

My Quest

Today's Meditation - If I had to pick one principle or idea that was the most instrumental to me in turning myself around I'd have to pick learning about the freedom to choose and its powerful effects.

I used to think that my life was messed up ~~and~~ and dysfunctional because life itself was treating me so unfairly. I believed that because I grew-up in dysfunction and because I had to experience trauma after trauma that I was doomed to a miserable life. It was the circumstances that kept befalling me that made my life so difficult. Of course I knew that if you work hard, just maybe you can break the cycle. But because I kept experiencing crisis after crisis I believed I was cheated out of my chance to break the cycle. My ~~current~~ Circumstances were creating a living hell for me.

So many of us believe that the circumstances we find ourselves in control the quality of our lives. That kind of victim-like thinking is what kept me trapped in a cycle of desperation and dysfunction. It wasn't until I ~~had~~ read Viktor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning and Stephen Covey's The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People that I realized how my experience of life was created by how I chose to respond to circumstances more than by the actual circumstances themselves. This was such a radical and profound shift in perspective that my life was dramatically altered from the day of that realization onward. To think that the circumstances I kept blaming for my

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trouble actually had less creative power than how I chose to respond to those circumstances... astounding. Sounds simple and obvious to some people, but let me tell you: there are millions of people who have lists miles long that chronicle all the ~~ways~~ ways life has wronged them and they blame this list for ~~all~~ the quality of their lives. I was one of those people and I can tell you that the fallacy is pervasive and powerful.

Here's an example: currently I am being denied proper medical care. I have had a neck/shoulder injury since April of 2010. Whenever I see a nurse about this issue he or she treats me ~~as if~~ if I'm lying or exaggerating. This injury is so bad I often have to write with my left hand - as I am now doing - even though I am a righty. I'm in pain and dealing with medical here is very humiliating and frustrating. Now this is an unfair circumstance and it certainly does affect the quality of my life. ~~but~~ Now a lot of guys in here choose to ~~use~~ use similar reasons to "go off": they will flip-out, Walte Ground Steaming Mod in full on rage. They will grumble and complain and basically use any excuse to "rip out" (cause trouble). They feel justified because the fact is they really are being mistreated. But here's the difference. Such behavior causes them to be in an intensely negative state, they end up going to the hole (isolated segregation) and they just end up having a miserable existence. Yet they blame this misery in the system - they have no responsibility because they really are being mistreated. All responsibility is shirked off onto the ~~system~~ system.

Here's how I'm choosing to respond to this grossly unjust situation.

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I'm going to file a medical grievance, if that gets no results I'm going to file a complaint with Mass Correctional Legal Services - Medical abuse. In the meantime I'm doing my stretches and exercises. ~~Beyond~~ knowing that I am carrying out a healthy plan of action provides me with a sense of relief. I can now move on and continue my life. Sure, I'm frustrated, but I'm not flipping out, I'm not full of rage and negativity, I'm not Miserable and I am carrying out a more effective plan of action, which has a better chance of getting results.

The experience of life I am having compared with someone in a similar situation who blames outside sources for his experience of life is dramatically different. Why? It ~~wasn't~~ because my situation is different - it's an unbelievably unfair situation - but because of how I chose to respond to the situation. Sure, the situation is effecting my life, but how I'm responding to the situation is effecting my life in a much more powerful way. I'd say life ~~experience~~ is 10% circumstances and 90% how we choose to respond to circumstances. And I am including extreme situations because I have been through extreme, tragic situations and even then, how I chose to respond had the greater effect over the actual circumstance.

My Motto is - I am always free to choose a response that reflects my goals and values, that reflects the best of who I am, and it is through these choices that I create my reality.

Victor Frankl once wrote "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Frankl was a survivor of the Nazi death camps and even while interred in that devastating hell, he lived as a free man. No one can take my freedom to

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choose away from me. No power, circumstance, or authority can stop me from choosing a response that reflects the best of who I am no matter how challenging or tragic the situation. I hold that freedom tightly to my chest as if it were the life-line that will save my life... because it is such a life-line.

For today I ask you to consider this: Are there any areas where you hold life, a person, or a situation responsible for the quality of your life? If so (I still have many! :)) could you choose to respond to that person or situation in a new way, a way that would empower you and would reflect your goals and values?

Taking responsibility for our freedom to choose can turn hells into rewarding experiences, can turn lemons into lemonade. Yes, life can be unfair, yes, life can hurt us deeply, but it is always we who have the greater creative power. This is what it means to be made in God's image.

