

## Denial of the Living Problems Behind Addiction

Notes are based on a video tape: *Dealing with Denial* with Ernie Larsen

### **Chemicals medicate pain**

15% Addiction (alcohol); 85% Living Issues (pain). If you get rid of the addiction (15%) you still have the living problems – the pain – (85%). Getting sober and staying sober is the foundation (15%) and is important to be able to deal with the living issues (85%). Once sober you need to focus on the pain.

Chemicals medicate pain and the denial is that I do not need to work as hard on the life issues causing the pain as I need to work on and pay attention to being clean and sober – that's the denial that can and will absolutely Kill You.

Greatest denial in the world is to not think that 85% of our recovery is dealing with the living issues.

There is no greater delusion in recovery (getting and staying sober) that does more damage than the denial of the living problems. Denial of the work that needs to happen after sobriety has been achieved. If all you do is take away the chemicals (alcohol) what is left? The Pain!

**Living Issues** – rate yourself from 1 to 10, (1=none and 10=strongly present) on the following issues:

1. Repressed Anger
2. Intimacy
3. Need to Control – (take responsibility for outcomes over which we have no control)
4. Fear of Rejection
5. Fear of Commitment
6. Fear of Abandonment
7. Perfectionism
8. Workaholic
9. Other (there are many other issues that could be added to the list)

If you rate high on the above traits what do you do about it? Your recovery program needs to free itself from the delusion that this is not really important. Your program needs to focus on it.

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### STEPS TO CORRECT THE LIVING ISSUES

List at the top of a piece of paper the living issue you need to deal with.

1. Issue – Workaholic (for example)
2. What have I learned is my expectation about this issue? What have I learned about my responsibility around this issue?
3. What are the most slippery people, places and times? (learn what to avoid – to keep away from)
4. What do I need to do to remedy this issue?
5. Where did the living issues come from? Need to understand.
6. What is the learning I am fighting against so that I don't repeat same cycle?
7. What is the positive behavior that I need to do on a regular basis to learn that new skill?
8. Need to keep at it on a regular basis (behavior to learn new skill)

Underneath the addiction (drinking) are the living problems. If you don't work on the living issues one or all of the following 3 things will happen (pitfalls of recovery):

1. Not working on life issues will tremendously limit the quality of sobriety (quality of life).
2. Relapse is guaranteed to happen if you do not work with the life issues. Not taking serious the life issues underlying the addiction (drinking).
3. Switching addictions – chemicals, sex, food, work or recovery itself.

### **SUMMARY**

To help resolve the living issues discuss the following 3 questions:

1. In what way is every chemically dependent person also co-dependent?
2. In what way have you used chemicals to meditate your pain?
3. What specifically is the living problem that you need to focus on in your program?

The degree of freedom and joy in our life is our own decision!