

TRULINCS 23038076 - LUMMUS, ALLAN CRAIG - Unit: BAS-H-A

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SUBJECT: Denial
DATE: 04/29/2012 12:25:29 PM

MP 37 Denial 4.27.12

Another component of the first step* (of the twelve step program) is denial. Denial comes in many forms but for me they are primarily three: blame, downplaying and "I can handle it."

*SAA Step 1 "We have admitted we are powerless over our addictive sexual behaviors, and that our lives have become unmanageable."

A very old pattern is to blame my situation for my behavior. I am me because of my parents or later my partners. Blame reached a peak as I became entwined with R. Oh poor me, If R could just get his act together I can get mine. It was convenient way to not deal with my issues. Why was I staying in a relationship that was not satisfying to me? Did I not deserve to be happy? There are lots of questions I could have asked that would have redirected my thinking in productive ways. But I just wallowed in self pity. Oh wow is me.

Later with C, again my own unhappiness with my life could have been a direct focus of my attention. But I kept my focus on the marriage and C. Looking for examples of how she was causing my emptiness. My addiction to the internet, alcohol and later porn and chat were just an extension of this outward looking focus. Each addiction provided distraction from my own conscious awareness of me. They were daytime dreams I could float in.

Now there were objective issues to deal with in both my relationships. But as long as I did not address my own contribution to the situation by my mental and behavioral patterns, then neither relationship were going to function. I was waiting for them to change so I can change. Therefore, denying my role in my static life.

In addition to blaming others for my unhappiness, I assumed the responsibility for the happiness of my partners. In some ways it is the other side of the same coin. I assumed that R's happiness depended on me. I stayed in an unhappy relationship so that he could be happy. I felt guilty for thinking of me. Isn't that what a Christian should do, give himself for his friend?

Other aspects of denial were less prevalent in me, but still present. One is downplaying the significance of the behavior. I told myself that I was not creating the porn like others. Or that I was not touching teens or younger. My behavior was not like those other people. This distancing served to separate me from the "bad" actors. You hear that allot in prison. Your crime is not as bad as their crime. Creating two classes (worthy and unworthy) helps to place those in the worthy class above the others. Prisoners mirror societies fetish with creating a unredeemable category of humans. I practiced this self delusion as well.

The other form of denial I used was to reassure myself with the knowledge that I could handle it. I could handle this walk on the wild side. It is only an escape for a short period and I can take care of the needed tasks like work, husband, dad, etc. Everyone needs a little break right. I can juggle the various balls and keep them in the air. I am a multitasker. I can manage it. But of course, I was not managing it. My life was a shambles: disconnected from my wife, son, not performing adequately at work.

Of course it is good not take responsibility for what is other peoples issues. But we need to see our situation objectively. Determine what is our responsibility (something that we can directly change like our behavior or how we think) and what is not our responsibility (our feelings and emotions as well as other peoples feelings and emotions). This is the heart of the serenity prayer that twelve-step programs say every meeting. The irony is that I have practiced the opposite for twenty years. The Serenity prayer "God grant me the serenity to accept that this I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

I tried to change the things I couldn't (my feelings and emotions as well as my partner's feelings and emotions) and left what I could change to others (my behaviors and thoughts in support of my own happiness). No wonder I was so miserable. How delusional! Our feelings and emotions are not eliminatible. We can only harm ourselves by repressing or denying them. All we can do is be present with and through them while they arise and then fall away. On the other hand, our thoughts and feelings are within our sphere of influence. I should take responsibility for acting and thinking in my best interests. Also, when relating to others, even our most significant other, we need to all them to rule their own experience (just like we should expect them to give us the respect to rule our own). The best we can do is love them and act in ways that support my own best interests.

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In my own case, I took ownership not only of my feelings and emotions, but my partners as well. I set myself up for failure all the way around. My failure caused me to hide behind my walled heart, alternating between two hopeless positions: feeling responsible for everyone's happiness and then pushing any feeling and emotion away. The twelve-step program asks us to begin with wisdom. Discern what we can and do it. Discern what we cannot and don't do it. (Which interestingly are the first two of the three components of Buddhism according to the Buddha. The last is clarify your mind.) The past couple of years I have seen a noticeable change in how I think about my life. Now that I have spent more time changing what I can and not trying to change what I cannot, I am much happier, hopeful, and experience real change in how I behave and think. Blessed be.

allan lummus

mindful prisoner

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