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Nicki,

let me first say that there is no need to thank me for responding to you, I do this to reach out to people, and for people to reach out to me. It's my pleasure, and honor to respond. If you don't mind my asking what was the nature of your assessment? and why was I the person you picked first? In response to feeling lost and unsure of what to say I know how you feel to a certain extent because at times I feel unsure and lost about the content that I provide, and on some levels the people I converse with. I know that's probably a little different than what you're talking about, so I'll move on.

When I write my post I write them as if I'm with that person holding a conversation, because it's my belief that a word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged; It is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and time in which it is used. Nicki, I am and was inviting you in, and again there is no need to thank me, I should be thanking you for taking the time to communicate your thoughts to me.

I hate to be the one to bring sadness into your life, but unfortunately it's all true from my experience, and the experiences that others have shared with me. I've come to believe that the saying "out of sight, out of mind," is true for prisoners, and that a separation like this, especially if it is for a long time will show the true feelings, and emotional bonds of all of the people who have been, and are a part of your life. Love is a funny thing, if it's not built on a true and solid foundation of friendship first, chemistry, second, and true bonding on the emotional, mental, and physical levels—

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In our greatest time of need the pressure of the situation can cause those that we love, to abandon us out of fear or shame, and you're completely right it's easy to brush it off by saying "They obviously never thought much of me in the first place," but that's only on the outside, because on the inside, it causes hurt, disappointment, sadness, and a look into the "mirror of self" it makes a person ask "what's wrong with me."

That's a good question, I've never looked at it from the societal standpoint, but, I will say that in some environments, it (being in prison) is a "badge of honor," and taken as proof of manhood or "tough love," basically sacrificing your freedom for the sake of "protecting" "representing" or "honoring" your neighborhood. I also see it from your point of view, where the pressure of those in the community or social group can cause the person, or family to shun the individual due to shame, or wanting to impress others, and at times it can be "tough love," where the family believes that by letting the person go through the situation by themselves it will prevent them from going back, but most people in prison just find a reason to resent, grow frustrated, and fall into depression, or plain loneliness. It could also be like you said, something that people don't want to deal with or know how to deal with.

yes, it is in some ways a cultural thing, because as you said "American culture is very individualistic..." not to mention materialistic - some people were the main source of income, and strength (emotionally) for their family or spouse, so when

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that aspect of the relationship was taken they felt that they had no need for that person, so they moved on to the next person who could support them, not only that, but the individualistic mentality of Americans leads to a "what can you do for me from there" attitude, or the "I'll get to them when I feel like it," mentality. Wow!, Australia, that's on my places to travel list along with Mexico, England, and Paris. ~ What a coincidence, I've only read a couple of books, and saw a couple of documentaries, but it caught my attention. I hope you're willing to share what it's like there... I believe that in such a culture (collectivist) that their mentality would be to do whatever possible to keep their loved one okay, or at least provide enough for him/her to not have to depend on those within the prison for everything. In our prison system if you don't have anyone to help you from the outside, you have to have a "hustle" or a prison job; for me my "hustle" is poetry, or anything to do with writing. I can make a dollar, sometimes three, by writing a letter or song, but mostly I get paid for my poems.

I agree that there is shame attached to losing someone to prison, especially if you're the parent, because it causes you to think, "what did I do wrong?", "why did my child do this?", etc. A lot of people can't look past themselves, to the pain, or outcry of another, not only that, the media portrays every "criminal" as a lowlife, who would rather commit crimes than work, and although there are some like that, the majority are victims of poor choices or circumstance. Some people, couldn't find employment, and had no one to lend money to them, so instead of going to a homeless shelter, or food pantry, they robbed, or sold drugs - some were protecting themselves, etc.

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yes, it would be nice, if everyone thought like you, but I guess that's too hard for others to do - and I understand that people have a life to live, but I (and maybe I'm biased) feel like a few minutes out of a person's day is not too much to ask, but that's me.

yes! I agree with you it upsets me that people abandon their loved ones, but what else upsets me is that the same people who abandon you, are the same ones who act like you were their main priority when you get out.

I'm the same way, there's a reason for everything, so I ask 'why', as well; that's how we get a better understanding of the people, culture, and environment that we're in, or around.

yes, I'm glad that my mother is a constant in my life, as I said, she's the only person in my life who has been a constant in my life, and you're right a lot of people don't even have one person that visits or writes, I know how hard it is for me with my mother, so I can imagine how hard it would be for someone without a supportive person. you're right she feels like she has to be, for lack of a better term - the family, she tells me everything that goes on, so I'm up-to-date, but I hate that she feels the necessity to be "the family".

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I'm glad that you have decided to stay in touch even though your paper is written, and I hope that I can contribute something worthwhile to you day when you visit; Again no need to thank me, but I do truly appreciate your input.

Before I close, if you don't mind could you spread the word about my site to a few people? I would like to communicate with as many people as possible.

I hope I didn't make this too long, but I felt that I needed to express myself as much as possible.