7. _____: cutting deals or setting _____ for when things will be right to deal with the problem.
8. _____: ignoring the situation, or being its victim.
9. _____ (also known as “attacking”): when a person becomes _____ or unpleasantly irritable when the area of his/her woundedness or drug of choice is addressed, scaring or threatening people away from discussing it.

God’s Thoughts on Denial

Denial is a matter of _____.

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...the god of this age [satan] has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the light of the gospel [good news] and the message of freedom being poured out upon them by our Higher Power, Jesus Christ. [a loose paraphrase of 2 Cor. 2:4]

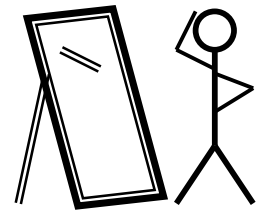
The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives... - Jeremiah 17:9-10 (NLT)

The Impact of Denial on My Life

1. Living in denial can _____ my emotions.
2. Denial can leave me in a constant state of _____.
3. Denial can force me into _____:
4. Denial can leave me with a _____ heart.
Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts... Hebrews 3:8 (NIV)
5. Denial creates too many _____ for _____ / _____ !

Further Reflection:

The greatest struggle, issue or pain in my life right now is...

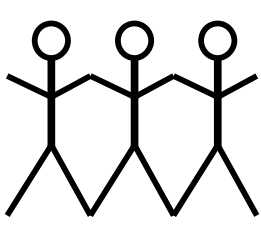


My favorite form of denial is...

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My back up form of denial is...

The truth or lesson that impressed me most about tonight's teaching was...

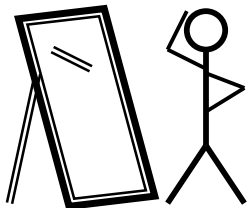
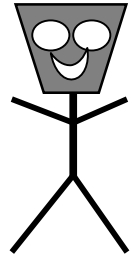


the small group experience

Behind the Mask: Please introduce yourself to the group this way:

My name is _____ and I'm at Freedom Session because I struggle with...

The last time I used, acted out, rescued, attempted to control or blamed others for my problem(s) was...



Session Reflections

1. Go around the circle and share your answers to the four questions you were asked at the end of the teaching time [**Further Reflections**, previous page]. If your group is larger than 5 or time is short, share in groups of 3-4.

Note: your favorite and back up forms of denial are the techniques you are using to avoid facing and dealing with your struggle, pain or issues.

2. The sixth denial technique we learned that people tend to use is “diversion” – *changing the subject, telling a joke or “tuning out” when coming close to facing something painful in our lives.* Are you one? If so, admit it to the group and give an example of your favorite means of diversion.

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**Step
Stuff**

3. Question 1, in last week's “*On Your Own*” homework assignment, asked you about previous attempts you have made to become healthy and how these past experiences might block your current success in Freedom Session. Share the answers you wrote down with the group. After everyone has shared, brainstorm, as a group, how being part of your small group might help each other rise above past attempts or failures.
4. Question 3 walked you through 12 common, unhealthy behavior characteristics. *What did you learn about yourself by completing this exercise? Any surprises?*
5. In groups of 2-3, share your top three unhealthy behavior characteristics. If time permits, give examples.



On Your Own:

Taking Steps towards Freedom

1. Look back over the three-fold Freedom Session definition of denial on page 20. According to this definition, what are you in denial about?

2. What flaw(s), character defect(s) or weakness(es) about you do you have the most trouble admitting or accepting?

Why?

3. What flaw(s), character defect(s) or weakness(es) do people who know you mention most often? Write it down.

People say I am...

Is there any truth to what they are saying? yes no

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If there is truth to it, why do you have such a hard time accepting or embracing this truth?

4. Out of the three “coping skills” mentioned on page 21, which did you use most?

fight

flight

accommodate

Think of a recent stressful or painful situation where you used this coping skill. *What happened and how well did your avoidance of the issue serve you in the long run?*

5. Denial is often linked to the “family secret” everyone knew about but no one talked about. *In your family, what was it?*

How did people try to protect it?

6. How do you tend to handle pain and disappointment today?

What connection can you see to this and denial?

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7. Most of us use a number of denial forms. Re-read the different forms of denial [pages 21-22] and select the three you use the most. Then, for each of them, write out a specific example of how you have used it to avoid pain or the truth.

Denial preference #1: _____

Example:

Denial preference #2: _____

Example:

Denial preference #3: _____

Example:

Which of these three “denial preferences” have you used in the past week? Explain.

8. In what ways are you now starting to step out of denial and face reality?

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9. For you, what is the most difficult part of doing the “*On Your Own*” homework assignment?

10. Think about the people in your small group. Who strikes you as the type who keeps their word? Who do you think you could count on to give you a call each week to make sure you come back next week with your homework completed.

Write down two names of potential accountability partners: _____ & _____.

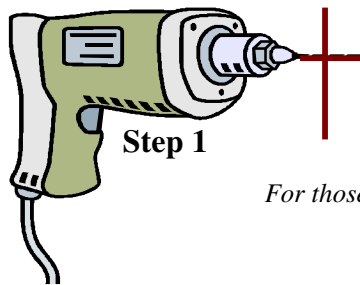
Sobriety Check: check off the days you refrained from using alcohol/drugs, the abuse of food, withdrawal, fantasy, pornography/immoral sex/masturbation, rescuing, etc.

My one week “cake”



___ Sunday ___ Monday ___ Tuesday ___ Wednesday ___ Thursday ___ Friday ___ Saturday

Note: this “sobriety check” is for your benefit and will help you refrain from indulging in those habits/activities you tend to turn to for escape, comfort and to ease pain/pressure in your life. The best times to do your Step work are the times you are tempted to run or attempt to escape emotional pain.



Powertools

For those who are really serious, pick a “powertool” and memorize it!

“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”

Romans 7:18 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us.

Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)

“For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

new this week

The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives...

Jeremiah 17:9-10 (NLT)

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