Breaking Through Denial

Time to Accept the Truth

NewHeart Ministries

Sand? A Mask? Disneyland?

"Oh, get your head out of sand"… "Get real"…
"It's a nice place to visit, but you can't live there"

Has anyone ever said things like that to you? If so, they were telling you that you were in denial about a particular situation, attitude or belief.

Everyone moves in and out of denial as a normal part of dealing with life on a daily basis:

- ***"I'm not overweight. I'm just too short."***
- ***"How old are you? 39 and holding."***

Denial is a psychological process that we use to protect ourselves from pain, or the fear of events we are not ready to accept. Surviving family members will often respond to the information of the tragic loss of a loved one with the words: *"No, it's not true. This just can't be happening."* But, it is true. It is happening.

For the chemically dependent person, denial is the way the mind operates to avoid the painful recognition that they are in a self-destructive relationship with drugs and alcohol.

Alcohol and drugs has caused you many problems, but you may not see the truth clearly. You may not even recognize the amount of alcohol and drugs you use. You may blame the physical symptoms and emotional troubles you are experiencing on other things.

You are in denial.

Portions of the above material have been excerpted from Denial, The Change Companies, 2002

Look at the four photos above. Consider what each photo says about denial. Write out your responses below.

Process with your group:

- Which of the above photos best represents your understanding of denial?
- Which of the above photos best represents your denial? Why?

Your System of Denial

Our System of Denial is like a wall of defense we have built to protect our addiction. At strategic points around that wall, we have placed "warriors" who defend our use of our "drug of choice." The majority of those "warriors" are our own psychological defense mechanisms that we have put in place to deflect any truth that may try to penetrate our denial. However, sometimes our families play a key role in unwittingly defending our addiction by choosing to "love, accept and forgive" instead of confronting us with the truth.

Process with your group the following:

- Is the model, "Your System of Denial", depicted above accurate?
  What is it about the model that you believe accurately depicts denial?
- In what way(s) has your family been "denial warriors," defending your denial about your addiction?
- What other "denial warriors" can you identify that have served to defend your denial of your addiction?

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Denial Factoids

Denial in addiction is particularly problematic because the downside of drinking (or drugging) plus denial and driving can be fatal for the substance abuser and others. Other health risks associated with denial in addiction include heart disease, lung and liver disease, overdosing and brain damage.

Drug-Alcohol Rehab.com

According to the results of a 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, of the 5.0 million people who needed but did not receive treatment in 2001, an estimated 377,000 reported that they felt they needed treatment for their drug problem. This includes an estimated 101,000 who reported that they made an effort but were unable to get treatment and 276,000 who reported making no effort to get treatment.

"We have a large and growing denial gap when it comes to drug abuse and dependency in this country," said John Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy.

Refusing to accept a painful reality that alters the perception of ourselves is a psychological defense called denial. As human beings, we may use denial to protect ourselves from knowledge, insight or awareness that threatens our self-esteem, mental or physical health, or security.

Hazelden

However, even though denial is the subconscious, sincere attempt at self-protection, it often just leaves us at greater risk instead of providing safety. While we engage in the cycle of denial about our drug abuse, addictions tend to worsen. Personal consequences and relationship problems increase, and we find ourselves with financial, health, and psychological repercussions to drug addiction. Additionally, the same denial that encompasses our drug addiction often invades other parts of our psyches and lives. We may find ourselves using the same measure of denial to avoid our own emotional pain, past traumas, or even current abuse we're suffering from. Until these areas of denial are broken, we will never be truly healed or truly free.

Passages Malibu

Which of the four factoids listed above is the most important? Why?

Type A Denial

Type B Denial

Type A Denial

Type A denial is when a person sees, understands, and knows that they have a definite problem. When confronted about the problem they flat out deny it, knowing that it is true.

This type of denial is outright dishonesty or lying.
Azure Acres Recovery Center

Type B Denial

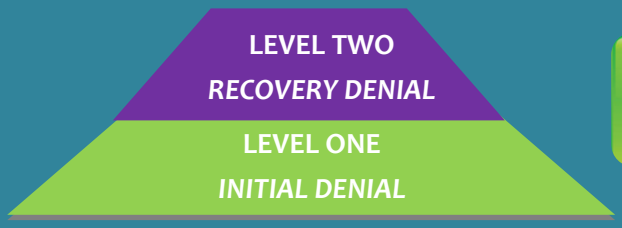
Type B denial is when a person is either partially or totally blind to a problem that they have. Through a hundred forms of self-deception, rationalization, justification and excuse making, a person can actually believe that they do not have a problem, when everyone around them sees this it is obvious. This type of denial comes from being honestly dishonest or by blindness.
Azure Acres Recovery Center

What has been your experience with Type A Denial?

