

THERAPY

I have been involved in all kinds of self-help and behavior modification programs. From 1998-2005 I was a Lifer-mentor/Co-facilitator for a Therapeutic Community. From 2005-Present, I participate, help organize/build, or facilitate short term programs in prison (Short term programs are Non-permanent programs). During my work with these men as well as myself, I have learned a great deal. Lately, I've come to realize the need for more programs that work with outside people with troubled lives to share and participate with in-prison programs. So they can better save their lives before they end up in prison themselves. (I have plans to revolutionize how programs and prisons are run in the future).

I am currently participating in a short term program. Alternative to Domestic Aggression and Violence. Where men gather weekly and discuss past behavior. Discuss how we utilized particular methods to abuse family and self. Some realizing their actions for the first time are abusive, others sharing how they changed their lives. Most all the men share personal stories. I want to share with you today the story of a man who displayed such strength and courage yesterday.

On the topic "Economic Abuse" a few men shared how they used this method in their past lives. One of the men shared his story. Let's call him José. José spoke about how in his early 30's he met his wife. José was a heroin user. The girl he met was a speed user. Unbeknownst to the both, they sought each other out. They both sought a partner that would help and allow them to still be who they are and do what they do. José came into the relationship with no children, she came in with 3 children by 2 different men. They both fell in love, moved in together, married and had a child of their own.

José shared the origin of his idea of responsibility. He said his father died when he was young. He dropped out of school and took over his father's actual job. He was old enough to do the work but he did not have the knowledge of taking care of the responsibilities. So he would give his check to his mother and she would pay the bills. If ever he needed money to do the things he wanted to do, she would gladly give him what could be spared.

José brought this form of dependant manhood into his adult life. He knew he could not trust himself with his paycheck. If left to him, he would spend it all on his addiction. So what he did was give his paycheck to his wife. She would first pay all the bills, make sure the children were taken care of, then she would give José some money (that he would use to get high) then she would use what was left for herself to get high. Together they were the perfect co-dependant addicts who helped each other.

José was asked if he felt responsible even for the children that were not his? He shared that he never looked at them as not being his. He went into some of the joyful things he shared with he and the children. Then he shared about the day he says was the worse day of his life.

José admitted that he didn't think he was controlling at the time, yet he sees that he was today. On this worse day of his. José had asked his wife for some money so he could buy some beer. She refused to give him what he asked for and gave him only a little money. José felt emasculated and disrespected when she did not give him the money he asked for. Then he made what he calls his mistake. He slapped his wife. José still seen the money as his even after giving it to his wife for the family. Which is why he got upset.

The fight escalated and ended up outside. The neighbors called the police. Although the wife said she was not struck, José was still arrested and eventually convicted and currently serving time for said Domestic Abuse.

Understanding the dynamics of this relationship and out of curiosity I asked a follow-up question. "I don't mean to b all up n yo bizniz. I am curious. Since you have been arrested, has your wife been able to maintain? Do you still have contact with her and the children?" This brave man stood in front of about 40 other men in prison. His emotions building as his mental picture of today's reality becomes more clear and the feelings refreshed. The chapel room we all sat, became stone quiet, because all could see this man's pain and know that it is soon to be transferred into words and we all want to respect this mans...life.

Tears streamed from his eyes. The more he fought to control himself the more he lost control. His sobs became loud and open. Soon after a few minutes to grieve for his self and thoes he loved, he shared with us the outcome of his life.

He looked at me and said, "No. I have no relationship with my family." José shared with us that after he came to jail. His wife seeked another man. She hooked-up with this new guy. He was a speed user himself. It did not take long before the domino effect began. They lost the car, then the house. His wife's oldest child was a daughter. She was molested by Mom's new boyfriend. Because mom did not leave him the daughter committed suicide. Leading to her losing the rest of the children. The father of the other 2 children rescued his children. He could have adopted José's child also, but he blamed José for all the problems and felt he had no responsibility in his child. Allowing the child to be lost in the system. José admitted that he has no idea where his child is? He has been in prison now for 3 years, with 2 more to go. He has not heard from his child in over a year now.

Needless to say. We all felt honored for José to be brave, open and honest enough to share so personally with us. After the meeting it became so clear to me. Something has to be done. Yet so many people do not care, and the ones who do are powerless. José's family dynamics are not just José's problem. This is societies problem also. No matter how successful one becomes, how happy one can get, how caring or rich one can be. A civilization is only as civilized as it's lowliest civilian. There are so many reason's families like José's exist, and ther are a lot of families like this. Mostly it is the lack of concern for people with fucked-up lives.

Contrary what popular belief is. The MAJORITY of prisoners want to do 2 things. Help ourselves and others like us. The average person don't want to help people like José. No problem. The average person probably could'nt help a person like José. However, too many average people hinder attempts of others trying to help people like José. I belive had José been able to attend a program in prison like the one he was in yesterday, and heard someone share what he did. He would have been able to change the outcome of his own life. Nothing is 100%.

Anyway, I have plans to change things. Prisons are not in the business of fixing people. I just hope others can come up with REAL solutions to these problems. Because civilization depends on it. My best to José, his family, people like José and all who want a better life for self and others.

MICHAEL
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