

Playing the Victim: How the Victim Mentality is Hindering Your Sobriety

Do you often feel hopeless; like you've failed so many times that it's not even worth trying anymore? Do you frequently dwell on all the mistakes you've made and all the relationships you've lost? Maybe you just feel like your life will never be meaningful so there's no use trying to be anything or do anything.

If thoughts like this are controlling your life, you may be using self-victimization to cope with issues you feel unable to manage.

Exploring the Victim Mentality and the Role of the Victim

The victim mentality can display itself in a variety of ways. People who play the role of a victim believe everything that happens to them is completely out of their control, therefore, it is never their responsibility. They blame others when bad things happen to them and they have an extremely negative outlook on life. They are resistant to help and respond to any advice or assistance with reasons why it won't work and explanations as to why the problem is unsolvable.

Many people with a victim mentality also use passive aggressive behavior and manipulation to get what they want from others. This type of behavior is frequently seen in those who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. They will feel and act helpless to convince their loved ones and friends that their life is really as bad as they believe it is. They frequently use this behavior to manipulate loved ones into enabling their addictive behaviors by giving them money, drugs, protection, or companionship.

Playing the victim is an extremely damaging and self-defeating behavior. Individuals who do this tend to develop relationships that involve mistreatment or abuse, they reject opportunities to have fun or deny any enjoyment, and they fail to prioritize their own well-being, eventually setting themselves up for failure and pain.

Many individuals in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction are comfortable in the role of the victim, but drug and alcohol rehab programs challenge them to assume responsibility for their behaviors and take control of their lives. This requires giving up that victim role and the helplessness that comes with it and taking ownership of their lives instead.

Identifying Victim Mentality

It's not always easy to identify the behaviors of victim mentality within yourself, but to overcome self-victimization and addiction, it is necessary to identify the beliefs that fuel these behaviors.

According to WebMD, there are several characteristics and beliefs associated with the victim mindset that you can identify within your own thought patterns:

1. You believe that others are intentionally trying to hurt you. You don't consider the other person's perspective and automatically assume that they are out to get you.
2. You feel helpless. You believe the world is against you and you are powerless to change anything. As a result, you expect the worst and blame others for your problems.
3. You relive painful memories repeatedly and seek revenge. Instead of forgiving and moving on, you choose to keep those memories alive and refuse to forgive those who have harmed you in the past.

4. You refuse to accept the help of others or consider other methods for coping. You identify as a victim by refusing the help of others and assuming other coping strategies will not work. Because you gain attention, money, affection, or some other advantage by being a victim, you don't want to stop.
5. You tend to exaggerate your problems. You believe that everyone else's lives are so much easier than yours and you are the only one who experiences such extreme problems.

These five beliefs are some of the most common ones held by individuals who struggle with identifying as a victim. If you believe that a loved one is self-victimizing, here are a few questions to ask yourself that may help you identify his or her behavior:

1. Do conversations tend to revolve around their problems and issues?
2. Do they constantly say negative things about themselves?
3. Do they always seem to be miserable?
4. Do they blame others for the bad things that happen to them?
5. Do they always expect the worst?
6. Do they express the belief that the world is out to get them?

Modifying Thoughts and Beliefs to Change the Victim Mindset

Playing the victim greatly hinders any efforts towards sobriety. At a drug rehab center, counselors and therapists work with addicted individuals to identify and address the victim mentality. In doing so, people learn that while they may not be able to control everything that happens to them in life, they do control their feelings, emotions, responses, and their overall happiness, and if they continue to blame others for their unhappiness, they will never be fully focused on their sobriety.

Additionally, in rehab, people are encouraged to practice self-reflection and acknowledge that perhaps their victim mentality is a result of traumatic experiences, a need for validation, or a desire for human connection. Because of this internal reflection, individuals in recovery can learn to modify negative thoughts and beliefs about themselves with the following strategies (among others).

- Accept responsibility for past and present decisions and actions. Taking ownership of decisions, as well as the consequences of those choices, is a huge step in overcoming the victim mentality and the addictive behaviors that accompany it. Accepting responsibility empowers an individual to help themselves by using the resources, coping strategies, and skills they have learned in drug and alcohol rehab instead of using all their effort to blame others.
- Learn to accept mistakes. In order to stop being miserable, bitter, and angry, a person must accept that the people in their lives have made mistakes, and they have made mistakes too. To move forward in a life of sobriety and wellness, they must let go of these negative feelings and potentially even forgive those who have wronged them.
- Recognize self-worth. Instead of assuming that they don't deserve to live a happy life, continually repeating negative self-talk, or intentionally doing things to harm themselves, individuals in drug rehab will learn to understand their own value and self-worth, as well as the importance of self-care in recovery. In modifying these negative thoughts and beliefs about themselves, they will be empowered to let go of the victim role and accept responsibility for their lives.

Breaking the victim mentality isn't easy, but it is a necessary part of recovering from addiction. Many aspects of drug and alcohol rehab will help individuals identify and resolve this behavior, so they can live a fulfilling, meaningful life that is free from substance abuse.

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