

Self Deception is Still Deception!

When I am hungry and go to the refrigerator for food, I usually know what I want, get it, prepare it, eat it, and feel satisfied. When I am avoiding something, I stand in front of my open refrigerator and mentally take inventory of the taste of each item, looking for a different kind of fix.

If I eat something then, I can't fill myself up, and keep going back for more.

I can't get enough, because food is not what I need. My problem isn't lack of food, it is something else. I just don't know what! I 'sorta, kinda' know that I am deceiving myself, but I would rather not think about it.

Eating is easier than considering something that might make me feel discouraged, ashamed, overwhelmed, angry, sad or frightened. If I let myself know what I am avoiding, I might even feel compelled to do something difficult or unpleasant to fix the problem.

Each of us has our own favorite way of avoiding unwanted information. Watching TV, smoking, alcohol abuse, surfing the Internet, overworking, shopping, gambling, (name your own if I missed it) are all convenient ways of fogging out. They provide temporary relief from facing some of the seemingly overwhelming challenges of life.

The trouble comes later; when those challenges are ignored, they grow and grow until they get too big to ignore. Drastic action may be required to fix something that needed only minor attention in the beginning, and sometimes the problem becomes unsolvable.

*The oil leak in the car that is ignored until the engine damage costs hundreds of dollars to repair;

*The manager who is too uncomfortable to talk to an employee who is doing sloppy work, until the employee alienates a valuable customer;

*The husband who doesn't have time to be with his wife until she has him served with divorce papers;

*The new business owner who doesn't want to think about how long it will take for her business to become profitable, until she can't pay her bills and loses the business;

*And, tragically, the young woman who ignores her friends' pleas to see a doctor about a rapidly growing mole, and dies of cancer two years later.

Fortunately, we can learn to tune into important problems, before they get out of hand. It takes a little practice and determination, but you can learn to use your favorite self-deceiving behavior as a signal that something is wrong instead of as a way of avoiding (discounting) the truth.

Try these tips from The Integrity Course to protect yourself from the consequences of self deception.

"Use a habit that you would like to change as a signal that tells you that you are probably discounting something.

a. Each time you have an impulse to reach for a cigarette, eat when you are not hungry, drink another cup of coffee, or automatically turn on the TV, STOP!

b. Reflect on whether there is something you do not want to feel or think about, or if there is something else you really need or want. Often you will learn that your habit helps you to distract your attention from something about yourself or others, or your situation.

c. Decide what if anything you will do with the information you have discovered, and when you will take action, if you choose to do so.

d. Decide whether or not to eat, have the cigarette, watch TV, etc.

Caution! Any process of becoming more aware of yourself takes time. You developed your habits for reasons that once made perfectly good sense to you. Changing them is a decision only you can make.

Sometimes becoming aware of hidden truths is a joyful, refreshing process that allows you to take new risks and proceed in new directions, and sometimes it is painful and frightening experience. Avoid self criticism and congratulate yourself for every bit of progress you make."

I have learned to notice when I am taking inventory of my refrigerator, or going back over and over again for food that doesn't satisfy me. Sometimes I stop and follow my own instructions. Often I find that the problem I am avoiding is easily solved. Sometimes it is too big for me to deal with immediately, and I choose to eat anyhow, to comfort myself, and postpone problem solving to another day.

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