

My name is Martin James Malone, I am currently serving a 22 year sentence in a Federal Prison, The reason I am in prison today is for importation of cocaine back in 1989. I absconded to Ecuador before sentencing and became a fugitive for 22 years until the DEA and anti-narcotics agents pick me up in 2012. 1)

A sad fact about serving a long-term sentence is being slowly forgotten by friends first, then family. My first couple of years I would receive mail every week. Gradually it trickled down to one letter a month. Monday through Friday they call everyone up to the dayroom for mail. I wait just like a lot of inmates for my name to be called only to be disappointed.

It amazes me how people can use technologies like T.V. Books the inter-net, or smartphones, ~~they~~ to feel a sense of belonging for what is lacking in their physical lives. Surrogate relationships with characters or personalities can somehow fill emotional needs.

Social neuroscientist John Cacioppo, who has research on loneliness, points out that loneliness has nothing to do with how many people are physically around us, but has everything to do with our failure to get what we need from our relationships. This can be manifested as a "feeling of loneliness" regardless of how many names and faces that are in our social circle. Neuroscience has found convincing neural correlation between the experience of loneliness and the attraction to human conflict. As the old saying goes, "Misery loves company", people who feel socially isolated are predisposed to seek out conflict.

The fewer social relationships a person has the shorter the life expectancy and the worse the impact of various infectious diseases. Moreover, the process of becoming isolated from your family is also associated with immune functioning. In order to have a sense of belonging you must have real, tangible, meaningful relationships. In prison, you have none of that.

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From my experience here, Prison makes you lazy. The system sets you up for failure when you are released. It takes everything from you: your identity, self-esteem, self-affirmation, self-motivation, generosity, kindness, responsibility, trust, and the most important quality we all need and crave, LOVE. You must constantly fight with yourself to maintain these emotions and character qualities.

Life in prison is biologically disrespectful. It is a negatively-charged environment between staff and inmates, and often between the inmates themselves. This kind of environment takes away any healthy relationship an inmate may wish to develop. This can be seen in the classic research on learned helplessness by Martin Seligman. He found that development of our social skills is severely hampered during incarceration.

This includes the ability to build coalitions, to walk away from provocations, to exert some control over social conflicts, to recognize when you become frustrated and the source of that frustration and how to displace it in a healthy way.

It is also true that when you have hope, no matter how irrational it may seem at the time, it can sustain you in the darkest times in your life. But it can also break your heart and spirit effectively when it is given and taken away capriciously!

The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr penned the popular thought: "GOD grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

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JAMES M MALONE on 9/6/2020 1:06:43 PM wrote

What I have seen in so many cases when someone comes to prison, is that person wanders aimlessly around the compound trying to figure out where he belongs or at least where he fits in. Those are two different environments. Belonging is being comfortable wherever you are at. Fitting in is being accepted by a group within a greater population. An inmate can wonder for months or even years and never feel truly in one setting or another.

For me, the key was to accept my prison sentence and not to look at the top of the mountain of time I had to climb. I chose to take each step in the right direction to make sure that I was climbing to the top and not going sideways or backwards.

I had to find what I could do in prison to see my life progressing. At times, it was infuriating to be blocked, hampered or hobbled by the limitations set upon me by staff and the prison environment as I tried to achieve my goals for improvement.

We each have to find a purpose and a meaning to lives. When you are in prison, you have to find something to challenge yourself. During my time in prison I have found it is helpful to use your time constructively doing something to upgrade your life, both mentally and physically. Later you can say to your family, "This is what I accomplished while I served my time in prison. I didn't just sit and play cards or watch T.V. the whole time.

I made something of myself." Then and only then, is your time in prison not wasted. No matter where you are, or what circumstances you find yourself in, it is important to remember to do the best you can with what you have to work with.

Never succumb to hopelessness..

There is always a ray of hope when you engage in activities that help raise you to a better version of yourself. It's easy to give in to the negativity around you. Prison life has shown me that in the multitude of lives wasted here. Acceptance of your situation, focusing on making the best of the situation you find yourself in, and striving to be your best, you will provide your self with hope, resilience and strength To eradicate the negativity you may encounter in your life...

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