How long were you in Type B Denial before you were willing to take the initial steps of recovery?

Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me
Psalm 43:3a (NIV)

Levels of Denial



Level One Denial

Level One Denial occurs when everyone around us is aware of the destructive consequences of our use of our "drug of choice," but yet, we continue to minimize the seriousness of our addiction and offer a variety of excuses for our bad behavior.

Level Two Denial

Level Two Denial occurs when we have been clean and sober for period of time. A little more insidious than Level One, this type of denial can develop without us even realizing the process is underway.

The issue is complacency and a cavalier attitude toward unhealthy relationships and recreational activities. As a result, we become less intentional about pursuing our healing and recovery. We begin hanging out with old "drinkin' and druggin'" friends, telling ourselves that we're O.K. now and we can handle it.

What level of denial would you say you are experiencing right now?

Why is Level One Denial so dangerous?

What is the issue "on point" in Level Two Denial?

What do I need to do to guard against slipping into Level Two Denial?

Process the following with your group:

- Which level of denial presents the greatest challenge in recovery? Why?
- How can we help each other break through Level Two Denial?

The Language of Denial

Obrigado Merci Gracias Danke Tack

Obrigado, Merci, Gracias, Danke, and Tack: five very different words that mean the same thing: Thank you!

Likewise, denial has a language of its own. Though the words and phrases are very different, they all indicate the speaker is in denial.

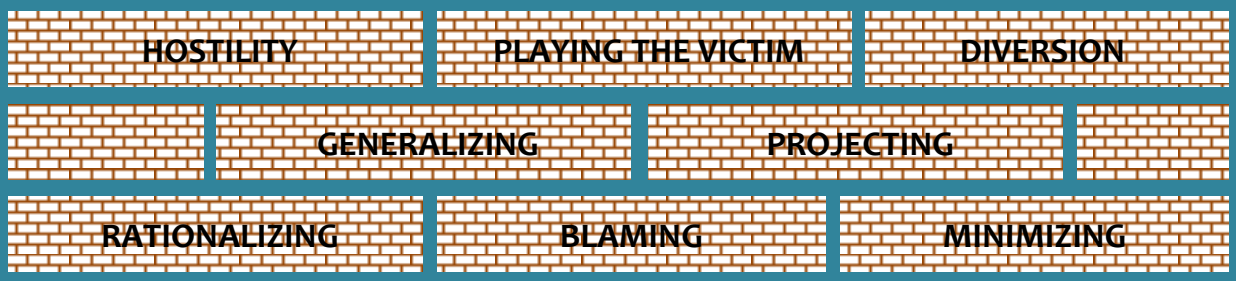
- ***"Sure, I may have problems, but they're not because of my drinking."***
- ***"I'm not hurting anyone."***
- ***"So I like to party a little on the weekends. So what?"***
- ***"I can quit any time."***
- ***"If you were under the pressure I am under, you would use too."***
- ***"I use to get away from the tension in the home. It's just overwhelming sometimes."***
- ***"C'mon, we all have unhealthy habits. You eat too much. I drink too much. So what?"***
- ***"You wanna talk about someone out of control? Take a look at Jim. Now there's a guy who's in trouble."***

What defense have you used most often?

What is your "Language of Denial?"

At what point did you realize that your "Wall of Denial" had imprisoned you?

The Wall of Denial



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TRUTH **Truth** truth

What is Truth?

That question was asked over 2,000 years ago by Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, as Jesus stood before him hours before His death on a cross. Since Plato and Socrates, philosophers have wrestled with this profound and provocative question.

Consider this question for yourself: what is the truth about my using? What is the truth about healing and wholeness? What is the truth about freedom?

Truth is defined as "something factual: the thing that corresponds to reality." How close to reality are your thoughts about drugs and alcohol… about your freedom to use?

Speaking to a group of religious leaders one day, Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The "truth" of which Jesus was speaking was Himself – "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) – and the Word of God (what we know today as the Bible).

Breaking Through Denial will require you to understand and submit to three (3) important truths:

1. The truth about your use of alcohol and drugs.
2. Jesus Himself
3. The truth about lasting healing and sustained freedom from alcohol and drugs.

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Proverbs 14:12 (NIV)

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." | John 10:10b

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then…" | Galatians 5:1a

The Truth About Your Using

Denial positions us in a very difficult place behind a wall from which we fought off all efforts of friends and family to speak to us about *The Truth of Our Using*.

"So, how do I find my way out? How do I breakthrough denial and begin a journey of healing and wholeness?"

