

My Life On Five Acres

BLOG

By Joaquin Jordan J-27227

#4

Expansion

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Long before I knew the meaning of existential factors (Factors related to existence and the experience of it) I was in the process of constructing a life for myself which dealt with many of its conditions. As a result I have a very full, meaningful and purposeful life in prison.

I work as a clerk for eight hours a day, in an assignment with a significant amount of responsibility; I facilitate four, 90 minute groups, four days a week. In addition, I study at least 3 hours a night (usually psychology themed material) and run 40 to 50 miles a week. This is my normal routine and has been for at least six years now and it serves to reduce the emotional stress associated with the finality of my prison sentence and greatly blurs the perception of time, which results in my not "having enough time" during the day to complete all my tasks. The previous is significant because as a child, I acquired a belief that I was less than in comparison to others and developed a stable sense of my inability to succeed, which directly influenced the amount of effort I put forth to any activity. Although I was a good baseball and football player, "I would never be as good as..." Although, I was a smart kid, "I will never be as smart as..." Although, I was as chocolate as candy, had big brown eyes and was the nicest boy ever, "She'll never like me because..." "I was the lead actor in my life drama titled, **"The Causality of Failure."**

For the last six years I have been rewriting the script for the new production. Although the current production is off, off, off, Broadway and contains the same lead actor, the performance has been absolutely spectacular. I have demonstrated to myself that I can think, learn and be productive. I have demonstrated to myself that I can withstand being rejected by my peers. I have demonstrated to myself that I can withstand being examined by others. I have demonstrated to myself that the reflected appraisal of others reflects from a surface that although may have been "cracked" (No pun intended) it was never broken. I have demonstrated to myself that I can do anything as long as I put forth the required effort. Most importantly, I have learned I don't have to compare myself to others I just need to be the best me.

I was told recently that I am too focused on prison and need to begin thinking about a life outside of prison. My first thought was, **"But I'm in prison."** It is very difficult for me to conceptualize "getting out" when my first parole consideration date is not until 2024. I know this resistance is rooted in the fear of a parole denial, so I focus on being mindful of the present moment and "doing" what is before me. It is far more expedient, mentally and emotionally, to intellectualize my pessimism and cloak it in therapeutic terms and concepts.

Ironically, the statement regarding my being too focused on prison was made as I am dealing with a conflict involving my running.

The only time I give any thought to living outside of prison, is when I am running, but those thoughts are idyllic re-creations of the past centered on how I think my life would be if I had never used drugs. In fact, these thoughts are actually fully formed "lives" that I can access in an instant. Two to three hour runs are nearly effortless because I am some where and "someone" else. I am Joaquin, but "Dream Walk" is my ideal self, drug free, productive, and with no criminal record.

However, I am finding it increasingly more difficult to maintain the construct of my imaginary spaces during my runs because I have increased my training intensity in order to achieve a Boston qualifying time (3:15). I've stepped up my interval training (1 mile repeats at 6.15 x6) and begun higher intensity tempo runs (6 To 8 miles at 7.15). The effort required prohibits me from dreaming, because I am focused on performing the task, fully aware of my surrounding. If I want to get faster, I have to spend more time "here" during my runs, but I am accustomed to using my running as a means to mentally and emotionally escape from prison.

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I know I am maturing emotionally, because I have forfeited the emotional safety (dream state) in pursuit of my goal (Boston qualifying time), which results in additional exposure to my emotional and mental reality. This was something I was never able to do in my formative years and this inability contributed to the development and sustaining of my previous addiction to substances. This capacity has resulted in an increased amount of emotional freedom and an even greater sense of personal efficacy, which has led me to realize that the "idyllic past" conceptualization is a disservice to my actual and possible selves. I can no longer feed this dream, which I realize is a vigil of mourning for something that cannot be, it is not dealing with reality.

It is going to require a major expansion of thought and belief to achieve the escape velocity needed to accommodate the existential fear regarding the possible "death" of my societal liberty. This broadening of existential acknowledgement means that I have to cope with an aspect of reality which I have been ignoring. This coping requires I navigate the emotional dialectic inherent with considering parole (grant or denial), which includes exposure to all the requisite emotions of my reality, while maintaining a course of conduct (emotions and behavior) that is productive and consistent. I can no longer deny, avoid, rationalize, or minimize the desire to be physically free. I need to revel in that desire and bask in it as it is a good thing to want. No matter how much I have "succeeded" in prison I need to look forward to the opportunity to perform in society. Looking forward includes having faith centered in personal responsibility, which means having the ability to respond to the uncertainties of life in a productive manner and living the most robust and meaningful life possible, in this skin, no matter its location. I know I am capable because I have been able to simulate the mechanics and dynamics of this task demand in my running. Once again running has provided the needed "speed" for my continued vertical expansion. I have continuously discovered the ability to generalize skills developed through my running in other important aspects of my life. The **Tao of the Hamster Wheel** has proven to be effective once again.

Post Script: Earlier this week, as I was processing these issues, a friend of mine was working on an opera he is writing. Serendipitously, as I stopped to speak, he was singing the following line, "**I will be true, I will not flag nor fail, but remain ever firm in my vow.**" I will live and I will live well, committed to the pursuit of meaning, on purpose.