

The Missing Tile Syndrome

I would like you to imagine a ceiling with tiles, an indoor ceiling with tiles; most ceilings have tiles in our society, anyway. And imagine that there was one tile missing – just one. Now tell me, what would you concentrate your vision on? What would you look at the most? The answer is obvious: the *missing* tile.

Now, that's fine for ceilings, because that's where the eye will immediately gravitate to: the missing tile. It's fine for ceilings, in fact it's good for ceilings, because then we'll have perfect ceilings, because ceilings can be perfect, but it's awful for life. Because, if you concentrate on the missing tiles in your life, since you can never have a perfect life, that's a big problem.

So, let me give you the example that taught me this great lesson about what I call The Missing Tile Syndrome. A bald man once said to me, "You know, Dennis, whenever I walk into a room with other people, all I see is hair. And I realized, oh, wow, this guy sees the world utterly different than I. I happen to have all my hair; I never notice hair. That's because it's not a missing tile for me. But, in fact, for this guy, it was everything: all he saw was hair.

Women who think that they have a heavy, fat thigh, all they see when they walk into a room are thin thighs. A woman who wants to get pregnant, I'll never forget, once said to me, "You know where ever I go, every woman I see my age is pregnant." Now, of course, that's not true. The vast majority of women her age are not pregnant at any given time, but that's all she saw, because her missing tile was not having a child, not getting pregnant. That's the way human nature is: we focus on what's missing in our life.

There's a very big problem here, however, since there will always be *something* missing in your life. When you see other people's kids, you will see what is terrific about those kids, and you will think, "Gee, why can't my kids study as hard, or be as polite, or be as bright, or be as good looking, or be as athletic." It's endless.

I'll give you another example; when I was a young bachelor, I remember, I would call my friend, Joseph, after every date, and God knows, I had a lot of dates. And in my inimitable way of thinking things through intellectually, I would announce categorically, "Joseph, tonight I realized what the most important trait in a woman is." And he would be listening, and say, "Okay, Dennis, what is it?" And one night I would say its *personality*; another night its *looks*; another night it was *intelligence*. And finally he got sick of this, and as usual, after a date I called him up, and I said, "Joseph, I finally figured out what the most important trait in a woman is," and Joseph immediately said to me, "Don't tell me, I'll tell you." I said, "How do you know, you don't even know who I went out with." He said, "It doesn't matter. Whatever this woman was missing, that's the one you'll say was the most important trait in a woman." And that was last time I ever came out with that idiotic line, because he was absolutely right.

Whatever she was "missing," that's what I would declare the most important trait. I didn't have the words then of *Missing Tile* but if she didn't have tile "x", tile "x" became the most important trait in a woman.

That's the way we play tricks on ourselves to undermine our happiness; it's by concentrating on the missing tiles which every one of us has in our life. That's just the way it is. Ceilings can have perfect tiles, filled with tiles, but we can't. There will always be a missing tile in life, so we have a very simple choice in life, and that is do we focus on the rest of the ceiling, on all the tiles we *do* have, or do we focus on the ones we're missing,

And in that way you determine how happy you will be.

I'm Dennis Prager.