

Empowerment

Inspiration

Hope



# MyQuest

By Daniel Labbo

Are Prison  
and love  
compatible?

Hell on  
Earth

Transmuting  
Hell into  
Heaven is  
the work  
of Alchemy

Current Events - I've come a long way since I was incarcerated eight years ago. Back then I used my fists and my anger to solve problems. When depression overcame me I became suicidal and often landed up in the State hospital for the criminally insane. I have four vibrant scars from when the pain of life became so overwhelming I released it ~~in~~ from my veins with a razor. That was then.

Today my life is amazing. I've faced the demons that once tormented me, and I overcame them. This has allowed me to enjoy a rebirth. Today I am the creator and facilitator for the Mindful Living Group here at old Colony. In this group we use meditation and study ways to lead more productive and enjoyable lives. I'm a board member of Toastmasters and recently received my Competent Communicator Award. I'm a facilitator for the Alternatives to Violence Program. I'm writing a self-help book for inmates called The Basics. I hope to find the funding ~~to~~ to make this book available at no cost for inmates. I'm also working on creating a personal development organization called LifeQuest. When I'm released I plan on making LifeQuest ~~to~~ a reality. Finally, I write this blog in hopes that it may provide inspiration for someone.

My life today is more fulfilling and rewarding than it ever was before my incarceration. If there is such a thing as "justice", I hope I have fulfilled my end of the deal.

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So what now? I mean, now that I have come to a place where I have a sense of self-worth, confidence, and personal empowerment, what's next? The answer is obvious. It's time to give back.

I've already started the process of giving back with all the projects I'm working on. But to focus on those projects alone is to jump ahead too fast. There is something much more fundamental that I want to engage in. Something I believe is at the core of all our lives.

Love. I don't mean romantic love. Instead what I feel people need the most is supportive, kind, warm acceptance. Love to me is choosing to see past a person's social masks and personal flaws and instead choose to see the core being behind it all. See this and validate it. Choose to accept people for who they are, see their suffering and pain and let it move you. Let it stir you to want to help. Know that every person is "good", pure, innocent at the core. All behaviors and attitudes that fall short of this are just unskilled attempts to find relief from suffering.

Being in prison is like being in boot-camp for love. Just imagine how difficult it is to learn to ~~love~~ respond with love to all the negativity, ignorance, violence, and fear that exists in a prison environment. Yet, isn't this the place that needs it the most? Think about it. Most of the men here are in prison because they never learned how to cope with the intense pain and suffering ~~in a healthy way~~ of their lives in a healthy way. I know that was what brought me here. When I see someone being manipulative,

What is Love?

oops! switched to second person

Compassion or judgement? the choice is yours

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Judgement  
and  
labeling  
People just  
doesn't  
feel good,  
does it?  
So why  
do we do  
it?

hateful, or angry I no longer see a "jerk". Instead I see someone using the tools he has available (as maladaptive as they maybe) to get his needs met. I don't excuse people's unproductive behavior. In fact, love requires of me to hold people accountable for their actions that ~~may~~ they may have the chance to own up to their behavior and possibly grow. Love is not blind.

Anyway, my goal now is to learn how to love more fully and more truly. I still have problems with anger and judging people. I still act out of selfish needs now and then. I can still get defensive, and I still have plenty of ego-attachments. All these qualities keep me from being able to choose love as freely as I would like. Also, if I truly want to help people with all the projects I'm involved with I need to ~~be~~ cultivate a deeper sense of love, compassion, and understanding.

Most of  
is will be  
released  
someday.  
Will your  
community  
be safer  
through love  
or bitter  
judgment?

This is the focus of my quest today. I want to remove the obstacles that keep me from being able to love as fully and freely as I would like. The men in here need a little love (get your mind out of the gutter! :)) and I enjoy it a lot more than anger or judgement.

So what do you think? Am I using my time wisely or should I focus on more "practical" matters? Feel free to leave a comment or write me at the address above.

Today's Quote: "Young love is when you love someone because of what they do right. Mature love is when you love someone in spite of what they do wrong." Mark Goulston