



TO BLOG OR not TO BLOG?

I'm not sure what other prisoner blogs even look like, how they write, or what readers come to such places expecting to read (and why)....

But, for me--in a lot of ways--this blog has been a kind of memoir.

When I first started, it was in hope that one of two things (or both) would occur: a) I would reconnect with my kids, my estranged wife, my family, and lost friends. b) That in the event of my death, I would leave behind something of myself for any of my kids, exes, my family, or lost friends, that might have forgiven me at some point later in life, and maybe wanted to know what became of me.

My blog has accomplished those things, and so much more. But, along the way, I have lost control of my emotions at dozens (if not more) points. I probably would have been better off had I NOT posted anything in December.... It's a bad time of year for me ... or anyone really. Those of us either away from loved ones, or without them entirely.

And while self-deprecating comments can be funny, and for some readers a nice entertainment--self-pity, however, is utterly repellent. During such spouts, I'm likely to cast aspersions and/or judgments on people--and that's wrong, I know it, and wish I could stop.

I'm going to give an excerpt here, that is from a piece that I assign to my Creative Writing students each semester on the topic of personal essays and memoir--it's something I've apparently forgotten to practice myself recently:

AVOID WRITING OUT OF VENGEANCE

If you're adamant about not divulging your writing prior to publication, there are other ways to minimize [emotional] damage. "I try to be as just and clear and balanced as I can, to see if from the other person's viewpoint as well as my own, if possible," says Phillip Lopate, essayist and editor of The Art of the Personal Essay. "In short, I try never to write with an ax to grind."

Gail Greiner, whose essays have appeared in publications such as Cosmopolitan and Real Simple, advises writers to follow the advice of her former instructor: Write from love.

"That was probably what was missing from a piece I wrote that hurt someone close to me," she says. "There wasn't a sense of love and understanding about the person I wrote about. It came across as being judgmental." (1)

There is a Chinese proverb that has it thus: There are three truths--my truth, your truth, and the truth. I write with the third in mind, but the first creeps its subjective way in whenever it can, and that's something I have to work on.

I won't lie--Christmas this year broke something in me.

But, I'm going to move forward, and past it.

I've recently ALLOWED myself to be brought down emotionally, and for no reason whatsoever, other than to let someone else feel better. I believe I thought I could just remain outside of it, but ... it didn't quite work out, I got emotional, and lowered myself to their level when I know I'm better than that. I cast stones and snide comments.

In the coming year, I plan to return back to my intellectual self, and forget all of that crabbiness that possessed me over the past few months--I have work to do, and plans for my future that I do intend to follow through with. For too many years I've been focused on helping others, when I need help myself. 2019 will be the year of me!

Not fully abandoning altruism--just, working a little me time in.

The question I face now, and pass to you:

Should I continue writing blog posts?

M

1. Kim Schworm Acosta, "Write Personal Without Hurting Your Relationships", Writer's Digest, September 2009, pg.60