

A Numb Spot...

Bang! I open my eyes and quickly gather my thoughts as I, internally, take survey of where I am. The rapid pace of my heartbeat is the only thing I hear. Randomly throughout my tenure as an incarcerated individual I have had to cope with the stress of waking up in a place that is not my home. At 4 a.m. everyday I am woken up by the sound of bars clanging against their receivers. Inmates who work in the kitchen are starting their day to prep our meals for the day, first one being at 7 a.m. For years I didn't realize that the reduction in my ability to fall asleep or stay asleep was being caused by unknown variables that triggered my nervous system. On "the outs" sleep was easy to come by and once asleep I stayed that way unless a bad dream occurred or there was a shift in temperature. On "the inside", at times, sleep would be so relaxing that I would become frustrated when I was brought to a state of consciousness without fully understanding what it was that woke me. Now that is has become the norm, my brain, I have noticed, has began processing different paradigms in a way that is completely alien to me.

It is my opinionated understanding that all humans have a "spot" in our brains that our nervous system resorts to as a safe haven when

overwhelmed by the ongoing pressures of life's terms and reality. My current reality is what I'd like to call one of my "coldest endeavors". Metaphorically speaking, everyday at 4 a.m. is like ice cold water being poured on me while I'm asleep. This stressful experience has assisted in my continuous efforts to peel back the layers of my brain and ultimately what and who I am. This self-evaluation has given me clarity on what ~~it~~ is I am feeling and has been the building block for how I deal the stress. Bead-work, working out, my job, and school are all things that help with taking my mind off of my current circumstance. When I'm ~~at~~ not doing those activities and my brain is working in overtime mode, or when I'm peacefully sleeping and am abruptly woken up, harsh reality sets in. Consequently, my nervous system is triggered and I compartmentalize by doing a swift, but thorough, mental check-up. First, I as myself am I safe and after a quick decision that account I decide if the issue requires immediate attention or is it able to be handled at a later time. Once this assessment is complete I follow through with necessary action(s). On the issue at hand I am always able to file it away till a later time because I have become accustomed to the uncomfortable new

norm. Stress in this environment comes in many forms and is a 24 hour cycle due, in part, by the multitude of variables (other inmates, staff, food, needs not being met, missing relatives or home, etc.) Furthermore, as I do a self-diagnosis, by paying attention to what my brain is experiencing and how it responds, I notice that my brain has, what I call, a "numb spot". This "numb spot" creates a barrier between my mental processes (sub-conscious, conscious, etc.) and my physical processes. When faced with circumstances that are out of my control and that, at the same time, interrupt my peace, I experience an extreme calm that prevents me from responding without, first, doing my mental-check-up. This "numb spot" has the potential, if I am able to harness this new ability on "the outs", to help me analyze every situation, that I deem stressful, in a deeper, more informed, manner. With this new-found "numb spot" I'm not able to simply just react. The entirety of the problem at hand now has to be looked at from all angles before any, rational or irrational response, to what is going on, can be given.

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