

## Comment Response

Dear McSev,

First, thank you for your honest and thought provoking comment. Really. What you say is true, something I've been coming to realize more and more lately. There is a time in the journey of healing where one's focus should be on oneself, and quite intently, but it is a stage I have lingered too long in. For the last year or so it has actually become rather... sickening, as though I ~~am~~ myself am sick of hearing about myself! So, really, thank you

To be honest, it is proving a lot harder to truly be as "helpful" and compassionate in daily interactions than I hoped it would be. Recently what I've ~~been~~ been trying to do more is to be present with others in a supportive, listening kind of role. It is lonely in prison, and cold, and what a lot of guys really seem to respond to - more than "good advice" - is when someone is able to be with them, really hear them and share in their truth, without any other agenda. Because ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> live in a "therapeutic" prison (Program based) ~~another~~ another way to help others is to be available to help with homework and to offer honest feedback, which isn't always easy. There are practical things as well. When my deaf friend wants to call home he needs someone to talk for him. In order for this to happen I had to learn sign language.

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In the past I have led groups, and this was helpful, but still, I did use my success in such groups as a way to boost my self-esteem. It's a long road, one never quite fully traveled, I am not healed, but healing, and the process has really been done in a kind of bubble. For a long time I was alone in this journey. Just self-help books and my journal. When I tried to talk to others about it it was like I was an alien, so a process that usually requires the support of peers ~~and~~ was undertaken quite alone. Luckily I had supportive family members to write to, but without peers the experience ~~was~~ was very alienating, and in this hostile environment ~~the process~~ ~~the process~~ the process may not be so clean and perfect. Certainly, I've made mistakes and may have progressed in some areas while in others have remained completely blind. ~~is~~. Fortunately I'm in a "Therapeutic community" now where everyone is involved in the program and this allows for greater vulnerability and support than what most prisons provide. For the first time my thoughts and views and behaviors are open to honest supportive feedback. It's no longer just me and my journal.

Self-consciousness is a hard mold to break, especially in prison and coming from such a dysfunctional background, so, yeah, the process is ongoing. How does one go from "I can't trust anyone, no one can or will help, everyone is dangerous or incompetent, I can't even rely on myself" (cold core beliefs/views) to greater wholeness stability, and openness? Well, often times in a very messy

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haphazard, ~~an~~ unpredictable way. Add a closed, corrupt hostile prison environment and very little support and what you see may be a very self-conscious effort. I think that coming from a place of constant depressive/manic episodes, repeated hospital commitments, persistent suicide ideation, a head full of resentment and distorted views + core beliefs, and much violence to where I am today is rather remarkable. But you are right. How long do I ride my gladness over what I've been able to learn and accomplish? Yet, I wish I could convey to you the depth of the dysfunction that was once my life. I can't help but be amazed by how fortunate I am.

Okay, so, all that said, it really is time get into the actual daily experiences of interacting with others and the journey of being a positive helpful member of the community. - something that has been taking place but maybe not with enough focus. As I said earlier, from what I can tell practical help and being truly present with people, to listen and ~~share~~ really hear another person seem to be the way to be a truly helpful and compassionate presence. At least for me. Also being a presence of groundedness, of openness, of integrity, and compassion is also a kind of way to make a positive difference in a community. Do I do these things perfectly. Absolutely not. And maybe I could write more about these efforts?

~~Share~~ Writing this blog has been a way for me to share and explore who I am or am becoming in this healing process as well as a way to maybe make a positive

Share what I've actually been doing and how others respond

impact, give hope to someone, or open someone's mind to new possibilities. I don't know how to do this. I'm just winging it, and doing my best to travel this crazy journey. Your feedback was very helpful and much needed. But as you see, I haven't received much feedback like yours. I've never read a blog - to this day - and have no idea if my attempt is up to par. So more critical feedback would be much appreciated, but you must understand: most of this journey has been undertaken alone and in hostile territory. And I didn't begin it with a healthy mind or great set of skills, so any help would be greatly appreciated.

As for inmates who struggle due to loss of any outside support, I definitely agree that families often have very good reasons to cut ties. I don't think it is always wise to maintain relationships with people who continually victimize and manipulate - if that's the case. That ~~is~~ doesn't take away from the fact that such disconnection has devastating effects. Even if the disconnection is justified, the devastation still occurs and whether it is the rightful consequence of a person's pattern of behavior or not has no bearing on whether or not compassion from others is the "good" and right response. Can not one be held responsible to actions, be dealt rightful consequences and still be held in compassion? Judges (good judges) often speak of this. Whether a person deserves their consequences or not does not sway my duty for compassion. I can't help but want to reach out to someone dwindling in despair no matter the cause. And what would the world be

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like if no one felt this way and reached out in response to such feelings?

In my next Post I will try to focus more on the actual details of my interactions here rather than on ideas, views, and hopes. I hope to hear from you again, because I surely could use some honest feedback. Honestly, you have no idea how desperately I've undertaken this journey and hope to grow and heal enough where I can be a healthy, productive member of society, have rewarding mature relationships, and lead a life that is full of love and effort and honesty. If I'm heading off in a bad direction I surely want to hear about it! Only recently have I been able to open this journey up to include others and to be a part of their journeys. It's been a difficult change, but one I am truly relishing. Really, ~~so~~ I'm only just learning how to reach out, to open up, to be open to others in a real way because I am now in a community where it is safer to do so. I look forward to sharing the experience and reading any feedback you may have. It's much needed, so thank you.

Peace

P.S, You want me to help someone and express the experience from their point of view? I will try to do that, but with the understanding that whatever I state from their point of view is an assumption on my part, a sort of role play at empathy.