

Relationships

Many people look at the word “relationship” and connect this word to some kind of connection between two different individuals: male and female, male and male, and female and female, depending on what your sexual preference may be. What about relationship that we people have with ourselves?

As humans, we are so in tune with others’ emotions, feelings and behaviors, that we at times, if not all the time, in most cases forget about our own needs. The relationships we have with ourselves become neglected. There are negative as well as positive relationships that people have with themselves, resulting in outcomes that are of a benefit or disaster to these people.

As drug and alcohol users, we tend to have a negative relationship with ourselves. Our feelings and emotions are tangled up. Our views of life are unhealthy. Our health becomes neglected and we become visibly miserable to others. The only time we feel “happy” is when we excessively drink or do drugs. These behaviors trick our minds into releasing a chemical called dopamine also known as “the feel good” chemical. Once our dopamine levels are depleted, our bodies start to withdraw. Emotionally we feel down and out, resulting in a further need to feel good again in order to remove us psychologically from the depths of our depressed state.

This kind of relationship that we have with ourselves eventually leads us to re-use more and more in order to feel good. Our addictions, no matter what kind, strengthen the negative relationship that we have with ourselves.

To decrease the level of this negative relationship, we need to formulate a more positive one. This begins with how we view ourselves, how we feel and our outlook on life. Changing a negative relationship is hard work. It involves challenging our own views - views that we have essentially lived with our entire lives - and actually sitting down to look at who we are. Self-examination is the key to establishing positive relationships with ourselves.

Our bodies and minds are to be cherished. We only get one of them, and one life to live. To enjoy the many wonderful aspects of life itself, we must treat our bodies in healthy and respectful ways. Naturally, all humans begin to die as soon as we are born. However, our behaviors either extend our lives or accelerate our deaths. The extension of life or the acceleration of death depends on the kind of relationship we have with ourselves.

I would like for you to sit back and reflect on a time when you either did drugs or drank so much that

you had a massive hangover in the morning. How alone did you feel? How detached did you feel from the world around you? I bet you felt completely alone and that the world around you was a long way away from you. Addictions not only affect your physical body but slowly kill your emotional state. Which slowly kills you physically because as addicts we engage in much more risky behaviors and unhealthy decision-making.

With all this said, I hope that all of you in this group will do your best to establish a healthy, more positive relationship with yourselves. For years in prison I had a negative relationship with myself. I never did much to help myself at all. When I decided that I disliked my situation, I realized that change had to start with myself first. Not with a system or other people around me, but with myself.

Once I established a positive relationship with myself, I began to feel emotionally and physically healthier. Life around me came alive and reality set in. My life began the day I started honoring and loving myself. Treating myself better, my self-doubt disappeared, allowing motivation to emerge and a need for me to reach out to others with a helping hand. Change is a life-long process, but that's a part of having a relationship with yourself. You always need to work hard to keep it, like any other kind of relationship in life.

I wish you all good luck and remember: "You are what you think." With life comes challenge and with surrender comes slavery. Improvise, adapt and overcome. We are all great inside. We all have meaning and purpose. It's our choices that make us who we are.

Best wishes,

Christopher Balmer - GX-5754
SCI Forest

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