

FROM: 23038076
TO: [REDACTED] The
SUBJECT: Titrating off follow-up
DATE: 01/18/2013 07:54:49 PM

mp.52

My mind as my teacher

1.23.13

Titration off meds - Follow-up.

The past month has been a series of teaching moments for me. On the whole the experience has been good going off the meds, but some experiences show I will need to be centered to handle the more charged emotions running through me. Both intense anger and sadness as well as positive feelings of happiness and wholeness are coming into my awareness with higher voltage and greater frequency.

A couple of particular wakeup calls in particular. One, I was waiting to go to choir practice and the compound officer closed the move. I started walking very fast toward the door to go to choir. The CO called and told me to stop that the move had closed. There is usually a delay before the door is locked after the call to close the move. I reacted to this by ignoring what the CO said and continued through the door and out. I reacted reflexively. Indignant that the CO would act the way he did, I walked away from the situation (fight or flight reactivity). I came back on the second command to stop. But I was not yet ready to let it go. I walked by him again and went back to my cell. The CO and I had a heart to heart later in the day. He was predictably patronizing as he dressed me down and I dutifully groveled smoothing his ego. Guard ego management is the number one skill all inmates learn.

This teaching moment reminded me of two things in particular. One is how easy it is for me to react judgmentally. My indignation was a reaction against my judgmental reaction to the CO's action. It was a reaction, quick as a reflex. When I react without mindfulness, this is an outcome that could happen often. Two, the situation provoked strong emotion and I reacted in a habitual way - walk away - immediately. I can remember many a fight with partners that I would react similarly. Thoughts. I cannot control my initial reactions because they are just that habitual reactions from my conditioned mind. But once the indignant thought arrives I have a choice - if I am mindful. With drugs, all the emotional voltage is much lower I have not had as much difficulty handling the current. But going off drugs, means with the power turned up (both positive and negative) I will have to be more aware of my reactivity. I could easily see how a breath and a simple statement of where I was headed and why would have accomplished what I wanted. It will take some practice, but I know now something that I did not know before: that I can handle the emotional charge and it will not overwhelm me. Before my fear would not allow me to go there. I know my fears were misplaced now, given my experience over the past six weeks.

The other situation was another old habit (listening to the radio as a form of distraction) which I tried out at work recently. It was a strange feeling that I could not place till by the end of the work day. I was feeling a general sense of unease and distraction. I felt a little fuzzy mentally. My body remembered what it felt like when I practiced this form of distraction before, and I did not like it. This is what I felt like all the time! WOW! I want none of that. I kept the radio in the cell the next day and I went back to feeling much more calm, centered and present. It was so much easier to be without my old friend the radio playing in the background. I still listen to the radio, but it is more for specific programs or music and not as a form of musak always on in the background of my life.

My unmedicated mind is teaching me how to ride the waves of happiness and anger, Joy and fear. The positive feelings are truly new. I do not remember feeling so at peace, calm, even happy and joyful. Maybe when I was younger, but not as an adolescent onward. Getting used to the waves constantly breaking is the biggest hurdle. Waves of peace are followed by waves of agitation and back again (if I do not latch on to the agitation and make them worse). The key is trusting that any bad moments will be temporary and good moments will come, while they too will be temporary I can choose to be truly there for them as they happen.

allan lummus #23038076
mindful prisoner

po box 1010 bastrop,tx 78602
betweenthebars.org