

INSIDE / OUT

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One of the most significant changes I went thru because of the many years I've been incarcerated had nothing to do with behavior modification or rehabilitation.

A totally unplanned by-product of my prison sentences was a gradual adaptation to my environment that turned a essential part of my daily life that I had enjoyed since birth into an event that I slowly began to need less and less, into an uncomfortable burden, and finally into something I don't do at all.

As a child, if someone would have told me that by the age of 44 yrs old I would no longer have any desire to be outside for any reason I never would have believed them.

Prior to being incarcerated the first time I cannot recall a single day of my life in which I didn't go outside at some point even if it was only to get in the car or get the mail out of the mail box. My saddest memories as a child are rainy days and the misery was because the rain prevented me from being able to go outside and play. Being outside is such a normal part of everyday life that we don't even give it any consideration except as to what clothes we'll wear that best suits the weather. Infants, teens and elders all find themselves outside at some point everyday of their normal lives, if only to get to the baby sitters, or school or to the grocery store. The poorest among us as well as the most successful business men alive all have at least one thing in common and that is that at some point of every single day they will find themselves outside and inhaling fresh air. Not only is everyone

outside every single day as they make it from home to work or as they drive the kids to school but being outside is such a cherished activity that plans are made and vacations are dreamed of in which we can spend entire days and even nights outside. We love the beach and the park. We snow ski and ice skate in spite of the freezing weather. Being outside is so cherished and unappreciated that on one hand we plan trips and vacations accordingly so that we are able to spend as much time outside as possible yet on the other hand during our daily routines we hardly ever slow down long enough between point A and point B to enjoy and appreciate a lung full of fresh air or the fragrant scent of the flowers or trees. (2)

Taking time to enjoy something so common to our lives like going outside would almost be the same as paying special attention to wearing clothes. It's kind of crazy how one part of us pays no attention to being outside (except to dress accordingly) while another part of us longs to get sun tanned, or marvel at the stars and even give up our modern luxuries in order to spend the night camping or climbing a mountain.

Being outside is as much a part of our normal lives as is eating or sleeping. Very, very rarely does anyone find themselves living in a way that doesn't require them to be outside at some point of everyday. Except for the new born and extremely ill almost everyone else comes in and out, and out and in and back out for a moment so often in the course of a normal day that it's done without the slightest thought given to appreciating it or even remotely considering any scenario in which you didn't do it. Most people live their entire lives without ever pondering on any circumstance in which they

would no longer go outside. Not only is that never considered (3) but most people can't even imagine themselves in a situation in which they can't go outside whenever they want, for as long as they desire. This freedom is so fundamental to us that not being able to do it no more crosses our mind than does not being able to breath. We never worry about having enough oxygen to breath because we just understand our atmosphere as able to keep up.

Can you imagine how much duress your body would have to endure before it began to evolve into something that could survive without oxygen. Can you fathom how close to sufficating you'd have to continuously find yourself before you survival instincts would kick in enough to alter your internal structure so that this oxygen that it had always had to have had become so foreign or in short supply that it altered your internal mainframe so that it could survive without it? Because that's what happened to me. Due to long term incarceration and extended periods of time without a single moment outside my brain and body changed from a being that was outside so often that it would of been unimage-
-able to live without it, into a person that needed it less and less, into someone that began to find it burdensome and uncomfort-
-able, and finally into my current state of being that not only no longer desires the daily routine that so easily and naturally went outside without the slightest thought of not doing so, into a guy that hasn't stepped outside for even a moment in over two years and the last few times I did go outside I found in completely uncomfortable, it was either to not so that the entire time I was exposed to the unbareable heat I longed for the approx seventy degree temperature that I enjoy all year long inside my prison complex

that now comforts me. Another unenjoyable memory I carry (4) with me was my last visit outside while there was snow and ice on the ground. Within minutes all my toes and fingers were in extreme pain and the cold air was causing my inner ear to ache like nothing I've experienced in many years.

The few times prior to that, that I went outside before beginning to realize that prison had changed me so much that I no longer sought the exterior elements I had to go thru all kinds of changes in order to either bundle up or dress for the heat. My first true realization that I had slowly become different than what I once was, was how burdensome it had become to need to dress accordingly to the weather outside.

After years of never leaving the set temperature as found here (and regulated by heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer) I had become perfectly accustomed to the year round temperature of approx. seventy degrees and the variations I was subjected to when I went outside were not just uncomfortable but almost seemed harmful. The strain my inner functions went thru in order to try and keep me comfortable as I exposed myself to the outside temperatures was no longer the effortless functions they once were before I had lived years at a time inside this prison and thus without experiencing any significant change in temperature. I was no longer readily equipped to function outside of prison temperature. I had begun evolving into an indoor being.

Clothes that once felt great to keep me warm in the winter were horribly restrictive and smothering. Anything more than shorts and a t-shirt that I wear year round in here have the potential to make me feel unable to properly breathe. The whole experience of going from my comfortable temperature into the freezing cold or burning hot

and then back again to my seventy upon re entry is an unbearable transition that stresses so much of my being that I'd not want to constantly experience it, even if there was some truly enjoyable award awaiting for me upon completion, much less merely to be outside.

Anymore the only attachment I have to being outside is the romantic memories I carry with me when the summer heat usually led to swimming pools or water skiing. The fun of riding a four wheeler on the snow and ice would prob make all the discomfort my body would endure worth the trouble but since the only thing the outdoors has for me anymore is a caged in section of grass in which I can stare beyond the fences and wires and long for things that are no longer attainable to me I simply cannot justify putting any strain on my body or disrupting what I've become so perfectly adapted to.

I live inside a indoor universe. The gym, the library and the chow hall are all under this roof. Everyone I know either lives here or must drive here and spend time with me by entering this secluded world and enjoying the seventy degree temp that I've come to rely on.

Only those on the Space Station and Submarine crews can kinda understand the concept of never going outside. And only others like myself that have spent literal years on end without even one moment outside can begin to truly understand the evolutionary changes that the body is going thru as it adapts to life without one of the most common experiences it had always known. And only those like me can grasp the emotions and thought process that has turned my mind against the once highly desired prize of going outside. Without experiencing the physical discomforts and changes that my body introduced me to after it began adapting to life

without the outside you could never understand the logic the (6 brain uses that turns going outside from a wonderful freedom into a physical burden that causes me physical discomfort and mental anguish.

This is my world now. Everything that I can have is confined within these prison walls and under this ~~roof~~ ^{roof}. My body is no longer comfortable dealing with temperature change. I have become perfectly comfortable at seventy degrees all year round. I have no chance of diving in the river or running thru the woods. Never again will I push my children down the hill on a bobsled, nor will I rub up against my wife in her bikini.

I can see the moon and the stars just fine from my cell window without ever going outside. Same with the snow and rain. Being outside this building is just a cruel reminder of what was and what can no longer be. Just as my crimes removed me from the free world so now has my body began to deny me access to the outside world.

You see I am a convict and a convicts situation is unique and so rare in that by design his entire existence is all under one ~~roof~~ ^{roof} and only heartache and torture wait for him outside.

In all the studies conducted on prisoners No one ever considered the fact that by removing my bond with nature they would slowly begin a evolutionary transformation that would lead to a specific species of human that not only no longer desires being outside but that has also begun to change into one that is no longer equipped to endure temperature changes and or the exposure to the sun.

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