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mp.58 Depression 5.5.13

I usually do not write for the blog when I am depressed. I wait till I am feeling better. Which is good for some things, but bad for others. One weakness of this approach is that I do not record how my mind works when I am depressed. So I decided to look back at my journal and record some thoughts on this past session.

I was moved to a new room with one of the infamously bad cellies. I started ruminating on my bad circumstances. My first cycle of story lines follows the line of self pity and victimhood (step 7 character flaws). I am being treated unfairly. Poor, poor, pitiful me. This is an old line going all the way back as far as my memories take me. It feels comfortable and normal like an old well worn coat or pair of shoes. But the comfort comes from the regularity and history and not from the qualities that the old clothes/shoes bring with them. The old shoes have holes and let the water in and the coat is scratchy, smelly and too hot for the situation.

Soon after victim troupe arises I shift to another normal defensive mode: withdrawal. I pull within myself put up my shell. I protect myself from social danger by insulating my "self" from all others. Another very well worn coat. While maybe useful in the midst of particular situation, it quickly becomes self defeating. By withdrawing, I only increase the intensity of the victim theme. My lack of social interaction helps to keep stories lines strong and unchallenged.

Self defeating behavior is not something new for me. Never forget question that my therapists asked. So you moved to Knoxville to get out of one relationship and do you think you sent yourself to prison to get out of the next relationship? Boy that took the air of me. While I doubted that it was literally true, because I had left the marriage once, I certainly could do that again. But on a more profound level. I could see my blatantly illegal actions as a form of self punishment and destroying of my whole life (yes marriage was apart but only a part) marriage, job, meaning, purpose. I felt empty in so many ways, I do see my actions as a social suicide of the "self" that I had created.

After the victim/withdrawal cycle has run its course, I respond with a new troupe that is especially prevalent in prison: gossip and character assassination. I will not be a victim, I will not be bullied, I will be the avenger. I will get my revenge the way everyone around me gets revenge: talking smack behind people's backs. This felt good for a couple of days with the psychic rush of action (after contemplating my inaction or victim status). But after the initial adrenaline, the effects of this type of behavior on me would not be good. As the saying goes, anger is the poison we take that we think will kill someone else. It is tempting to attack when we feel threatened, but it is a short lived experience of happiness. After the initial energy surge, the blowback is much longer and more lasting.

Eventually after a bout a week or so, I finally regained some sense of equanimity. I saw how my stories were not ultimately satisfying. I was glad that I did not act on my fantasies of victim or avenger. I relaxed and breathed some clean air into my lungs. What seemed like a terrible blow only a week before, became just another cell like any other. I have learned to move my center of happiness from outside me (making my environment perfect for me) to inside me (resting in my own sense of enoughness). My depression lifted as let go of my self defeating story lines. It is interesting to see how my own constructed sense of deficient self is so central to maintaining depression symptoms. While the initial depressive symptoms are most likely have physical sources, my reaction to the depression are mental kindling to the fire. This recent episode, helped to so me how I stoked the fire unwisely.

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