



Self-Pity – VIDEO INTRO: https://youtu.be/PkXn7VN_ktk

Intro - Feeling sad when something bad happens is appropriate, acceptable and “normal.” It makes sense to have some compassion for yourself when faced with unfortunate or unfair events. However, if left unchecked for too long, feeling sorry for oneself can become chronic self-pity, which can really stagnate growth.

Keep in mind, however, that quite often individuals who are having problems with self-pity may not even realize it. This is because it can become easy to convince oneself of being entitled to ongoing feelings of self-pity. In a lot of ways self-pity can breed more self-pity like a snowball rolling down a snowy hill. A person can get stuck in the cycle of chronically feeling sorry for oneself which can make it seem to that person like there is no way out. Again, it is okay to feel sad for yourself when something negative happens but there is an appropriate time to pick up the pieces and to start to try move forward. Chronic self-pity keeps a person trapped in a state of inactivity as self-pity can become an excuse for quitting and not trying anymore.

Identifying Patterns of Self-Pity: Discuss the following signs of chronic self-pity. Think about your own situation honestly if any of this may apply to you. It can be hard to admit being stuck in a state of chronic self-pity so try to be open minded:

- **Feeling remorse or regret in excess of the situation or for an extensive time period** (*Harry still talks about losing his college scholarship due to his drug arrest like it happened yesterday, even though its actually been 10 years now!*)
- **Holding on to excuses and reasons why you were wronged.** *This can look like a person making a case to “prove” why they are the victim.*
- **Keeping your radar open or casting a wide net to try to find situations where you were wronged or treated unjustly** – *A person can go out of their way to persistently look for reasons why others hurt them or the world did them wrong*
- **Turning away practical solutions** – *A person stuck in “self-pity mode” may have a way out but elect to stay where they are. “That sounds like a good solution but it won’t work for me”*
- **Turning away helping hands** – *Similar to above someone may want to help pull a person up out of the pit but a person experiencing self-pity may not take their hand*
- **Turning a deaf ear on supportive compliments and encouragement** – *Someone stuck in self-pity may not want to hear positive words to instead stay in a rut*
- **Allowing negative feelings to guide decision making in a way that prevents growth** – *Ex: “I got treated wrong at my last job, so I won’t work at all anymore” or “The last friend I had screwed me over so I am done with friendship entirely”*
- **Comparing** – *“Everyone has it better than me”. “They all have the easy life”. “If only I was in their situation, I would be okay.”*
- **Staying in a negative cycle of behaviors because you were hurt or wrong** – *‘My significant other left me so I am going to get drunk as often as I want’ – Excessive blame*



- **Difficulty feeling happiness and gratitude** – “How can I be happy when _____ happened to me!” Or: “What’s there to be grateful for _____ happened to me!”
- **Convincing oneself negative realities are true (even when they are not)** – “No one cares about me, no one wants to see me succeed” Or **exaggerating negative circumstances:** “I am the poorest person in this neighborhood” or “I have to work harder than everybody else”
- **Reliving bad experiences over and over** – Telling the story of victimization or hurt over and over well past the time when it is appropriate to start moving on.
- **Excessively focusing on what you cannot do instead of what you can** – “I can’t go to school with my history of problems” – “There’s no way you can expect me to....”

**Interestingly, animals don’t experience self-pity.
It is a uniquely human phenomenon.... DISCUSS:**





Escaping the Stagnating Cycle of Chronic Self-Pity

The following are some suggestions and strategies for overcoming self-pity. Take note of any of these ideas that stand out to you:

- **Talk about the hurt with a view toward healing** – *This does not mean “venting” or complaining but rather processing the event with the goal toward learning to let go and instead cope and move forward. Therapy can help.*
- **Work on letting go** – *It does not diminish what happened to you if you move on – In other words you do not need to keep reliving the negative experiences or preserve them “alive” in your memory - Give yourself permission to let go. It is okay to move on*
- **Practice gratitude** – *Something terrible or unfair may have happened to you that caused great loss and suffering. However even though you lost something, what do you still have? What is there still to be enjoyed and gained in life? There is always something.*
- **Strengths-based thinking** – *What can I still do in spite of this negative situation. For example a person who loses their hearing learns sign language or a person who lost their sight learning to go outside again.*
- **Accept and adapt** – *This may be the most important thing to focus on. Bad things happen to good people. Unfortunate and unfair events happen to some of the nicest people who did not deserve it. Perhaps that is the case with you. Still this does not prevent a person from learning to accept what happened and then work on the process of adapting to the new circumstances no matter how challenging that may be*

Closing discussion:

What resonated with you?

If possible, everyone in the group should try to share any example by completing the following sentence:

“ _____ happened to me and it felt really _____ but today I am moving forward by _____ ”



“When we pity ourselves all we see is ourselves. When we have problems, all we see are our problems and that's all what we love of talking about. We don't see the good things in our lives.” - Ann Marie Aguilar