



Possibility Deficit Disorder (PDD)™

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What is PDD?

Possibility Deficit Disorder (PDD) is the pervasive and persistent experience of 'no possibility' now, and no attractive prospects in the future. PDD is widespread in modern times. At the national level it is evidenced in the lack of ambitious ventures in technology development, industrial policy, educating necessary resources, infrastructure planning, national security, and transportation. PDD can be observed at the corporate level in ineffective product development, low employee morale, low customer loyalty, high staff turnover, lack of cooperation between functions, self-protective behavior between individuals, and distrust between hierarchy and employees. PDD is demonstrated in individual lives in lack of vitality, self-expression, money, positive relationships, health, dysfunctional marriages and families, absence of ambition, and continuous complaints about how things are.

PDD is not the same as clinical depression. Depression is also accompanied by a loss of the experience of possibility. However, PDD does not necessarily imply a loss of one's ability to cope, earn a living, or to function in daily life or corporate operations. PDD is a loss of future focus, inspiration, and the ability to create new possibilities for one's self and others.

PDD is a major cause of the lack of innovation in corporations and national competitiveness. Successful innovation is the basis of competitive success in business, government and in life itself. There is an inverse relationship between the inability to create and sustain new possibilities and the ability to invent and sustain innovation. Curiously, because of PDD, corporations and individuals do not identify the lack of possibility as the root of their recurring challenges, problems and lack of creativity. The very condition precludes them becoming aware of the fact that the lack of possibility is the root of the problem. It is a transparent double bind.

PDD is reinforced by media, politicians and corporate leaders, whose economic or political interests are enhanced by inducing and maintaining fear in their constituencies. Fear is the killer of possibility and possibility thinking. Scared people do what they are told. Therefore, PDD is not simply a matter of psychology and human nature. It is equally a matter of values and the character of leaders.

PDD also, not obviously, helps keep the people in power in power. Either by intention or inadvertently, PDD serves people who control the most valued resources in corporations and government agencies -- to have their people not experience too much possibility prevents 'rocking the boat' and changes in the balance of power. The modern *Zeigeist Movement* suggests that the pervasive interest-based banking and financial system is a primary source of PDD.

PDD can be a temporary event caused by difficult circumstances. However, it can also become an addiction in itself. The addiction falls into several classes, each with the power of a monastic order. These include the:

- Order of the Devout Victim,
- Order of Diminished Delight
- Order of Perpetual Confession
- Order of Incessant Explanation
- Order of Insincere Apology
- Order of Insincere Offers
- Order of Fearful Inaction
- Order of Having to Make a Difference
- Order of Having to Make No difference
- Order of Self Deprecation
- Order of Too Much to Do
- Order of Continual Tidiness
- Order of Perpetually Trite Response
- Order of the Immaculate Inquiry
- Order of Having to Have More
- Order of Nobody Tells Me What to Do
- Order of Committed Inattention
- Order of Desperately Seeking Salvation
- Order of Perfection and Worry
- Order of Terminal Service
- Order of Pathetic Objectives
- Order of Having to Do What You Don't Want To Do
- Order of Unworthy Existence

A rare form of PDD is found in those individuals and groups with Possibility Addiction (PA). In these cases people feel compelled to act on possibilities they discover or create. While they experience the positive effects of possibility, they usually do not follow through and are left with far too many possibilities on their plate. This is accompanied by fatigue and a sense of not going anywhere. Often they are critical of people with PDD, without awareness that their own reaction is its apparent opposite, Possibility Addiction.

Everyone suffers from PDD in some areas of their work, community, and personal lives. The very act of naming PDD is a breakthrough for many. Prior to identifying PDD for one's self or one's organization, it's hard to know that

Possibility is missing. For some, the addiction is too strong for them to act on the insight. Others, in the moment of seeing that they have been incapable of doing it, immediately begin to identify or invent possibilities.

PDD has many causes, not all of which have been identified. Recent brain research may provide clues. Cultures hard-wire certain behaviors and attitudes into the neurons of the brain. Culture, therefore, makes people blind to certain possibilities. Americans, for example, usually cannot see possibilities transparently available to the Chinese, such as the power and satisfaction in collective effort. Other cultures cannot and will not see possibility in personal freedom and full self-expression. It has been said that “people do not think what they are paid not to think.” Culture is the protector of the status quo and new possibilities are not welcome in many corporate, national, and family cultures.

