

Today was quite a day. I had an appointment with my case manager. A two and a half hour appointment, that is. For those who do not know the job of a case manager – she is the person that works for the clinic in which I get all my mental health care. Her job is to coordinate any and all mental health related issues in my life. She takes care of Doctor's appointments and Therapy appointments. If I am not doing well, she can make sure I get where I need to be. I see my case manager every two weeks, here at my home. I see my therapist every other week that I do not see my case manager and my Doctor every other month. In other words – a mental health professional sees me once a week to help manage my illness. Yes, it does take that many people to keep me balanced. Not to mention my parents and medication. I think it is important to state this – because most might simply see a bipolar guy doing “just fine” and ask why can't I or why can't my loved one be “just fine”. Well, now you know it takes an army!

Today was the day that we would sit down and do my annual Treatment Plan. A Treatment Plan allows the consumer and the professionals to set realistic goals for life and the treatment necessary to meet those goals. There is also a chain of command for the event of a suicide attempt and/or psychosis of any kind where I would relieve any rights I have over my mental health care to those that I choose. I also Advance Directives in place for these events that hopefully will never happen, but given my past and the level of my illness are somewhat inevitable at some point. Although, I have a pretty solid army! ☺

During the treatment plan we needed to review previous treatment plans that had started way back when at the Paulding County Jail. On my way to the Paulding County Jail I had taken 18 Nitroglycerin tablets that were given to me by a cell mate who had heart problems. I was taken to the hospital and then to the mental health clinic to meet with their staff. Reviewing some of the notes from this initial meeting sent a huge flood of fragmented memories. I was then taken directly to North Coast Behavioral Hospital for the sole purpose of being stabilized for trial.

I was so sick at that time. 120 lbs and beyond miserable – I simply was numb to life and the world. The two voices that haunt me were in full control. Looking over the notes and thinking back on those days was not as painful as I might have thought – though my head was pounding by the time my meeting was over.

This evening I pulled out a couple of binders full of journals, letters and essays that I had written while in jail, hospital and prison. At first, the journal entries are devastating and I couldn't help think to myself – how did you get through it? The second question was why did you go through it? I continued to read...

I started seeing that when I was writing about reaching out to others and comforting them, my spirits rose a bit even though every other paragraph seemed to say “God, can you please take me, please?” The incidents that happened with corrections officers at CRC – the inability to get medication – the threats of all kinds are just as infuriating now as they were then – the difference now is that I am safe. This past prison sentence didn't even compare to my previous one and I am so grateful for that. All those journals

and essays have since been lost in my chaotic life and live only as haunting memories in my mind.

In my binders, I found programs that I wrote and used to help other inmates dealing with mental illness and behavioral issues. I chuckled when I read my notes as if I were clinical psychologist – but hey, they worked and they worked very well!

I found over 200 letters to God. I used to write him nearly every day. Every letter started out with “Thank You” and then went on with a diatribe of self-pity and confusion. I guess I didn’t think I could say thank you at the end of the letter! I tried not to write negative letters to family and friends, but at times I did.

I found about twenty pages listed as “dream” and it was a schematic of a website that I had dreamed of building for the Mental Health Community. I never used it to build Harrison’s Website and said, “I’ll be damn – that could have been useful!” HA! There are probably 20 or more speeches written all grouped together with a cover page titled, “If I could say what I want to say!” I read through them all – they had me in tears. Most are good and could still be used. Some, however are like reading something that a long lost and dearly loved friend had written and I my heart ached for the fact that I put him in that position. I wanted to reach back into the past and grab a hold of that man and just hug him. Yet, it is very clear to me with goose bumps on my arms, that he – was and is me.

One of the programs that I had written and used with inmates was titled, “Building a roadmap to a better life.” So, of course having not seen this for over a year, I had to sit down and test my own program! HA! I loved it and found it quite useful! There was a little sense of pride in myself for what I had written. A majority of these writings were proactive and optimistic along with a huge dose of hope. Sadly, I did find several suicide letters that I had written – I must have written them when I didn’t think I was going to make it and they were simply loaded with words that in my hopes would define me better than how I felt I had been defined.

I always feel as though I have 20 lifetimes in my brain. In many ways, I do. Shifting between them and finding comfort with the past will most definitely always be a struggle that I will endure. This evening the past brought me tears and surprises and even some laughter. Many heartaches for those I can’t help and heartaches for the times I couldn’t help myself.

A great deal of the hopes and dreams from a couple years of jail, hospitals and prisons actually came true. I think it was good thing to write all those letters to God! ☺ I wonder what it will be like to do next year’s treatment plan.