

Jack McFadden #D-34424
CSP-LAC / A-2-118
P.O. Box 4430
Lancaster, CA 95359

Dealing with Loss in Prison

Well, as they say, "Another day in the crazy house" and I still haven't lost my mind! I have to admit I am still not sure what a "BLOG" is or how it works but here I am again. I admit that I am mostly writing for myself. Trying to find rhyme or reason in the loss of my friend. I am still trying to get passed the guilt I feel for understanding why my friend took her own life. I still feel the guilt and pain for not being able to give her a reason to live. I know enough about psychology to understand that it isn't my fault and yes, I understand what a Doctor would tell me and a counselor would say... It isn't my fault, she had emotional issues that had nothing to do with me. I know all this and yet like anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide it doesn't help. For anyone who has done a lot of time in prison we understand the attraction to suicide. I use that term loosely. "Attraction". Yet, it is true. I am as far from suicidal as anyone around but I can understand that attraction. Life in prison is not just about punishment and time. It is about thoughts and pain AND REFLECTION. The reflection comes constantly even when we don't want it. The guilt comes with the reflection. At least for those who are not psychopaths! Most are not even though we are portrayed as such. I learned many years ago that a person can only feel so much guilt and say "Sorry" so many times.

That is what my friend Wendy never got the chance to learn. What I learned years ago. I fell (got locked up) in 1983 when I was 19. I learned how stupid I was and learned to feel guilt and compassion. I learned to say "I am sorry" and mean it. I learned I have to get past the guilt and to learn and grow from my mistakes. I learned that I don't have to be "That person". Wendy didn't have the chance to learn this. All Wendy knew was guilt, pain and sorrow. All Wendy could see in the future was "MORE" loss, guilt and sorrow with so much pain.

People have asked me what it is like to do so much time in prison and how i deal with it. It is hard to explain how there are only so many different options for us. Especially for those who do "Hole Time" as so many of us have done. (Segregation for doing something wrong. Also known as Solitary confinement as most are left alone with nothing, no books, no TV, no nothing) You lose your mind slowly, thinking of nothing but violence, chaos and stupid stuff. You can begin to hate the officers, and blame them for your stupidity. You can give up and end it all. Something far too many do. You can give into the madness of prison life, the politics and games of prison is an easy escape for many. It keeps you from "thinking" too much. Or you

can focus on yourself and find reasons to live. You can become stronger and harder. It is not such a good thing to become harder but it is something we have to do. Loss in prison is just something we have to deal with. The loss of friends and family are "Just how it is". Not all to death, usually to life and the world and time. It is just "How it is".

We learn to live with it and we learn to become stronger and harder. My amazing Friend Wendy never learned this. She lost herself in the pain and loss. I wish she had learned to get past that. I wish I could have helped her get past all of it but I didn't and I feel so guilty for it. I have found since I found out she died that I am not nearly as strong or hard as I thought. I have learned it still sucks and I miss my friend more than words can explain. I have learned the world is a much darker place without her.

I sit here for hours and wonder what life would have been like with Wendy in it with more than just letters. I wonder what life will be like without her in it at all. I reread her letters and cry because I find so many things that "Now" feel like warning signs. Then I snap out of it and realize her whole life was a warning sign. I sit and wish and cry and then feel the guilt and the pain that feels like it will never end and then it does lessen but I know that it will never end. I will just learn to live with it and that makes me sad all over again.

Loss in prison is so hard to explain. We have no outlet. This is a "Man's Prison" and to show weakness is to invite the idiots, the predators. For me, I have been down so long I don't care anymore what others think. I am the "O.G." the "Old Timer" who has "Put in his work" and therefore I am left alone when in my moods. In prison there isn't really anyone to lean on. There are friends who understand and can relate but there is no Funeral to go to. No wake or a get together to talk and feel the company of others. Loss in prison is dealt with alone, at night when the monsters come out. It is night when the thoughts wont stop coming and all those things you would share with others out in the free world come crashing into your mind and you want them to stop but just like those that are free... they don't stop. They just keep coming.

I try to embrace the sadness and the loss of my Beautiful, Smart, Kind and Loving friend Wendy because she asked me "Don't forget me". So I try this BLOG and hope that others will read it and others will remember the Woman in a South African prison that couldn't take the pain anymore and ended it. I hope they will understand she was amazing and was a good and kind person. I Hope

that someone who reads this will realize that just because a person is in prison does not mean we do not feel. Wendy felt too much. Wendy was a woman that I will admire and remember for all my life. I hope and I pray for the pain to lessen inside me and yet I feel guilty for wanting this because to lessen the pain is to lessen the love and memory of Wendy. That is not something just for prisoners! The confusion and pain of the loss is so intense and so overwhelming at times but I will remember Wendy.

Loss in prison is different than loss for those of you who are free. But... Loss for anyone is hard. I honestly don't even know if anyone will even read this or if I am doing it correctly. A BLOG I mean. 1983 was a long time ago and what little i know about the internet now is what I read in books or see on TV. I use words in writing to get things out. It helps, anyone who writes a lot understands this. This is my release. I am not sure why the people at M.I.T. decided to do this but I sincerely thank them. I haven't even used this until now and I thank them for the chance. This helps a lot more than I truly understand. I don't know if anyone is even reading this but if so, thank you. Please take some friendly advice, make sure you tell those you love that you care and need them. You can never know what is going on inside them. It only takes a second and everyone craves love and enjoys being wanted and needed. Prison is the home of the unwanted but we do not corner the market. Everyone feels alone and feels pain for this or that. So please, take a few minutes and tell those you love they are loved and wanted and needed. It will make them smile and it is worth it.

Jack