At the broadest levels, it seems that economic, technological, and educational success derives from the sum of the sense of possibility and opportunity in the culture. Undeveloped countries seem to have less possibility in their cultures. Fundamentalist groups, certain in their beliefs, whether political, religious, ideological, or commercial, appear to struggle with new possibilities.

PDD is a pervasive disorder. War, persistent animosity, and the unwillingness to risk maintain a vicious circle of past-based behavior. At a recent Innovation conference in Shanghai, one Global IT executive discussed broadly-based research showing that 90 percent of companies did not sustain innovation, and 75 percent of new product developments fail. Over 50 percent of acquisitions and more than 50 percent of partnerships either fail or don't live up to expectations.

While success can be achieved, many organizations place too great an emphasis on technical solutions and do not invent possibilities that could help them move beyond the obstacles that yield failure and loss. While PDD is not the only source of failed innovation, evidence suggests that most companies suffer from acute PDD and remain clueless as to this source of repeated difficulty.

Identity itself is a root cause of PDD. Identity is defined as, “all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing.., the distinguishing character or personality of an individual entity.” Everything seems to flow from who one considers oneself to be -- one's essential character or identity. There are national identities, e.g., to be Canadian is to be moderate, to be British is to be understated. There are personal identities, e.g., I am a father, a friend, a consultant, a believer in the true God.” There are corporate identities, e.g., “We are a service organization” or, “We are smarter than the competition.” Once you consider yourself to be anything, you seem to get stuck with it. The game is over. New possibilities are hard to come by. The past repeats itself, effortlessly guided by the identity.

Identity and possibility have an inverse relationship -- the stronger the one, the weaker the other. Fear of loss of identity kills new possibility. People will give up success, relationship, sometimes life itself for the preservation of identity. Consider suicide bombers, killing themselves for who they consider themselves to be. On a planetary level, identity is the greatest threat to the survival of humanity as a whole. It is the basis of PDD at local and global levels. Most people and nations appear to be stuck with it.

There is a vast array of symptoms of PDD. While we can classify common symptoms, it is often difficult to tell the difference between a symptom and a cause. For example, PDD is related to weak relationships, lack of shared commitment, absence of respect, little environmental challenge, ineffective leadership, inability to resolve conflict, and low commitment to action. The difficulty in treating any of these to improve PDD is that there are usually so many other causes in the background that the treatment is short-lived or without effect.

This further indicates that PDD emerges from the complex culture or identity of the individual, corporation, or nation. This implies that the introduction of "Possibility" as a phenomenon in a culture or within an identity is the only way to deal reliably with PDD, and further, that treatment of symptoms, while sometimes necessary, is fruitless over the long term. Since entities have survived successfully within the identity or culture they already have, they are unwilling, except in crisis, to change it. And normally, after a crisis, they revert to their prior expressions of PDD.

Therein, lies the challenge.

Symptom Checker

Adult PDD Symptoms:

- Personal or group identity is the basis of all decisions and behavior
- Need to be right
- Feel like a victim
- Feel spiteful
- Excessive compliance
- Unable to flow with other people or situations
- Unable to inspire others to what they are capable of
- Unable to listen or pay attention to anything inconsistent with what is already known
- Placing the cause of things outside oneself
- Resignation
- Require certainty
- Weak relationships
- Conflicts do not resolve

Corporate PDD Symptoms

- Senior management knows best
- Senior people and bottom people communicate mostly through middle management
- Conviction that we already know
- Reality is physical
- Arbitrary exercise of power
- Shallow relationships
- Lack of inquiry
- Pattern of proceeding to solutions before agreeing on problems
- Lack of innovation
- Innovations do not sustain
- Language disguises underlying realities
- Absence of listening
- Absence of free speech in practice

National PDD Symptoms

- Certainty that “we” are better than other countries
- Certainty that “we” are worse than other countries
- Certainty that “our” traditions are the basis of our success
- Conviction that the nation is on the wrong track
- Certainty that our system of governance is better than others
- Excessive Debt
- Wealthy interest groups control politicians
- Secrecy
- Language disguises true realities
- Public distracted by fear mongering
- Public distracted by sports and media intensity
- Promotion of values-based, inflammatory issues
- Systems designed to keep the people in power in power
- Absence of free speech in practice

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