

To the reader,

From the age of 22 I was incarcerated in the Florida Department of Corrections, and spent the next 13 years behind the fence. I endured hardships the likes of which most people could only imagine. I was beaten and belittled on what seemed to be a daily basis. Through all of that I continued to educate myself and even worked as a certified Teaching Assistant while there. After about seven years the education system collapsed and drugs began to flood the system. Being an addict, I fell in line with everyone else. The system had failed to equip me with the skills I needed to overcome my addiction, and so I reverted back to drugs and the attempt to block out the pain I felt every single day. Everyone, yes, every single person deserves the right to heal from their traumatic experiences and drugs and alcohol do nothing but cause more pain and suffering from which it seems almost impossible to overcome. Florida lacks everything that is needed to become a successful and productive member of society and so I was released from prison without so much as a bus ticket. They never explained what to do upon release, they didn't teach me how to deal with my emotions, they truthfully just don't care in the state of Florida. I began working, living my new life and enjoying my freedom. Then I was fired and I didn't know what to do, so turned back to my old ways. So, this may sound crazy, even absolutely absurd, but I was so extremely depressed that I purposely put myself in jail this time. I was lost and did not know how to accept being fired from a job or how to overcome the daily rigors of life in general. Fast forward two and a half years later and here I am a completely different person than I was at the time of my release from prison. With the programs that I have been involved in and the healing that has taken place here, I am confident that I am finally on the right path. DBT, or Dialectical Behavior Therapy, has given me the ability to step back and take a look at why I do the things that I do, as well as how to overcome my triggers. Working with a clinician gave me the ability to delve deeper into my traumatic childhood experiences as well as the traumatic experiences I went through while incarcerated in FLDOC. Having the ability to overcome my faults has given me a new outlook on life. Taking a Regionally Accredited Psychology course here was such an eye-opening experience and taught me how my childhood experiences created pathways that had never been pruned and so I would take actions without thinking, leading to emotional hijacking. In all my years I have never been able to relax and feel like I can be myself. Here at this facility, even though I am still in jail, I am a human being, that is more important than you can ever imagine. I am currently attempting to start an inmate-based group that focuses on re-entry, and giving us the strength to lean on each other. Removing that all too familiar feeling of fear. Fear that which drives so many of us in here, can be overcome as long as there are programs, like the ones here at Franklin HOC. Re-entry is a huge part of being incarcerated and I feel that no other facility will do more for you than the team here. They sat me down and moved step by step through getting MassHealth, how to get food stamps, even reached out to businesses to help me with employment upon my release. I have come to realize

that no matter how much time we do, no matter how long we are away from society, it all means absolutely nothing if we are not prepared for our release. I learned that the hard way already. I never want to go through that again. I have always prided myself on how knowledgeable I am so when life hit me in the face I turned and ran as fast as I could. By the grace of God, I have the chance to start over once again. I will forever be grateful to this facility and all that I have accomplished while here. My only hope is that I can begin to help others just like me to finally realize their full potential and to overcome that which drove them to do wrong in the first place. I thank God every day that the security, staff, and teachers here are very personable and give us the chance to correct our wrongs, learn from our mistakes, and reward us for doing the right thing. It is so amazing how much a simple good job can drive someone to strive for greatness. They have given me that drive and I won't stop moving in this right direction. I thank you for taking the time out of your day to read a little bit of my testimony. Have a great day!!

Sincerely,

Matthew Tetzloff #199076