

Denial is When One Actually Can't

The following is a result of my personal experience with Denial and the consequences of living in this state. It also is written from the direct experience of acquiring insight and knowledge about my mind and as a result activating my brain's ability to work itself into a more moderate degree of Denial. I was born with a learning disability in 1945, during a period before there was any interactive science in regards to this situation. Anyway the term Learning Disability actually was coined in 1963 by Dr. Samuel Kirk.

My disability prevented me from grasping ideas and concepts unless I had been exposed to them experientially. An example from my math background. I was a capable math student up to the point of taking Algebra. When I first took algebra the $A + B = C$, being taught 100% in a non-experiential format was completely abstract and thus beyond my mind's ability to process. I suffered through Algebra 1, 2, 3, and 4 getting an F the first semester and forced to repeat it. In the second take on the course I would get a D. This meant I had to repeat it in Summer School with only through the mercy of the teacher I moved on to Algebra 2 with a C-. This happened through the course of Algebra 1 through 4. However when I entered college I took a course in Economics in which for the first time the algebra incorporated an experiential component. For Instance: $S + C = AF$ where $S = \text{Savings}$, $C = \text{Checking}$ and $AF = \text{Available Funds}$. So, yes $S + C = AF$ makes sense as $\text{Savings} + \text{Checking} = \text{Available Funds}$. Well, why didn't they start with this back in Algebra 1? Anyway suddenly with the letters having concrete meaning I was able to process the equations and determine outcomes, getting an A in the course work. Just one single variable that was missing and now included and I went from failure to success. So this disability not being defined during my pre-college school years led me and my parents, the other side of the equation, to experience a great deal of frustration, disappointment and anxiety.

I guess I was trapped culturally. There was no recognition of the possibility that I had a neurological problem that interfered with my functioning in the math environment as an abstraction. And of course there was this never ending echo repeatedly broadcasting from my parents, "You can do it if you only try," and "You can do it if you are willing to put in the effort," and "You aren't doing it because you're not trying hard enough. You got to really want it. What's wrong with you?" There was plenty wrong with me, it just wasn't definable at the time.

But can a one armed person perform a two handed task? Hmmm. What is the sound of one hand clapping? No. So why say, "You can do it if you only try," or "You can do it if you are willing to put in the effort." Probably because my parents saying it were in denial that there was something not working for me rather than me not doing the work. They couldn't or were unable to acknowledge the facts; in my case a permanent disability and the permanent effect that prevents me, the child they care for from accomplishing the task.

The same outcome of frustration occurred when I repeatedly made the effort to learn algebra, a goal that wasn't possible given my permanent disability and thus I must have also been in some state of denial. There must have been a correlation between my parents exhorting me to succeed. I must have felt tremendous pressure by their misguided encouragement to be determined to pursue an unattainable goal. Now both the one

encouraging and the one being encouraged have developed co-dependent state of denial. This state of being has further consequences.

From what little I have learned, the person being driven to repeatedly attempt an unattainable goal they were unwittingly preventing their brain from making the appropriate compensation to reduce the possibility of greater damage caused by the disability. This state of ignorance created a further cascading series of consequences that affected their existing relationships.

The disabled person may unwittingly insist that the people in their social circle support and thus reinforce their denial if they want to stay in a relationship with the person. The person being unconscious of their state of denial will feel undermined by any one of their friends who makes the effort to penetrate their denial, an act of good will in response to witnessing the painful and demoralizing further frustration in the disabled person's life when what they are spending so much energy trying to achieve is in fact beyond them.

Is it really true that the goal is unachievable? If I listen to someone like Colby Bryant a basketball super star say, "If I can do it through hard work, you can too if only you believe." Well that's absurd. No matter how hard I work at being competitive enough to be drafted into the NBA let alone be a super star, being that I can only jump six inches high, well, to fall into that ridiculous illusion and it is definitely just that, an illusion, is a setup for disappointment and a deep feeling of inadequacy. However if he had said that if I work hard at my basketball skills I can definitely have fun playing as long as I enter a league with other people with my level of ability. That's completely different. I wonder why the super stars go on the public domain and make such misleading statements. I feel that their intent is good but then I guess they too must be in a state of denial of the fact that life isn't always fair.

The tragedy of denial is that, as stated above, it prevents the brain from making the appropriate compensations. The damage to the body and or the brain is real regardless of the person's denial and so they start to live in a delusional state, which prevents them from being able to properly process the situation. So, not only is there physical or cognitive damage, the denial spreads the damage into the emotional/feeling realm of the brain, all of which reinforces and strengthens the denial. This process generates an emotional handicap that causes a form of mental illness.

Of course in my situation there was no way anyone could have acknowledged the disability because in a sense, given that it was as yet undefined it actually didn't exist. I mean it didn't exist because no one knew it existed, so it couldn't really be denied. Yes, years later someone finally intuited its existence and presto, Learning Disabled. Wow! So I wonder if "Denial" is even the correct word. My parents couldn't even think Learning Disabled, could they? I wonder if Denial requires being aware of it and then somehow the subconscious mind blocks its existence? Imagine my having a leg amputated and my parents telling me that if I really wanted to grow another leg I could. That would be absurd. Yeah, get a prosthesis and get up and going. That would be compensation. Hmm. Gets kind of confusing, huh?

At some point I was fortunate enough to take a course in Special Education when I was at Graduate School and I was introduced to Learning Disabilities and the different basic means a person learns: Visually, Auditorily, and Experientially. Once I was introduced to these concepts I immediately came to understand that I was an experiential

learner and that I could eventually process visual and auditory input once I had the experience, but without the experience coming first, I was hindered and blocked. I remember when I started Community College and was taking a course in Zoology I met this guy and we became friendly. One day he invited me to join his study group. I had never heard of a study group before this moment. I soon came to realize I never had been taught how to study and that the way I studied was missing some important variable, such as participating in a study group. Well, my grades from high school were about a C and once I began to study with these people my grade point in college was an A. Once I had the experience and the associated skills suddenly I was a competent student.

So social support and skills had been missing and I guess it never occurred to my parents that I would benefit from such a foundation. It wasn't introduced either in school as a primary course in education. I wonder why not? Perhaps another subtle form of Denial. What's your thoughts and opinion on this?