

"MAMA"

I went to the dayroom the other morning where I greeted an acquaintance with a "Good morning. How are ya?"

"Been better," he replied, "found out my mama died yesterday."

My heart broke for him. He is living what is one of my very worst fears - losing my mom while I'm in this place. That is a hard blow to suffer under any circumstances ; it is another kind of hell to lose anyone you are very close to when you are here, alone, and seperated from your loved ones in such a time of grief. For many of us in prison, Mama is all we have. She is often the only one who has supported and stood by you while you are away. When some might wash their hands of you due to whatever mistakes led you to prison and others just drift away after you have been out of sight for a while, Mom is there. She believes in you when noone else does and she helps you to believe in yourself. Mom is usually the cornerstone of your support group and your lifeline to the free world. As such, she becomes the living symbol of home for many of us in prison. Even if everyone else is gone, we know that Mama isn't going anywhere and that, wherever she is, once we are free again, we have a home to go to, someplace to get your feet under you again.

So, for someone like my pal, losing Mom is like losing home itself. That is heartbreaking.

What could I say? I know there are times that words mean nothing and I'm not an empty platitudes type of guy. So I just listened, let him talk, and did what little I could to maybe help him not to feel as alone as I know he must have. I have to hand it to him. He handled losing Mama better than I know I will. I CERTAINLY wouldn't have been in the dayroom looking for company. But, if that's what he needed in his time of grief, then I am glad I was able to provide it.

Mama would expect that of me...

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