

Under Pressure

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Life hands me challenging opportunities, I am rising to take on many of them these days. To some around me, it seems unwise. However, I learned that reasonable stress in life is beneficial. It creates growth, excitement and a sense of accomplishment. More importantly, the Parole Board will be most interested in seeing how I cope amid the demanding situations I encounter.

I have a disability that greatly hindered my life prior to coming to prison. It was a huge factor in my arrest and conviction. I suffer from a ~~met~~ mental disease that can be debilitating. The episodes of illness seem to be triggered by a combination of stress and depression. The Parole Board will refuse to release me if I fail to demonstrate the ability to manage my symptoms. So, it is of the utmost importance that I learn to live and cope under pressure.

I test my limits and grow beyond my perceived abilities frequently. Success is becoming a way of life for me. I came a long way from being a man who was isolated, insulated and bored with his existence.

I am currently in college with a double major of General Business and American Studies. I am an active deacon in the Sovereign Grace Bible Church of Chowchilla. I also take part in other activities offered in the prison. It all produces more stress. It is added to the common pressures of living in this environment. It is my hope that someday my growth and maturity will be evident to all and that I am granted a release from my incarceration.

In the mean time I try to make each day count towards my goals. I schedule the hours carefully. Each moment is precious.

I work to balance my desires for the future with my current needs. Sometimes I get out of synch. I end up putting too much effort into certain areas while neglecting others. It never achieves the best results. I usually find my negative thought patterns, or emotions when I take an inventory. I discover how they crept in as a result of too much activity in one, or more disciplines. Then I must regroup, refocus and prioritize.

It is all a learning process. I make progress by knowing how to manage the way I use my time, energy and resources. Through many errors I am discovering what I value the most. It frees me from being distracted by lesser concerns. The whole cycle causes me to focus my efforts. In doing so, I am achieving unexpected results. I am discovering and utilizing potential I never saw within myself. It makes me wonder about the heights I may reach in the future.

All these discoveries were unknown until my experience under pressure. I no longer fear stress. I see it is to be embraced. Like most things in life, it only becomes hazardous when it is overindulged. I call that state distress. It is a different matter. Ease and comfort are no substitute for the satisfaction that comes from growth producing activity. It requires me to deal with the accompanying emotional strain.

In conclusion, I know today that being under pressure can be a good thing when it is properly managed. It causes me to grow and mature. It is preparing me for the challenges of being paroled. It also makes it possible to feel the excitement and satisfaction of accomplishment everyday. Thus, I no longer run from the strain of stress but work through it.

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