

The End in Mind

Some insight on Harrison: Harrison had devoted his life to the cause of Mental Illness. He became a leading advocate, noted author, spokesperson and developer of programs of Rehabilitation.

This is an excerpt from Harrison's Story, an interchange between Mason, the narrator, and Harrison.

Mason: "You were only out of prison a few months when you began your campaign to change not only the stigma of Mental Illness but the systems that dealt with Mental Illness. Harrison? At the time, wasn't this a pretty grandiose expectation?"

Harrison Responds: "Well, Grandiosity is different for everyone. For a man that is 7 feet tall and an experienced basketball player, it is not grandiose for him to believe or know he can slam dunk a basketball. But for me, it would be grandiose to think that I could do the same.

"Was it a large aspiration? Yes. Was it feasible? Yes. Did I question myself? No. I had overwhelming support, but I also had silent opposition. This was a passion and a purpose, not a task or project."

Mason: “How did you know where to begin? The problems were massive and on a much larger scale than your locality!”

Harrison: “The problems were massive. We incarcerated nearly 90% of every Mentally Ill person that crossed a courtroom floor. We provided inadequate, if not disabling programs and rehabilitation. The stigma was still high enough to define Mental Illness and Crime as an Excuse rather than a reason. Those that were trying to help were desperately addressing the symptoms of the Mentally Ill rather than the source or core. It was a complete mess.”

“How did I know where to begin? It wasn’t about the beginning really. Steven Covey always said, “Begin with the end in mind”. I knew what the result had to be. There were no alternatives. My fears had been face and had dissipated. Nothing was standing in my way of doing what I needed to do. If I needed to be pushy, I could do that – people “liking” me was not my concern the goal always was.”

“I would guess that it is that way with anyone who has a particular mission in their sites; a mission that directly impacts the soul of a person rather than just the intellect. It redefines your priorities and aligns your talents and skills with the needs presented to you. I was never one to back down from a challenge; I would not have been alive at the age of 38 if that were the case. I was also someone that could argue the wrong thing and win the debate and

convince anyone who was listening to believe me. When that talent met truth, it became a very powerful thing. My decisions at the age of 38 did not come from my intellect, they came from the depth of my soul – I was simply the translator. Now, mind you this was not as if God was speaking to me or any supernatural hallucinations were happening. It was the realization that I knew myself so well, that my mind and ego no longer interrupted what it was I needed to do. Life was not about me and I wanted to make sure no one had to feel the way I once had. Even though I still dealt with many issues caused by my illness, my core was very much intact at all times.”

“Mason, when one’s life became congruent, in other words, all elements are headed the same direction, the effort to do monumental things is not as hard as one might think. My goals were in the eyes of the Mentally Ill and nowhere else. My goals were not in law changes, they were not in bestselling books, and they were not in audiences... No, those things were just byproducts of my goal which could only be found in the eyes of the Mentally Ill. The communication between my eyes and the eyes of the Mentally Ill is something that could never be put into words... it is language that only I understand a language of pure desperation and pain. It is my responsibility to give it hope!”

“Were my aspirations grandiose? No. The problems were grandiose. Everyone juggles balls in the air with budgets and development and flow charts and construction... never looking into the eyes of the people that are behind all those wonderful statistics... The problems were not the problem, the reactions to

them were. You can't save a human being if you're not actually defending him! Look at yourself once in awhile. We all do it. You get a cause or good dead on your mind; it becomes all consuming and important. If you take a good look at it, my guess is you forgot the core of what you are doing! Even if it is a success, you have lost that connection and it has become an earthly trinket rather than an internal selfless act for the whole rather for the 'you'! In other words it becomes about you and not the cause.