

Self Forgiveness.

Seventeen years ago, I made a terrible mistake and hurt the person I was married to. The hurt was so deep that the person cried, and the guilt and shame I felt made me cast myself into a tunnel of self-imposed punishment and isolation. It is true that I allowed myself several splurges of pleasure, but suffice it to say, I returned to punishment and self-isolation.

For whatever reason, and there were several, I punished myself because I fervently believed I could not trust myself enough not to hurt another person.

I kept telling myself that there was no excuse for hurting anyone, especially since I had suffered and know pain myself. But crossed wires aren't conducive to rational behavior, and I learned that to know rational behavior, I need to have experienced it. So, I fought my impulses to keep going as I was, and instead, I kept to my isolation and self-punishment. I could not, would not, and did not allow myself to make the same mistake again. I demanded I be able to trust myself.

Two years ago, I emerged from my self-imposed sentence of isolation and punishment. I had begun to forgive myself when I realized that as a child, when my morals and ethics should have been forming healthily, instead, my wires were getting crossed. Instead of learning right from wrong, I was taught to lie and deceive everyone about the abuse I was suffering because of my fear and the dire threats of more abuse.

Finally, fifteen years of punishment seemed sufficient, especially with the introspection, learning, and performing the tedious, time-consuming process of rewiring myself.

As I emerged from my decade and a half of self-imposed isolation, imagine my surprise at what I found had changed: everything! I felt like a prisoner returning to society after years of

confinement and discovering society had changed. I found, almost immediately, that I didn't know and could barely relate to most people I met.

I met many people and dated a few women, but there seemed to be no real happiness between us. Almost every friendship seemed transactional, so I started treating everyone as acquaintances.

I finally made a few excellent friends.

My rewired brain, self-educated after fifteen years of homeschooling, still listens to the opinions of the changed society I find but isn't readily accepting many of them.

I want to contact the more tolerant society I left behind but can't find it.

Having said no to so many for so long about so much has made me reluctant to say yes now.

Having spent fifteen years mostly alone, I created boundaries that clearly defined me. As a precursor for friendship, some people now demand I rearrange my boundaries to accommodate them. I won't and don't because those boundaries sustained my happiness in my self-isolation, and that continues to this day. I do not see any need for me to surrender.

Written by Peter Skeels © 8-6-2024