

STEP 1 - GET HELP

Get help. I admit that I am powerless on my own, and that I need help.

THE FIRST STEP in healing is admitting that I am powerless on my own and that I need help. How often have you heard yourself or a friend say any of the following statements: "Let's pretend it didn't really happen." "He really doesn't drink *that* much." "It doesn't hurt when he does that; really, I'm fine!" "Paul drinks more than I do." "I couldn't care less what they think of me." "I don't have a problem with eating . . . I just don't eat very much, that's all!" "All the guys look at that stuff, it doesn't mean that I have a problem." "If you didn't nag me all the time, I wouldn't . . ."

The reason so many people remain stuck with their pain for so long is because they deny the source and depth of their pain. Before you can take this first step and get help, you need to **admit** your pain and/or struggle. Obviously, you can't ask for help if you don't admit your pain! It's that simple. If you're living in denial, you won't face your pain. And if you don't face your pain, you won't get help. So, this journey toward healing begins with facing the pain you've been denying.

Denial is "*a self-protecting behavior that keeps us from honestly facing the truth.*" Often times we have learned to put on "masks" to hide the pain beneath. We get pretty good at faking others out, but in those moments when we are alone with ourselves, there is no escaping the pain and emptiness that we feel. Have you ever denied that your parents had problems? Have you ever denied that you had problems? The truth is we can all answer "yes" to these questions to some extent. Step 1 asks us to take off our masks and get to the root of the pain that we have been hiding behind. Denial is the enemy that keeps you from getting at the root of your pain. Before you can take the first step toward healing, you must admit what you've been denying.

- **DENIAL . . . DISREGARDS OUR FEELINGS.**
- **DENIAL . . . EXHAUSTS US.**
- **DENIAL . . . NEVER LETS US GROW.**
- **DENIAL . . . ISOLATES US FROM GOD.**
- **DENIAL . . . ALIENATES US FROM PEOPLE.**
- **DENIAL . . . LENGTHENS OUR PAIN.**

WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Step out of your denial! Whether you have been denying something that happened in your family, in a relationship, or in your private life—walking away from denial is not easy. Taking off that mask is a difficult task. Everything about you may shout, "Don't do it! It's not safe to take off that mask!" But you **CAN** do this and it's safe to do it here. Here you have people who care about you and who love you for who you are—people who will stand beside you as truth becomes a way of life. Jesus tells us: "*Know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:32). Step out of your denial so you can step into Jesus' unconditional love and grace and begin your healing journey to be set free from your pain."

STEP 1 PRAYER: *Dear God. My life seems out of control. I want to change. But I can't seem to do it. I've tried and tried to be all things to all people. Trying harder has not helped. Rationalizing, blaming, and criticizing others have not helped. Doing what "I want to do" has not helped. Trying to get control of my life has not helped. I am worn out! I can't do it anymore. I want to take off my masks and be "real." I don't know what else to say, but Help Me God! Amen.*