secondary gain *n.*
Interpersonal or social advantages gained indirectly from organic illness, such as an increase in attention from others.
Secondary Gain

Wikipedia

Primary gain or secondary gain are used in medicine to describe the significant psychological motivators patients may have in reporting symptoms. Primary gain produces positive internal motivations. For example, a patient might feel guilty about being unable to perform some task. If he has a medical condition justifying his inability, he might not feel so bad. Primary gain can be a component of any disease, but is most dramatically demonstrated in conversion disorder (a psychiatric disorder in which stressors manifest themselves as physical symptoms without organic causes, such as a person who becomes blindly inactive after seeing a murder). The "gain" may not be particularly evident to an outside observer.

Secondary gain can also be a component of any disease, but is an external motivator. If a patient's disease allows him/her to miss work, avoid military duty, obtain financial compensation, obtain drugs, or avoid a jail sentence, these would be examples of secondary gain. These may, but need not be, recognized by the patient. If he/she is deliberately exaggerating symptoms for personal gain, then he/she is malingering. However, secondary gain may simply be an unconscious psychological component of symptoms and other personalities. In the context of a person with a significant mental or psychiatric disability, this effect is sometimes called secondary handicap.[1]
Secondary Gain

Freud first proposed the concept of secondary gain, which he described as both the intra-psychic and external advantages attained by the patient as a consequence of illness.

He conceptualised it as a pre-conscious (i.e., just beneath awareness and able to be brought to awareness) “holding on” to the illness because of supposed or real advantage.

In more recent years, secondary gain has taken on a life of its own outside the traditional psychoanalytic arena.
Secondary Gain
Secondary gain refers to external psychological motivators. For example, if a client’s problem allows him/her to miss work, avoid jury duty, obtain financial compensation, obtain drugs, or avoid a jail sentence, these would be examples of secondary gain.

If he/she is deliberately exaggerating symptoms for personal gain, then he/she is malingering.

However, secondary gain may simply be an unconscious psychological component of symptoms.
Secondary Gain

Example:

“If my bad back was fixed, I’d have to go to work ...”

“If my headaches stopped, I’d have to start having sex with my husband again.”
Secondary Gain

Secondary gain is often the reason why hypnosis fails to stop someone losing weight or smoking, simply because they have an external motivator that makes them feel better smoking or putting on weight.
Secondary Gain

It is many people’s experience that the initial hope and euphoria – so often experienced immediately after a healing session (or therapy, or personal development) - fades, and the symptoms return.

The most common reason for this is secondary gain.

You may well find the root cause of your problem. You may well effectively heal it. But if the secondary gain is not released you will probably not see any long term change in the symptoms – because subconsciously you are choosing to hold onto them.
Secondary Gain

An older woman was diagnosed with cancer.

Despite having expert care her condition did not improve – against all expectation.

When asked the simple (and seemingly ridiculous) question: “What would you lose if the cancer was healed?” she finally replied:

“I would be lonely again”.

Before the diagnosis of cancer, she had been very lonely. When they found out that she was ill, her grandchildren began to visit her daily. Faced with the simple choice between cancer and loneliness, she (subconsciously) chose cancer.

The hidden benefit to her problem – the secondary gain – was quite simply that the quality of her life was improved by her cancer.

She was no longer lonely.
Secondary Gain and Limitations

- How could 'pleasing others' mean for a person?
- Being 'mindless' provides ...
  - Mindful + present
  - Mindless + unfocused
- Inflexible beliefs provide ...
- Flexible thinking
  - Mindset + thinking
- What could be gained by 'rigid' thinking?
- Influence
  - Boundaries
  - People Pleaser
- Influence
  - Identity
  - Resilient
  - Powerless
- Environment
  - Negotiate
  - Submission: By being 'submissive' what could be gained?
- Skills
  - Courage
  - Fear: Allowing fear to govern actions, could mean ...
- Attitudes
  - Possibilities
  - Victim
- What could someone lose by not playing 'victim'?
Secondary Gain

What do you think of this statement:

“Illness might become, for some people, a way of obtaining other people’s compassion or a leading role in a family or circle of friends.”

Have you seen evidence of this in your life, or in the lives of those around you?

In your journal reflect on this concept further and what it could mean for you in your work as a Coach, Trainer or Practitioner.