

Finding Appreciation

Our lives are filled with many things that we don't appreciate. For instance, we rarely appreciate someone who yells and curses at us, or someone who talks down to us and belittles us. There're millions of things that we can come up with in our live that we honestly do not appreciate.

However, let's take a moment to reflect on things in our lives that we do appreciate: our children, our family, our freedom, a nice home-cooked meal, a nice pair of shoes, someone to love us, sex, a cookout with friends and family. The list can go on and on.

Things in our lives that we cherish need to be placed first so we can always enjoy these things. What we enjoy should always come before things that make us feel like crap after we do them.

When I came to prison, I lost my ability to do as I wanted. **I lost all freedoms**. The things that I once took for granted I now cherish. When you set foot in prison you're willingly giving up many things you once had, if not all of them.

One thing I lost is my privacy. For the last nine-and-a-half years, each time I want to come out of my cell I have to be strip-searched. My choice to not be humiliated is taken from me. I have to get completely naked in front of another man in order to go to a visit, yard, library, talk to a doctor or counselor. Anything I want to do out of my cell, I have to remove my clothes. If you decide to continue the path of self-destruction, **you will be made to do the same thing**. If you don't do it you will be made to d it – officers will spray you with tear gas, hold you down and cut your clothes off.

This is just one extreme example of what you will lose if you don't help yourself change. Who enjoys losing their humanity? Who enjoys losing free will? And who enjoys being dehumanized?

If you're reading this, you are being provided an opportunity to get better. The drug and alcohol program you're currently in is a tool for you to use in order for you to continue cherishing your freedom. **The program isn't designed to change you**. You are the only one that can make that decision. That's if you really want it.

Before you decide to relapse back to your old addictions and retreat to your safe zone (drugs and alcohol), think about what you will lose by coming to prison.

The number one person you need to cherish is yourself before anyone else. Thinking about what could

possibly happen if you land in prison will deter you. You just have to let it.

I cherish the fact that I get to sit down and write these articles to members of this group. I appreciate the time I spend sharing my story with all of you. I'm in hopes that my story will help all of you recognize that there's more to your life to appreciate.

I've had everything taken from me because I decided to continue down my own path of self-destruction. When I finally am released on May 12th, 2018, I'll have a total of sixteen years incarcerated. That's sixteen years of my life that I lost appreciating the many things on the outside you can't appreciate when you're in prison.

I had and still have my own personal problems that I deal with each and every day. We all, including you, will have to deal with problems. Struggle is a part of life. Do we learn to deal with them? Or do we do things that take us from reality, that could potentially incarcerate us in prison? Only to cause further problems, more than the average human being needs. Additional problems that you don't need in your life.

This program you are in is your time to heal and grow. It's all up to you. View this opportunity as a blessing. You could be sitting in prison suffering, experiencing total misery. All alone.

I'm someone who has first-hand knowledge of what prison is like. I'm in prison writing this to you, investing hours of my time with you, hoping that my words of advice will enlighten you and provide you with an additional opportunity to re-think what you're doing.

I don't work for the system. I work to help you make ends meet in your life. I author these articles for you because I want to sit down and write them. I spend my time with you because I care. Prison is one tremendous nightmare. An emotional terror that I personally would not want you to endure.

With all of this said, please find what you truly appreciate it will help you through your struggle. until next time, stay true to yourself. Keep strong and remember the opportunity offered to you.

Sincerely,
Christopher Balmer