

The Causative Factors of My Violence

My childhood, not unlike others is prison, became a world of shame, fear, resentment, confusion, and anger. As a young boy growing up in the foster system, these feelings began to arise as early as age six. As I grew into adolescence and adulthood, I pictured the world as being a hostile place where I could trust no one.

I killed my grandfather Andy Sierra in 2004. My grandfather Andy was an 87 year-old man who was living his life in peace. I can only imagine the pain, wonderment, and horror that he felt when I attacked him.

During my stay in prison, I needed to understand why I had killed Andy, and why I was a violent man. Within the therapeutic community in prison, I discovered that my biggest stressor has been rejection and shame. I felt unworthy of a family or a stable life. Those feelings of rejection and shame became anger and resentment, which manifested into having a victim's stance, and being violent. I lived with an inability to have a general sense of empathy for people. Feelings of rejection and shame have caused a negative reaction to my sense of self-worth. Being in touch with these feelings, has taught me that shame and rejection are emotions that I needed to reevaluate.

Unlearning these feelings has not been an easy feat. It has taken being rejected and shamed over and over again for me to reevaluate the feelings that come with them. When I am rejected or shamed, I feel that my self-confidence is being challenged, as I am put on the spot. To resolve these emotions, I first remove myself from the situation, and then think about the moment and how I feel. Thinking and embracing how I feel about the moment feels uncomfortable and vulnerable; however, this eases the stress of the moment. I then use my coping skills as in writing in my stress journal, or talking to a friend who can give me good advice. Analyzing the disagreement and taking responsibility by holding myself accountable for my actions, accepting my mistakes, and finding resolution will ease my lingering tension. As time goes by, the feelings of shame and rejection may still be present, but I am able to put these feelings into a new and healthier perspective.

I killed my grandfather Andy because I could not manage my stress and my feelings of rejection and shame. The basis of these feelings came from blaming my grandfather (and my parents) for my abandonment. I also blamed the world in general. I allowed myself to believe that it was right to hurt my grandfather Andy and my community because I felt victimized.

The causative factors of my violence do not mitigate my violent acts; they only help me find the origin of my feelings that have manifested into my violent behavior. The causative factors of my violent behaviors do not excuse or condone my misdeeds.

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