

Don't Let Time Do You

By: Eric Smalley

Whether you have a short sentence or a long sentence, it's very important to find things to do. Keep yourself busy in any kind of way possible. Be creative with your time. Because when you don't, your time will do you.

So, what do I mean by that? Basically, if you just sit or lay around idly, not only will you have accomplished nothing but places like jail or prison can drag you down in a spiral of deep depression. Then, what happens is you become locked up in your mind. And this type of incarceration leaves you feeling ~~empty~~ empty and alone. Depression is a dark place filled with sorrow, shame, guilt and pain. It takes you from the joy to pursue something that can change your life for the better. Depression can close doors and windows of opportunity leaving you wishing you had taken the chance when it was available. And when you miss that chance of opportunity, you sink deeper into the darkness of depression.

If you want to avoid being that way while incarcerated or get out of the rut you're ~~in~~ in jail and/or prison, then this article is for you. I want to help you avoid or overcome depression by encouraging you to stay active while you are incarcerated. In this article, I will discuss active ways to stay busy while you are in jail and in prison. Then, I will tell you what I do to stay active in jail.

Before you end up in prison, you start off at your local city/county jail. In my experience of being in a jail, there's really not much to do. But, if you can look for something to do, I'm sure you'll find it. You can get involved with other inmates playing cards, chess, checkers or anything in a group setting to get your mind

off being in jail. But, if you want some "you" time, there is still ^{Plenty} ~~lots~~ of things to do. When a book cart comes around, find a good book to read and read it. Maybe you're a solitary player. If you have ~~some~~ ^{radios,} sit and listen to music. Nothing's more relaxing than listening to your favorite music. Perhaps you like to draw. Grab some paper, your pen/pencil and get creative. If you are fighting or appealing your case, the worse thing you can do is nothing. Access the law library and do some research. You may get more stuff than your own attorney. The law library is there at your disposal and you cannot be denied access to it.

At the prison you end up at (or if you're there already), there ^{is} ~~are~~ so much more for you to do. You can still do all the things I mentioned about at the jail plus more activities for you to do. In prison, you can go outside every day, sign up for the library and chaplain library, there are paying jobs at different parts of the compound, find a hustle to help you earn some more commissary (eg. make candy), find groups to attend, find a hobby. There's so much more to keep you from being idle and falling ^{into} ~~into~~ a depressive state of mind. Exercising is always productive for your physical and mental well-being. Lastly, whether at jail or prison, getting plenty of healthy sleep keeps you more alert to stay active.

I always try to find something to do. Since I have been in jail and the times I've been in prison, I find something for me to do. Currently, I'm obtaining information from the law library to strengthen my appeal. I'm also learning about ^{many} ~~some~~ legal ways to file certain forms. During my time away from the legal work, I like to read my religious books or a good novel. I write letters to friends, family, organizations that offer help for incarcerated people, ministries and

doing my essay writings for "The American Prison Writing Archive." I like doing research on certain topics so I can write about them. When I'm not doing any of these things by myself, I play a fun game of Pinochle with the men in my cell block. I do watch TV, but only if something good is on. Either way, I'm always active.

When I get to the prison, I plan to remain active. I'm going to get a job, go outside and exercise, continue writing, go to ~~the~~ ^{the} Messianic Services and whatever else I can find to do. I also want to go to law school and take the ~~Bar~~ ^{Bar} exam. The goal for me is, staying active so my time won't do me. When I'm doing time, days go by faster. Days turn into weeks, weeks into months and months into years. Next thing you know, you're close to your release date. And when you look back at all that time you just did, you'll see all you've accomplished. And your time in prison, will not have been wasted.

So, you have a choice to make at the fork in the road you're on. You can sit around and sleep your ~~time~~ time away. You can choose to be idle and let depression drag you down into darkness. You can even see opportunities pass you by and do nothing about it. Basically, you can choose NOT to do time by letting time do you.

Or, you can do everything I talked about in this writing. You can be proactive by sincerely looking for something to do. You can choose to find ways to better yourself on the inside of these walls. And lastly, you CAN choose to do time and not let time do you. It's your choice. All I can do is deliver this message and hope and pray you choose the right path.

-Eric Smalley

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