End the Suffering:

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"The prison population continues to rise at an alarming rate. And sadly, many of those entering the system for the first time, and repeat offenders alike, suffer from mental illnesses. Some cases more severe than others; but they are all suffering nonetheless.

In reality, sometimes some of the crimes committed are by those with mental illnesses. Unfortunately there is not much help for them out there, and definitely not within the jails or prisons. So when they commit their crimes, they are immediately thrown in jail where they are still receiving no assistance and this is a continual detriment to their well being. Where is the help for individuals

suffering?

In this prison alone, I have seen many whom are deteriorating mentally because no one really cares enough to come to their aid. There are only a few who genuinely care and put forth their best efforts to offer support. What are these poor people to do? They have no one to turn to. Some have no family support or meaningful relationships or friendships. Serving time is hard enough in itself; but when you cannot even find a true friend to share your journey with, it makes it that much harder. No one is selfless anymore and it's usually about another's personal gain. Many have ulterior motives so it's hard to find someone you can really trust.

Speaking from a person

who has had to go to counseling for my own relief, I can say that it proved to be absolutely useless. When you have an appointment to see a counselor, you are allowed twenty minutes. What can ever be accomplished in such a short time? Counselors ask only a few questions, nod at your response no matter the amount of distress you may clearly be in, and they may or may not jot down a few notes. And whether you're finished crying your eyes out or not, they tell you to schedule another appointment. I accomplished nothing! I no longer attend. For what?

On the other side, they have a team of offenders who work with the mentally ill. Those that endure the worst cases of mental illness are

housed in a designated area. There is what is termed the "acute" area, which is where offenders are kept locked in cells and are not allowed day-room time, nor allowed out on the compound. They are only permitted to shower on certain days. No human interaction except the correctional officers that make rounds every fifteen or thirty minutes. The offender mental health team is not permitted interaction with those offenders. How is this conducive to establishing a healthier mind frame?

There is then yet another area, or wing also designated for those offenders with mental health illnesses. This wing is a step down from the actual acute wing. These offenders have access to the dayroom. They are also permitted to

leave the building to go to recreation, groups, commissary, as well as the library. If they were once housed in the acute wing and their condition has improved, this wing is where they are transferred to.

Lastly, there is one more wing designed for those who have shown an exceptional amount of improvement whom may have resided in the first two wings. This wing is also commissioned for offenders who may simply need some time to recuperate from something which may be troubling them. All three wings are much smaller and only house approximately forty-five offenders versus the larger general population wings that house close to sixty offenders. The smaller wings provide a sense of comfort because

there are less people to communicate with. Some people prefer it this way. In an enviornment where there is relatively no privacy, sometimes it is helpful for some to have little exchange with others. This wing can leave the building for the same priv as general population.

Speaking also from someone that has taken mental health medication, I have only known there to be a few psychiatrists actually concerned with the healing and healthiness of our minds. The majority are only concerned with the prescribing of medications to mask, not solve, the problem. Their burden is lightened if we are numb and quiet. If we're sleeping our lives away, we can't bother them. Sad. This is not helping!

Haplessly, if those suffering with mental disorders are released back into society in the same condition they were in upon entering the system, what happens then? Will they become repeat offenders? Around and around spins the cycle."

Written by:
Chanell Burnett
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