

Imagine

Imagine not having your very own private bathroom, kitchen, bedroom and living room. Imagine having a small room with no doors and only a waist high wall for privacy, a living room, a backyard where you can only go out to at certain hours; not before 7:30 am or after 9: 00 pm, for a certain amount of time throughout the day; sometimes not at all it, is all very noisy and crowded all day long and seem so very small; like a giant party of strangers where you are never having fun and they never leave. Imagine your backyard not covered with soft green grass or beach sand but is with uneven desert sand that's crummier than dirt itself, the moon is your only escape and you can't reach it. Imagine feeling like you're not getting enough air; even in your own back yard. Imagine being claustrophobic. Imagine not being allowed any personal electronics. Imagine you are not physically small, uncomfortable but still must fit in your small world. Imagine hard concrete under your feet everywhere you step. Imagine palm trees; not the tall beautiful flourishing ones that make you think and dream of paradise with white sandy beaches and crystal clear blue waters but the ones that are leaned to the side like a degenerative curved spine, dried out and sits on a desolate desert floor sharing real estate with rocks, ugly dirt and cactus. Imagine no sit down baths. Imagine a world where you are allowed showers, with conditions, they are fully open and exposed, have timers to turn them on and off, you're not allowed to take them at your convenience or when you want, say when you come in from work, play, school or any other activity where you feel you need to get in a shower thereafter and you never get to shower alone. Imagine a group of strangers showering all around you, less than two feet away; their excess water splashing all over your body and no matter how much you try to convince yourself you can make it through; get used to it all, you never do; especially the excess water from the strangers invading your body without your express permission. Imagine stepping out of the shower and further being invaded by other stranger's eyes as they watch you towel off. Imagine washing up in the sink, throughout the day and a stranger pulls up next to you; sometimes more than one, and blows his/her nose in the sink without warning, which is not only disgusting but also sounds like a bullhorn at 5 am and you have nowhere to go because you were already in the middle of brushing your teeth. Imagine everything you sit on is

wood, steel or concrete with no back support. Imagine only being allowed to use plastic utensils, cups and bowls. Imagine having to sanitize everything you touch before you touch it. Imagine running out of lotion in the winter and you have very dry skin. Imagine sitting on a fully exposed toilet; no door or partition, no air vents, the floor around the toilet is not always clean, you have to cover the steel toilet seat; no seat cover, before you take a sit down, the wall directly in front of you; a foot and a half from your knees, is covered with nose and bowl discharge at any given time and it's like watching a horror movie then a stranger sits on the toilet next to you; about a foot away. Imagine having to stare at the horror wall or at this stranger. Imagine, because the two toilets are so close, the pants around your ankles are not strong enough to keep your knees from touching the strangers knee, your stomach decides it wants to be upset and the stranger wants to carry on a conversation with you while you are trying to do your business. Imagine that.

Imagine having only half of your current bedroom as your private domain, your sanctuary which is not so private. Imagine only having a twin size steel bed to sleep on with a tough mattress that is in no way soft. Imagine when you do try to sleep your thighs go numb. Imagine the only other furniture you are allowed to use is a bolted down steel foot locker size cabinet, you only have six cubic foot of space and all of your possessions must fit inside of it. Imagine several strangers sharing your room, the steel bunk beds are lined up like an army barracks but are only spaced a foot and a half apart and every time you sit on your bunk you have to look at one of the strangers. Imagine not being compatible with the strangers in your room. Imagine trying to take a nap, get some sleep, sleep early, sleep in or otherwise get a little quiet time to yourself but you never can because either the strangers want to stay up late, play their music all day, snore loudly, make annoying sounds, keep the bright overhead light on, get up too early and make quiet enough noise to arouse you out of your sleep, an alarm sounds, announcements are made over the very loud loudspeaker or the TV is too loud. Imagine only being provided three shirts, pants, socks and underwear. Imagine being told how to wear those clothes; tuck your shirt in, etc. Imagine washing those clothes during your shower time because you do not trust throwing your clothes in the bend and mixing them with all of the stranger's clothes or you risk not getting them returned to you. Imagine hanging those clothes on the end of your bunk bed under a small desk size fan to dry; if you own one. Imagine not being able

to afford the extra soap to wash your clothes. Imagine having to stretch a single tube of tooth paste and a deodorant for up to three to four months at a time because when you go to do your monthly purchase they have run out, you are limited to what you can spend and the amount of items you may purchase. Imagine strangers all around you coughing and sneezing all day long with out covering their mouth. Imagine the two daily meals you are provided; unseasoned, sometimes not fully cooked, not enough to sustain you throughout the day, not always suitable to your taste, you get fed up with it all because you have been eating the same things for years and your daily lunch (small kid sized lunch-in-a-bag) is stamped with "must be consumed within four hours" or you will be subjected to a write up for hoarding state food that was given to you by the same officer who threatens to write you up but you could use an apple or two small graham crackers to help you get through to the next days meal and every other year *lunch* is being threatened to be discontinued because of state budget cuts. Imagine having to swat at flies every time you eat something; even outside. Imagine retreating to the only place you feel you can be productive, get some solitude, be creative, get a (very) quick piece of mind and it never happens. Imagine in an attempt to defeat boredom on a daily basis, trying to find an activity that will sustain, stimulate, motivate, keep you busy and sane and each time you look up to take a break, pause, breathe, refresh/refocus your eyes to get away from all of the noise, foolishness and weird things the strangers are doing, there is always someone there to interrupt your train of thought and tranquility. Imagine having to deal with hundreds of constantly changing chaotic personalities all at once. Imagine not being able to complete a basic thought without more than five tries on the same thought and feeling as though the only way you can accomplish this feat is to sneak or zone out to do it in the middle of complete chaos. Imagine negative strangers everywhere you look and they are all complainers. Imagine being made to sit on your bunk and counted several times a day like cattle under a bright overhead light. Imagine being in this situation for decades and you've convinced yourself that you can handle it but then all it takes is one simple minor disagreement for you to relapse and get into a physical altercation, then you learn you cannot handle it as you may have thought. Imagine walking for miles in your small space and never getting anywhere. Imagine the leaps and bounds you must endure for days, weeks, months and years just to stay the course, reach your goals and fulfill your personal

worth. Imagine waking to loud heavy keys every other hour throughout the night. Imagine getting out of bed at five A. M. at least five days a week, getting dressed, prepared, travel to a location just to learn you did not have to report for school or work. Imagine not always getting jelly with your peanut butter. Imagine going in with all black hair and coming out nearly all gray. Imagine having only one lung and trying to suck a giant pachyderm elephant through a small drinking straw. Imagine the tremendous headache afterwards.

Imagine not having to imagine!

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