Current Events - Last night (Thurs. May, 5th) was the second official meeting of Mindful Living and it was a great success. I felt so empowered and connected to others as I facilitated this amazing group. We meditated for ~~ten~~ minutes then discussed Mindfulness in prison and how we can use our freedom to choose. Guys really took well to it. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I'm good at it, people respond well to me, and I find it greatly rewarding and enjoyable. This is why I am creating LifeQuest when I'm released. I know I can succeed at giving people new, effective ways to change and enjoy their lives,

By the way, The LifeQuest Prospectus is completed, but I haven't been able

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to type it up yet. Not that anyone is waiting for me to publish it, but in case you* are reading this blog and interested in LifeQuest, it will be coming soon. I just got busy with creating this new group and with Toastmasters.

Well, I included a copy of the official flyer that I had printed and posted in every unit. I expect a big turn out at next weeks meeting. Wish me luck!

There are a couple of typo's, but overall the flyer came out all right. I don't have access ~~to~~ to the computer it was printed on so I have to accept what I was given.

In June I'll be taking the Training for Trainers course in AVP (Alternatives to Violence Program) So I can start co-facilitating AVP Workshops. I already took the basic and advanced courses. They were fun and rewarding. I look forward to ~~be~~ being able to share my enthusiasm ~~or~~ when I co-facilitate ~~the~~ the next AVP Basic course.

All right, 'till next time, happy travels!

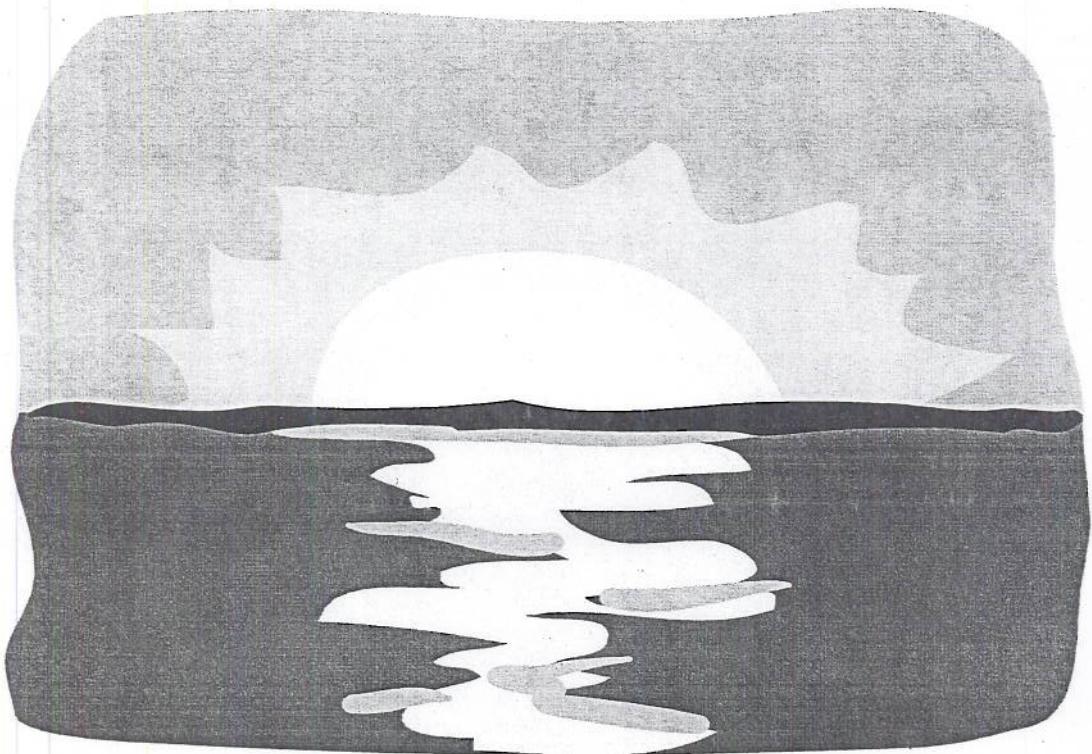
Today's Quote - "Shallow men believe in luck, in circumstances. Strong men believe in cause and effect." Ralph Waldo Emerson

Mindful Living

Join us as we explain how to use Buddhist principles and spiritual life-skills to meet the challenges of prison life.

Mindful LIVING is an open discussion group that welcomes anyone with a sincere desire to improve his life. If you would like to learn new ways to lead a healthier, happier life, or if you would just like to be part of a positive community then, Mindful Living is where it's at.

*Join us Thursday Evening from 6:30-8:30PM
in Classroom #4*



*Approved
D. La Horne
5-4-11*