

The 3'R's Experience

My name is Larry Stromberg, a facilitator for "Let's Circle Up!" a Restorative Justice Workshop at SCI Phoenix State Penitentiary in Pennsylvania. I was co-facilitating a mini-workshop back in March of 2019, and it was the last day of the workshop on a Saturday afternoon. I was facilitating an exercise known as the 3'R's which means, "Respect, Responsibility and Relationship." This was the first time for me facilitating this exercise and I felt that I fully prepared to present the exercise to the whole group.

Now, there's a point in the 3'R's where we have to honor a person in our lives, a person that we have known personally, whether alive or have passed on. A person who inspired us or that we love beyond measure. So, I humbly ask everyone to stand up as a group around the Peace Circle, (a place of deep sharing and true listening.) Then: I showed everyone in the circle the name of the person I chose to honor, who's name was written on a small piece of green paper with a purple marker. I was very nervous and filled with anxiety. My heart pounding a million times a minute. I chose to honor Stefan, (My wife) who is deceased by my hands of insanity. A double homicide I committed decades ago. Something I have endless remorse and regret for. Something I wish I could take back. But, I can't. The pain and sorrow for my choices dwells within my heart over and over again. It remains.

Still: I honored Stefan. My love for her has never ended. My sorrow for the two lives I took will never end as well. I am grateful for the moments of love and joy me and Stefan shared, our beautiful wedding day on Sept 7th, 1993 in Louisville, Kentucky. The wonderful walks we took with our dogs (Spartagus and Bandit) in Fairmont Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Our lives we shared together when we were happy and in true love. The horror of Mental illness destroyed us.

I chose to honor Stefan, she was an amazing woman who loved the color purple. That's why I wrote her name down with the purple marker on that small green piece of paper when I honored her. I will always love and adore her. I'm so truly sorry for what I done to her, her family and my family. I have vowed to God, Stefan, her family, my family and everyone that I hurt to try to bring some good out of this terrible tragedy. To leave a good legacy, even in prison with a double life sentence. The 3'R's dared me to look back on my horrible choices with eyes wide open. Hopefully, my guilt can help another from making the same mistakes I made decades ago. Maybe, make a positive difference and help save a life.

I honor Stefan, I honor her family. I'm grateful that I can do that. Something that I always do till the day I leave this earth to the next life.

Written by:
Larry Stromberg