Stop…Look…Listen

- Stop using now
  "Denial cannot be overcome until the drinking and using ends." (Denial | The Change Companies)
- Look for the person(s) you trust to tell you the truth.
  - Family?
    Maybe. But, often family members of the addicted are caught up in their own denial: they are unwilling to admit that the one they love is a drug addict or alcoholic.
  - Friends?
    If you enjoy the quality of friendships wherein they care enough about you to tell you the truth, then ask them to tell you what they see in your use of alcohol and drugs.
  - New Heart Healing and Recovery Group
    Those sitting around the table in your group have "been there." They know the truth about using and denial. Listen to them.

What is the truth about your use of alcohol and drugs? _____

_____

_____

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_____

Whom do you trust to speak truth to you about your use of alcohol and drugs? _____

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_____

Ask your group to help you tonight:

- "What do you see going on in my life tonight?"
- "Will you help me? Help me:
  - See what I cannot see
  - Break through my denial"
- "Please pray for me tonight"

The Truth About Jesus

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
John 10:10b

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone and the new has come!"
2 Corinthians 5:17

"I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you."
Ezekiel 36:26

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us
Ephesians 3:20

The "Higher Power"

The Gospel of John identifies Jesus (the Word) as the One who was in the beginning (at creation); the One who created all things (in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit). Jesus is the Higher Power.

The Holy Spirit through John goes on to say that Jesus in the One and Only begotten of the Father. (John 1:14). There has never been, nor will there ever be anyone like Jesus. He is the Higher Power.

Savior, Healer, Friend

In the Book of Romans in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul explains we need a Savior: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). We all long for a relationship with God. Yet, our best efforts to try to achieve peace with God (freedom from guilt and shame) fall short. Romans 6:23 tells us that the consequences of continuing to live selfishly, apart from God, is death…eternal death. But, the good news is that Jesus made a way for us to have the relationship with God we've longed for: a relationship marked with His presence now and one that will last for eternity.

Look at each of the four images above. Read the corresponding scripture under each image.

What is that you believe to be true about Jesus?

Process with your group:

What does it mean to turn control of your life over to the Higher Power: Jesus Christ?

Are there any in the group ready to surrender their lives to Jesus?

The Truth About Jesus
(continued)

Savior, Healer, Friend

In the three-and-a-half years of His ministry on earth, Jesus healed those who were blind, lame, oppressed by demonic powers and afflicted with chronic illnesses. Jesus can heal you.

Look at the promises He makes to us:

- "O Lord, my God, I called to you for help and you healed me." | Psalm 30:2
- "(Jesus) who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases" | Psalm 103:3
- "He sent forth His word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave." | Psalm 107: 20
- "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." | Psalm 147:3
- "I have seen his ways, but I will heal him. I will guide him and restore comfort to him." | Isaiah 57:18

Ask Him to heal you.

Jesus is the Higher Power. He is the Savior. He is the Healer. But, as amazing as it may sound, He longs to be your friend. He told His disciples, "I no longer call you servants…I call you friends." (John 15:15).

Become a disciple – a follower; a learner – of Jesus. Become an intimate friend with the Creator of the universe.

How?

Pray: ask Him to come into your life (John 3). Ask Him to forgive you for living selfishly apart from Him. Ask Him to be your Savior and Lord of your life.

Which of the five (5) promises listed on your left is the most meaningful to you? Why?

Process with your group:

- What does it mean to be an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ?
- How does being a disciple of Jesus affect my use of drugs and alcohol?

The Truth About Lasting Freedom

Anyone…Anything…for Awhile

Most of us can do just about anything for awhile. We can even achieve "clean and sober" for awhile. But, we are not ready to settle for "awhile." We hope and pray you are not willing to settle for something less than the lasting freedom from the drugs and alcohol.

God's highest and best for you is liberty (freedom) and fullness of joy (2 Corinthians 3:17).

How long have you maintained your sobriety?

Are you happy with that measure of sobriety? If not, why not?

Three Essentials

Is lasting healing and sustainable freedom from drugs and alcohol possible?

Absolutely!

However, there are three (3) essential values – three things that must be a vital part of your life – from here forward:

1. Worship | Download worship music into your MP3 and soak your mind and heart in it.
2. Relationship | Get connected and stay connected to New Heart and a local church
3. The Word of God | Read the Word daily. Take time to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

Process with your group:

Are there other things necessary for lasting healing and sustainable freedom besides the Three Essentials? Like what?

Are you connected to New Heart and a local church? Which one?

the Truth and the Issue

Then, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free
John 8:32

THE TRUTH

Stop and think about the truth you discovered as you processed through this material.
Record what you believe is the truth about:

- Your Use of Alcohol and Drugs

- Jesus

- Lasting Healing and Sustainable Freedom

THE ISSUE

Stop and think about the issues that are keeping you locked inside your Wall of Denial. What keeps you there? List as many as you can identify:

Are there issues that are keeping you from becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ? What are those issues?

NewHeart Ministries