



KARYN SHANKS MD

*Heart, Hope, Healing*

# Deprivation: The Challenge of Lifestyle Change

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | MARCH 4, 2017



Making lifestyle changes—like how we eat or sleep—can seem daunting. But it's doable when we get organized around it...and learn to deal with deprivation.

## **Facing Our Nemesis: Deprivation**

What do we do with the deep feelings of attachment we experience about the habits we love—the food, staying up late, the extra glass of wine—and the grief and loss that hits us when we try to create change—emotions that are hard for all of us and threaten to undermine our efforts to improve our lives?

The hardest part of creating change for most of us—especially in the beginning—is dealing with deprivation. We are attached to our food, our ways, our habits—the things that give us comfort, structure, and are familiar—even if they hurt us.

# My Unexpected Encounter With Deprivation

I once challenged myself to giving up *all* sugar. I was already close—just needing to give up my chocolate chip habit—yikes. My guilty pleasure, that got me through the “witching hour”—the first few moments of walking into my house after a long day at work, shaking off the intensity of the day, and stepping into the intensity of my household—dogs needing to be greeted, then walked and fed, dinner to get ready, expectations (real and imagined) of my family to tend to. I sought refuge in that bag of Ghirardelli semi-sweet chocolate chips that always—*always*—sat on my pantry shelf. Its sole purpose to provide me with the solace and energy I needed to transition from the frying pan into the fire.

So I gave them up. And my world turned upside down. Literally. What the hell?

## A Powerful Deprivation Solution

Enter one of my yoga teachers with a simple meditation to manage the deprivation of letting go. She called it, “seeding the gap.” The gap where we feel left hanging, abandoned—*desperate*—by our precious sacrifice. She taught me to fill in—*seed*—the gap with a new intention—one that would support my efforts to become healthier.

It goes like this:

Create the intention to make that small change—whatever it might be. Step up into action. Feel the pain, the loss, the *deprivation* created by that small sacrifice. Observe the gap it creates in your experience. Then *seed* it with something new. An intention. A blessing. A gratitude.

*Repurpose* the deprivation—deploy the energy of it to support your aspirations for yourselves. For me it was, “Thank you, Universe, for supporting my best health and wellbeing.” “Thank you for helping me step up into my highest, wisest self.” “Thank you for the challenges of my life that carve me into my better self.”

This practice took my attention away from the sense of loss, and toward my aspirations. With a little time, and practice, I soon forgot about my chocolate chip longing (well, sort of—but I thought about them less and less) and, eventually, I naturally let go of the affirmations that I no longer needed to help me through the witching hour. I was able to give up my sugar habit all the while taking in the magic of those positive affirmations.

I’d like to know how you handle deprivation. Muscle through it? A reward system?

Try seeding the gap and share your story...

### Resources:

Rod Stryker. [\*Four Desires: Creating a Life of Purpose, Happiness, Prosperity, and\*](#)

[Freedom. 2014.](#)

Karyn Shanks, MD. [Four Simple Steps to Jumpstart Change.](#) 2017.

## KARYN SHANKS MD

Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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