

## Counterting Verbal Abuse

One of the hardships in prison is withstanding the verbal abuse. It is often insidious. Some guards and other staff use it to degrade and demean inmates. I am threatened, bullied, and made to question if my life has any value at all. It happens repeatedly throughout my time in prison. The fact that this prisoner is "write-up free" bears testimony to my ability to overcome adverse conditions. I resist sinking into the infantile behavior modeled by those around me. The result is a disciplinary free record. It spans over a decade.

The guards habitually antagonize those under their authority. They do it to goad convicts into rash, destructive behaviors. It is also a way to break some people's spirit. It is neither constructive nor productive.

I am subject to the same abuse all inmates encounter. I choose to act differently. I deserve to be treated with courtesy. My dignity as a human being should be preserved. What chance is there for my growth if I am made to feel fatalistically inferior?

Today I had a guard make two remarks that were totally uncalled for. His conduct was unprofessional at best. I followed a colleague of his directions to eat before picking up my medication. When I did and went to the clinic for my antipsychotic drugs, I found the window closed. The nurse was refusing to dispense my prescription. I was unable to talk to her directly.

I approached the guard in charge of supervising the medication lines. He was confrontational. He said, among other things, that I should have taken my drugs before dinner. And, it was my problem. Several inmates tried to explain to him that the sergeant and another guard directed us to eat first. He was unmoved. He sent me to a different line. In moments he told me I was now in the wrong one and that I should return to my cell. I told him that I really needed my medication.

He then told me to take a seat and he would see if I might get my drugs. He reiterated that I should have arrived before the meal. I said "I was following orders" and "All I know is that when I miss taking my medication I become psychotic." He asked me to say that again and I repeated it. Then he spoke, changing my words slightly: "If you go psychotic I'll put a boot in your a\*\*".

I informed him he misunderstood, and that my meaning of psychotic was idfferent from his. He then turned to another inmate and said: "Those are nice thick shoelaces you have there. Maybe you could give them to this guy so he can hang himself". I refused to retaliate and quietly sat on the bench waiting to see if I would receive my medication. He entered the clinic building and returned a moment later. He said I could go to the window for my issue.

The nurse gave me the prescribed dosage and I left without further incident. However, I was humiliated and angry.

I want to take action. I may file a "602". That is a legal complaint form. The man's behavior was inappropriate. I want to see the guards at the clinic receive training in the knowledge of basic mental health terminology. This guy was ignorant about what it means to be psychotic. Yet, he supervises people with illnesses such as schizophrenia. I know he needs compassion.

It is my intention to pray for this man. I know he speaks to other inmates about The LORD. But, his actions cause me to wonder what his eternal destiny will be. I am a child of God. I was bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus. The MOST HIGH considers me to be His adopted son. I am a joint heir with Christ and He is my protector. May His mercy be upon this guard.

In closing I want to ask a few questions. Do you believe all people deserve being afforded common courtesy? If so, how do you think it needs to be communicated to authority figures? Finally, how would you handle a similar situation to mine?

I hope pondering those questions leads you to examine your interactions. Maybe they will even change the way you treat others, or, allow them to treat you. Remember, we all need to get along. The more freedom we have, the more responsibility we must shoulder.

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