



# Deep Idols & Lasting Change

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**A**s we conclude our series on the Deep Idols, please refer to the [November 2023 Toolkit](#) that explains what a deep idol is in the context of our unique approach to counseling, Gospel-centered Integrative Framework for Therapy (GIFT), as well as the System of Self Redemption.

The four deep idols are power, control, comfort, and approval. This toolkit focuses on creating lasting change after we identify someone's deep idol.

## Internalizing the Gospel

Recognizing someone's deep idol helps us understand their inner motivations better. It informs us on the direction of change needed and can guide our conversations with the person we are caring for. For example, knowing someone struggles with a control idol means we will not want to encourage them to work harder or do more at church for God. However, once we identify someone's deep idol, we do not necessarily have to share it with them because people tend to want a quick fix once they recognize their strategy.

Instead, we need to remember that the deep idols are just one component of the **System of Self-Redemption**. If the problem is that human beings develop this System of **Self-Redemption** to redeem their shame-based view of self, then the solution is to internalize **God's redemption**: who God says they are through the Gospel. Strategies are about *identity*—how people see themselves—as well as how they see God and others. People's strategies exist to either assert their goodness or hide their badness. Therefore, they need a solution for their shame and a transformed, Gospel-identity. Here are four ways to help people internalize the Gospel after we identify their deep idol.

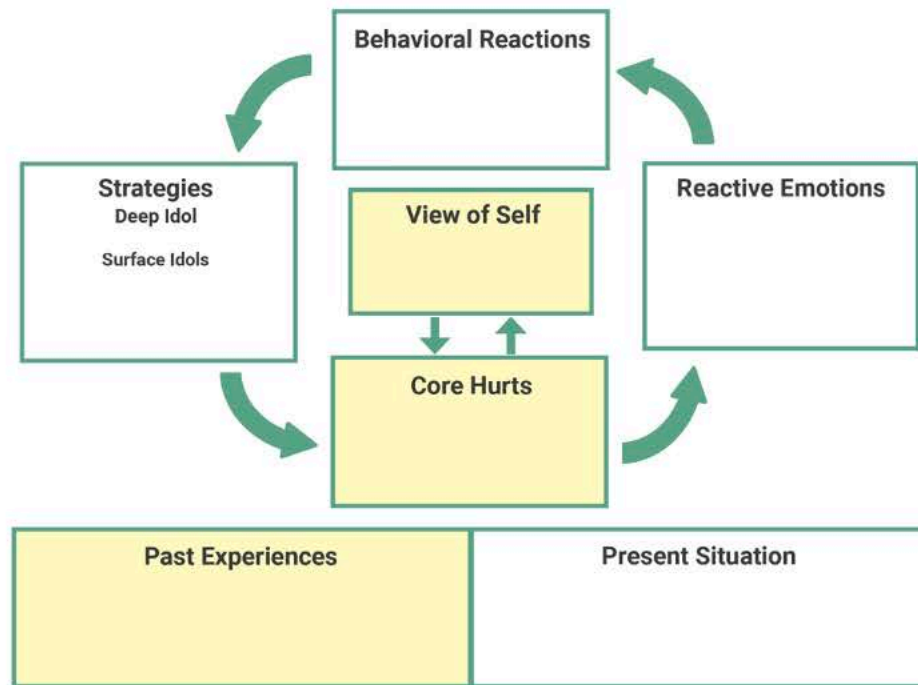
### 1. Move people beyond insight to change.

Be aware of the danger of "idol hunting." This tendency can become a pitfall for both caregivers and the person we are serving. Especially if we studied the Bible extensively, we may offer well-meaning spiritual guidance that unintentionally bypasses the heart of the problem. We may tell the person that repentance of the idol is sufficient: "Just confess, memorize this scripture, pray, and God will do the rest." However, insight or good intention alone does not bring change. Awareness of their deep idol/strategy is only the first step toward transformation.

Because their deep idol almost becomes a part of their personality, their attempts to give it up without doing the deeper emotional, mental, and spiritual work will be ineffective. Insight does not automatically undo the unconscious relational habits they learned through years of experience as a response to their core hurts. Because their strategies developed experientially in relationships over time, change must also happen experientially and relationally over time.

