

Validation Deprivation/Appreciation Deprivation: Not in the DSM-5

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ABSTRACT

As society changes, shifts, and evolves, clinicians become astutely aware of things occurring in the human condition, in various jobs and relationships, and insight begins to develop as to causal factors that contribute to stress and difficulties in the world and workplace. This paper will review two separate constructs offered by this writer to explain much of the malaise and relationship difficulty in the world and workplace.

As most psychologists, psychiatrists and mental health workers are aware, the American Psychiatric Association has a very thick book entitled the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders which has been around for many decades and has been revised over the past 50-60 years. The DSM-5 has been comprehensively elaborated upon and refined as clinicians investigate new syndromes and attempt to provide a clear number of criteria for various syndromes.

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As is well known, and data has been kept on this for decades- there is a problem in marriages termed divorce and while the data has varied over the years, one can make a sweeping generalization that approximately 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce and the data on second and third marriages is not very optimistic either. There have been a number of factors and or variables cited for this; for example, lack of communication, incompatibility, money, sexual issues, child rearing disagreements, and the list continues. The purpose of this paper is to simply offer another perspective in the long list of variables that might be operative in marriage issues. All too often, people enter into the relationship with unrealistic expectations and while the honeymoon period may prove blissful, the daily grind of work, parenting, bill paying, and all of the rest of "reality" begins to set in.

Both partners attempt their best to provide nurturance and sustenance to their respective duties. Although things may have changed over the past few decades, the male is, in general, the "breadwinner" - and increasingly both individuals do work part time (contributing to a perhaps stressful situation). If children come along, there are added duties, obligations, and responsibilities which may or may not be shared 100 percent by both individuals.

After a while, the "daily grind" may take its toll, unless there is a concerted effort to indicate to the other that their efforts are indeed appreciated and recognized and acknowledged in some way, shape, manner, fashion or form. Granted, a birthday card or a brief celebration of an anniversary may recognize the efforts and input of the other. However, there are 365 days in most years, and both the male and the female have emotional needs and the other may not be sensitive, to or aware of exactly what their needs are. The male may need to be recognized for the grief and aggravation

they endure on the job and while they do receive a paycheck, they may not really get the praise and acknowledgement they truly deserve. The female, on the other hand, may invest hours and hours in cooking and cleaning and washing and drying and caring for the children and never receive an iota of recognition from the spouse. Tensions may build up over the years- and, often it is difficult for people to ask frankly and clearly what they want and need. Communication falters, effort diminishes due to the fact that both are not receiving the appreciation and validation that they need and deserve.

It may be difficult for the female to truly understand what a long-distance truck driver endures or a postal worker endures as they go about their daily grind. Conversely, the husband may not truly understand the rigor and challenges of teaching students in a public school in the United States of America.

The Realm of Teaching

Since both males and females teach, this vocation was chosen as a type of "petri dish" for understanding the necessity for appreciation and validation. Indeed, in all jobs (bricklaying, carpentry, electrician) there are difficulties, but teaching is a most challenging profession, made even more difficult due to the recent school shootings, and influx of students with special needs.

It is a challenge to maintain classroom decorum and deliver instruction to a class of 20, 30 or even 40 students, some of whom need remediation, and some are clinically diagnosed as depressed or attention deficit disorder, or they are an "English Language Learner". Some students may have the label of "autistic", and the teacher may not have received adequate training in special education to address the educational needs of said student.

Parents send their child to school with health, medical and psychological needs, and there is the hope that the teacher and “the school “will be able to at least minimally meet their needs and attempt to do some remediation.

The teacher, at the end of the day, may not be recognized at all- either by the principal or even peers. A good principal should endeavor to praise and reward and attempt to grasp the emotional task and the emotional depletion that teachers encounter day by day. Yes, they receive a paycheck- but, for some individuals, the depositing of a certain amount of money is not quite the “reward” or the validation that they have “made a difference”.

The word “validation” is a tricky one- wherein a person communicates to another- verbally- that they grasp and understand the difficulty of one’s position. This writer cannot possibly grasp or comprehend the difficulty of flying a plane from New York to London carrying two to three hundred human lives. One can attempt to understand, but one does not grasp or have insight into all of the details and preparation involved.

In the realm of teaching- the noblest profession- the education and well-being of children is thrust upon teachers and the results of their endeavors are seen in test scores. There may be some appreciation or acknowledgement of teacher success via a piece of paper or certificate or being named “Teacher of the Year” or something akin to that, but the issue is raised as to how much validation does a teacher or counselor or minister need from those involved or those receptive to their interventions?

People have different needs; need for achievement, need for affiliation, need for power, authority and/or control, but the main thrust of this paper will be on validation and appreciation.

All too often, in jobs, in marriages and in the military- individuals are not told that they are appreciated and that their endeavors are worthy of recognition. The librarian shelves books constantly, and the United States postal worker delivers tons of mail day in and day out.

But at some point, every person seems to be lacking, or not receiving the proper amount of appreciation or support. Surely a supervisor or principal can say some words. “I appreciate it” but they may sound hollow or simply come across as verbiage. There is no true emotionality behind the words. The words provided by the wife to the husband sound faint and false, and the comments provided to the husband to the wife do not always “ring true”.

