

Reply ID:
7m8b

Dear TranscriptLion,

March 9, 2017

I just wanted to take a moment to say "thanks" to you, and everyone else involved in this project, for taking time out of your day to upload all of the writings generated by me and others in my situation. Living behind bars is difficult, even under the "best" of circumstances. Sadly, mine are far from the "best," or even "ideal," but over time, I've learned the true meaning of the "Serenity Prayer," and just as importantly, patience. This blog, and the comments left by those who've uploaded my posts, as well as those who've read them, have helped me through many a difficult time. I've even been "found" by two different people from my past, one of which was a very dear friend of mine that I lost contact with shortly after beginning my term. Perhaps most touching of all, though, is the fact that I was recently contacted by someone who wanted to apologize for their part in having falsely accused me. While this does nothing to open the bars that have wrongfully imprisoned me for more than 14-years now, it has helped me sleep a little easier at night.

As far as my "beautiful words" are concerned, anytime someone takes time out of their day to respond to something I wrote, it acts as a major boost to my self-esteem, but when someone says something as nice as what you've said, well, let's just say that it takes my self-esteem to whole new heights, and it was greatly appreciated. Thank you.

In regards to "better situations," when I wrote this, it was in 2005. I was in Corcoran, dealing with some of the most corrupt prison guards you can possibly imagine. They were routinely tearing up my outgoing and incoming mail, their way of retaliating against me for having stood up for those in my housing unit who were too mentally disabled to stand up for themselves. As a result of their interference with my mail, and a number of other things they did to me, I lost contact with just about everyone I ever knew. To make matters worse, during a cell search, they intentionally destroyed the contact information for everyone I knew, further isolating me. Complaining was futile, though I tried anyway, but in the end, I was so depressed and despondent that I tried ending my life. It was shortly afterwards that I wrote part of this blog, putting it into a folder and forgetting about it until the other day, when a pen pal started talking to me about depression. I dug it out to share with them, mainly to show them that I understood, at which time I thought it might be a good idea to share it with the world, via my blog. After having read your kind response, I was glad I did.

On a side note, there's no denying the fact that prisons are filled with some truly deplorable people, but they're also filled with plenty of decent people who made some mistakes, admittedly, some more often than others. Still, at the end of the day, the vast majority of us will be getting out, sooner or later, most of us later than sooner. While prisons aren't meant to be 5-star resorts, it should be noted that making them Hell-on-Earth serves no purpose other than to worsen whatever disorders that caused our downfall. If you treat someone like an animal long enough, it's only a matter of time before they start acting like an animal. This has been proven, time and time again, and yet, somehow, we seem to ignore these studies and insist on treating our

prisoners as if they're not worthy of basic human decency. This in turn only helps to perpetuate the cycle, but this doesn't mean this is how it has to be. If you're reading this, then you can make a difference, in more ways than you could possibly imagine, simply by extending your hand in friendship to someone who's incarcerated. It might seem like a trivial thing to you, but I assure you that in here, it's not. Your action has a ripple effect, touching not only the person you write, but to everyone that person deals with, not just then and there, but later on in life, when they return to society. Your act of friendship might not change the world, but it can start the ball rolling in the right direction.

It's difficult to say how, or more importantly, why, such a seemingly small thing like this could have such a tremendous impact, but it does. I think it has something to do with the fact that it's so difficult to make a genuine friend in here. For reasons too many to count, you can't allow others in here to get to know the "real you." In prison, kindness is viewed as a weakness, which means that people rarely, if ever, display acts of kindness towards their fellow inmates, and if they do, then you can rest assured that it comes with a price. With pen pals, however, you're given a chance to be yourself, to react with friendship and kindness, to develop the skills you need to make it out in a free society, as opposed to being kept in a cage and treated like an animal until the day you're released back into society, foaming at the mouth and barking at the slightest movement.

Either way, if you're reading this, then you might want to think about extending your hand in friendship to someone while they're still serving their sentence. You'd be surprised, not just at how much of an impact you could make in their life, but how much of an impact they can make in yours. Should this be something you're genuinely interested in, but have reservations, then by all means, share them with me. I have no problem whatsoever with showing you how to extend yourself in friendship to someone in here without placing yourself in a situation in which an unscrupulous person might be able to take advantage of you. After all, while there are many genuinely decent people in here, there are just as many people in here who simply aren't ready to change. At least, not yet.

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