Unless the person understands their strategy in the context of their story and processes their **core hurts, view of self, and past experiences**, they will find lasting change difficult.

## System of Self-Redemption



### 2. For lasting change, help people face and grieve their past experiences.

People develop their System of Self-Redemption to protect themselves from their past hurts and shame. As long as they are trying to avoid facing the pain, they cannot let go of the system that they believe keeps them safe. To dismantle it, they actually have to grieve the experiences that hurt them most. In the GIFT, we call this process **Grieving and Acceptance**.

[Redeemer Counseling's Toolkit Library](#) has several tools for helping people grieve.

Going back to the parts of their stories where they were wounded may be hard for people. Some may resist. Sometimes, to avoid going through the painful parts of their story, they may accidentally “overcorrect” their behavior to bypass doing the deeper work and end up switching their deep idol. For example, if they become aware that they are too much of a yes person (Approval idol), they may start to say no to everything, often aggressively, which looks more like the power idol.

We need to be patient as we develop trust with them. Show compassion as we sit with them in the difficult parts of their stories. As we continue to journey with people in grieving and accepting their past, we can help them move to a deeper part of grieving, which is grieving how their experiences impacted them and how they responded with their self-redemptive strategy. When we bring someone to this stage, we can lead them to the final process in the GIFT: **Facilitating Heart Change**.

### 3. Our presence can provide corrective experiences for them.

As witnesses to their stories, we have a unique opportunity to incarnate Christ to them. When we demonstrate compassion and acceptance, they can begin to see us as a place of safety. Whether or not we explicitly discuss spirituality, we are helping to reshape their view of others as we continue to relate to them as Christ would. As their view of others begins to shift, they may start to think, “The world isn’t all bad. People aren’t always out to get me, beat me, or hurt me.”

As we listen to their stories, we can lead them toward healing their core hurts and help them name how their past experiences affected their view of themselves. Bearing witness to their stories is a truly valuable and profound aspect of our work. However, because we, too, are human, remember that we cannot forgive them, change them, release them, heal them, or transform them. But, we can lead them to the One who can. As they have **Corrective Relational Experiences** with us, they can begin to connect and shift their experiences of God, as well.

#### **4. Ultimately, lead them to have a Corrective Relational Experience with God.**

We often find it harder to experience God because we cannot see or touch him. However, our amazing God transcends our limited perceptions of him and he can personally meet us in the specific ways we need him. God can also use us, as the person present with someone in a moment, to help them have a deep encounter with him.

In the book, [\*Who You Are\*](#), Redeemer Counseling Director Judy Cha references four ways to help clients experience God in new ways (p 166 - 185).

- 1. Creating an emotional connection with God** – Facilitate personal encounters with God. God created them and he knows them. Help them visualize what he says to them. Together, think through daily rhythms where they can connect with him like one would connect to a friend or a loved one.
- 2. Using imagination** – As we listen to the painful parts of their story, listen to the Holy Spirit. Use wisdom and discernment to look for opportunities to introduce God/Jesus into a painful part of their story. As they close their eyes, ask, “Where was Jesus?” “How does he respond in that memory?” “What does he want you to receive?” Allow as much time as needed to facilitate that experience for the person.
- 3. Engaging in worship** – Have the person develop a practice of reading a Psalm or listening to a song or hymn that speaks to them personally. Ask them to talk through what God is saying to them through the words of the psalmist or the lyrics of the singer.
- 4. Utilizing senses** – Using their physical senses, help them experience God more tangibly. Identify sights, sounds, touch, and smells that remind them of God’s majesty and his love for them. Some ideas for them to internalize the gospel through their senses are watching loving parents interacting with their little ones, spending time in nature that speaks to them of God’s qualities, or seeing kind eyes in a cherished photo.

As someone’s view of how they see us (others) is challenged and changed, we can lead them to a corrective relational experience that can also give them a new view of God. These experiences then lead to a shift in their view of themselves. This is the process of helping someone internalize the Gospel. Ultimately, without having God cover their shame, redeem them, and transform their identity, change through psychology alone can never bring them full healing. As we incarnate Christ and help the people we care for invite him into this work, we can help them experience incredible healing and redemption in their story. As this gradual process happens, they can truly repent of their deep idol and learn to reflect Christ in a new way.