Because the vast majority of people are mature, reliable, responsible, dependable individuals, they get up in the morning, have some coffee or breakfast, and head off to their position of authority or to their daily routine- but the spark is no longer there and the enthusiasm is lacking but they go thru the motions caring for their patients- if they are a nurse, and filling bottles with pills if they are a pharmacist and the reader “gets the idea”. Certainly, all occupations require and demand more than what the general public thinks that they do. But not all supervisors understand with clarity exactly what those under him or her do exactly. This is referred to as:

Understanding Deprivation

For some people, or supervisors, they do not exactly have a grasp as to what their underlings or those they are supervising actually do. They may feign ignorance, or in all honesty, many do not understand exactly what a phlebotomist does, or a taxidermist,

or an embalmer. Some individuals need to be educated as to the extent of their duties or the complexities that their job requires. A certain amount of empathy and patience is needed in this realm.

It is not good when a supervisor does not grasp what is involved in the daily work struggles of their employees or workers. A math teacher may say “I teach math” but there is paperwork involved, meetings involved, forms to fill out, colleagues to meet and consult with, and lesson plans to be developed and tests to be graded and homework examined.

We have no real empirical way of assessing how much validation a beginning teacher needs or how much a twenty-year veteran needs. The veteran teacher may know exactly how exasperated the other new teacher may become and how much support they need.

Supervisors need to be sensitive to the issue of the fact that men and women are different, and they may need different levels of support, and appreciation, and validation for the level of difficulty that their vocation requires.

Policemen and policewomen put their lives on the line with every 911 call or midnight occurrence. Little wonder is it that these individuals often “burn out” and commit suicide. When the expectations are unreasonable and unrealistic, and the demands are not acknowledged, we have validation deprivation and appreciation deprivation.

Certainly, it is difficult to measure these constructs and even more difficult to discern who needs a greater amount of appreciation and who needs more support and understanding.

Turnover in any vocation can result in loss of profit and low morale. While low morale is often talked about, often little investigation is done as to how to rectify it and how to address it.

Counselors and therapists cannot always read exactly what issues are causing depression and anxiety and malaise. The client may not even be able to articulate the issues themselves. They may have the insight into their own emotional needs and how to fulfill them. It is difficult to determine if a job or career change is warranted or a long ocean voyage to rectify the situation and help them regain a semblance of normalcy in their own world.

For some, the neglect has been pervasive for years, and some people have entered into a ghost-like existence, going about their daily routine sans enthusiasm and motivation.

They are not engaging in the “generative “stage spoken and written about by Erikson. They may see a therapist and be given some medication which is thought to energize the person [1]. Perhaps a dietician helps them with multiple vitamins and a change of diet or perhaps a minister will pray over them- hoping that this will provide some comfort and consolation. In some marriages, an “affair” or “fling” may occur in an attempt to bring some recognition to the life of an already exhausted individual or to fulfill unmet needs. Employers do not always take into account when hiring what any individual may be seeking in their employment but human beings do seem to have some need for fulfillment and externally a modicum of recognition from significant others in the work environment and hopefully some minuscule amount of appreciation from their partner for what they do on a daily basis.

There are challenges to adulthood and challenges to marriage and not all individuals have the coping skills to assist. Some

companies certainly have some human resource counselors that may provide a listening ear.

Shaughnessy has commented on the fact that many people experience constant frustration and exasperation and have difficulty coping with the challenges of this life! [2].

Stephen King in one of his books has commented on the importance of this [3]:

“The most important things are the hardest things to say. They are the things you get ashamed of, because words diminish them—words shrink things that seemed limitless when they were in your head to no more than living size when they're brought out. But it's more than that, isn't it? The most important things lie too close to wherever your secret heart is buried, like landmarks to a treasure your enemies would love to steal away. And you may make revelations that cost you dearly only to have people look at you in a funny way, not understanding what you've said at all, or why you thought it was so important that you almost cried while you were saying it. That's the worst, I think. When the secret stays locked within not for want of a teller but for want of an understanding ear”.

The sad difficulty here is that the vast majority of people may not have the language skills to communicate what they need in terms of appreciation and validation. The sad difficulty is that there are not enough people around who can provide an “understanding ear”. The sad difficulty is that human beings have emotional needs, which, if not met, may result in depression, and anxiety, about returning to work or even returning home to a domicile where it is “too cold at home” -emotional neglect may result from a long-term dosage of validation and appreciation deprivation.

Work vs home vs Family

In the work environment, individuals are paid to nurse, to teach, to fix cars and computers and are paid for the work they do. Not so in the family unit. Husbands and wives are committed hopefully, to the family unit and perhaps they need even more recognition for what they contribute to the effective running of the family unit. Both parents need to acknowledge each other, spell each other and be there “for better or for worse” But this requires a high degree of emotional maturity to tolerate the foibles of the other as well as recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the partner.

Scientists are all about measuring, and physicians take blood pressure readings and do blood work and urinalysis, but we cannot accurately, validly, reliably measure validation and appreciation deprivation. We may be able to count how many roses are given, how many cards are sent and how many kind, generous, considerate words are shared as well as soft tender looks across the room. But we cannot know the uplift the one receives from a compliment or touch or caress. We cannot know the impact of a kind, caring word or phrase or telephone call or assistance in the middle of one's surgery.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper has introduced a small concept or construct that may explain the malaise of some individuals who may not have a major depressive episode, but it may contribute partially to the understanding of the dysthymia that some individuals experience and present in a counseling session and further may contribute to a less than adequate perspective on life and the lack of a fulfilling life experience.

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