

Are You YOU or are YOU your labels? Victim

Throughout the course of a lifetime, most of us feel victimized at one time or another. Anything from having someone 'steal' our parking place at the mall, to finding ourselves in jail because of the false testimony of a friend. Regardless of big or small, each incident affects and distresses us, and we are tempted to apply to ourselves, that paralyzing label, "Victim".

Victimization does not occur just to one segment of the population. Younger and older, richer and poorer, etc. are all vulnerable to this unpleasantness. We can focus on our own problem, and start to feel completely alone. However, we have considerable company. To expand our focus, let us list a few:

- Your trusted business partner has been stealing from your company for years.
- You walk home from school the long way to avoid some local 'toughs'.
- You have lost your job, and then lost your house.
- A trusted relative is abusing you.
- A tornado has just leveled your home.
- You accept a ride home from a group of friends, only to find that they are dealing crack. You are all arrested.
- You are excluded from something because of your racial or ethnic background

While these things are happening, you can appropriately refer to yourself as a 'victim'. This term 'victim' unfortunately remains static*. Hopefully you would want to move on. 'Victim' justifies blame and anger. It also excuses us from taking responsibility for our past and present actions. You can take steps to shed this label and move on.

Once the incident has run its course, start making history of history. By this, you don't have to forget what happened, you do not want to relive it again each time you recount it. For instance, talk with two people who had open heart surgery years ago. One can tell you just what happened in a casual way, laugh at some funny incidents which occurred along the way, and probably tell you rather calmly about the worst part. On the other hand, as the second person starts to tell you his story, you can see that he can almost feel the scalpel cutting into his chest. He relives every pain and anxiety from his ordeal. He may even start to sweat. His poor body does not know all this is not really happening, and therefore stresses out all over again.

The first individual made history of history. The second individual has not moved on sufficiently.

How do you make history? Start by stating factual and dated statements about the incident in question. Try "I was really furious when I found out that I was cheated in 1999..." rather than "I still get furious when I think of what he did." Getting furious again upsets your body. Your adversary knows nothing of your latest rage and might be sunning himself on the beach. You end up punishing yourself.

*Static: Not active, not moving, not changing.

Another step consists of not only factual and dated statements, but also you can pretend you are a disinterested reporter. Avoid opinion type statements such as, he/she was a rotten, horrible person, since those statements will only tend to upset you.

Be willing to accept your, and only your, responsibility for the incident—but that is all. Do not permit others to put blame on you where it does not exist.

Look at what makes you believe you are a victim. Stand in front of a mirror and say, “I am not a victim. I am me—a unique individual perfectly capable of evaluating and dealing with the activities of the present. I need not live in the past, nor use it as an excuse for my present behavior.” Will this work an instantaneous miraculous cure? Probably not. But it might help you see your situation more clearly. If the magnitude of your problem requires the help of a professional or an adult friend, maybe this exercise will prompt you to seek it. If you are getting professional help, share these pages with your counselor, and together you might find a way to put aside ‘victim’ and other damaging static labels.

The terms ‘recovering addict’ and ‘recovering alcoholic’ have a static property, but that acknowledges that even when you stop drinking or taking drugs, your body continues to have a dependency. Support groups encourage members to look at the individuals’ present and ongoing dynamic process by emphasizing the time elapsed since the destruction stopped.

If you have an ongoing problem, either at home or at school, do not remain victimized. Speak with one of your school counselors, or teacher, or an adult friend about intervention. With intervention, you can move away from the label, “victim.” Hopefully, you will want to.