

July 2, 2011

Mindful prisoner #34

Anniversary of first day in Prison

Today is the two year anniversary of my entrance into prison. I had my sentencing hearing late in the afternoon of July 2. Then after listening to my sentence of 12 years - 144 months, I transferred in a van with five others to Mason, TN Detention Center.

Scared and feeling profoundly alone, I ached. Ached for my son. Ached for what I did to my marriage and my wife. While still married, I knew what I did had severed the trust which held us together for 18 years. We were tied only by our shared parentage of M.

Even though at that point I had a year to process my self destruction, looking back now I was still in a state of shock and denial. It would take time before I would recover from the descent into prison and to reconstruct (partially) the path that led me here.

Today, I still grieve our families lost present and future erased by my hands. But slowly the shock has given way to more clear thinking. The most important ingredient is a new honesty. The characteristic I share with everyone behind bars is the lack of honesty with ourselves and others. I lied to myself every day. On the surface, I was a "good/nice guy." The implication is that whatever "I" did, it must be for good or at worst neutral reasons. However, deep down below conscious thought, I felt the opposite. I was not a good guy at all, but a deeply unworthy person. This underlying unworthiness led me to seek outside endorsement of me as a "nice guy."

In reality, both universal judgments (good vs. unworthy selves) were lies that worked to keep my conscious mind in a cloud of illusion. My mind was totally divorced from the tension of my body held in my throat, around my heart, and in my stomach. The restrictions of throat, heart and breath reflect emotional blocks of speech and feeling. My isolation from heart, voice and breath represented obstacles to successfully addressing the existential issues of meaning.

My lifelong struggle with depression only increased as I aged. Seeking distractions only led to temporary satisfaction. The desire to quench the thirst led to more ultimately unsatisfactory actions. The unending cycle of desire, distraction and more desire reinforced the trance of unworthiness and depression leading to more futile behavior.

What changed from two or three years ago is awareness. Awareness of who I am, what I need and don't need as a human being, and what I can do to address my real existential needs (not my imagined insatiable desires). While still in process (the blog is part of the process), this path is leading toward a truly sustainable self. A self that feels stronger, more connected to others, and less separate and isolated than I can remember.