



Freedom Inside

National Newsletter For Inmates
Based on the CWG Material

Issue # 1 September 2001

Welcome to Freedom Inside

Freedom Inside
PO Box 47007
Phoenix, AZ 85068

Welcome to the first issue of the Freedom Inside newsletter. It is a national publication, designed for inmates, in which any of you may choose to share your own thoughts and/or experiences with the understanding that WE ARE ALL ONE and that which helps one of us, helps all of us.

Our purpose in writing this newsletter is to help bring people back to themselves by shining a loving light on each other.

You, the reader, will help shape Freedom Inside. Your

comments, questions, poetry, and personal stories are not only welcome, they are the life and breath of this newsletter.

“Our purpose in writing this newsletter is to help bring people back to themselves by shining a loving light on each other.”

I invite you to join me in this creation. Be a part of a new world for inmates, one of hope and infinite possibilities.

Send anything you wish to contribute to the address on this page.

Be a part of this newsletter. Let it become a means of shining your light on the world.

Now is the time to recreate yourself into the next highest vision of who you really are.

This newsletter’s mission is to bring love and light into a world that sees so little of it.

Please join me in this endeavor.

In Love and Light,
Janine G.
Publisher/Editor

Freedom Inside?

freedom (frē'-dum) n. The condition or state of being free; not imprisoned; not under obligation; able to choose.

Inside (in'-side). N. The part, surface, or space that lies within.

At first glance, the combination of these two words would seem an oxy-moron. They just don't seem to go together. They just don't. Or do they? How can one be free while imprisoned, inside? The concept of merely being inside would seem to necessarily limit one's choice; one's freedom. Wouldn't it?

I'm here to tell you that these two words, freedom and inside, should fit together, can fit together, and with a little forethought and methodology, will fit together. Yes, they will.

So what do I mean, “freedom inside”? What am I talking about? “Freedom inside” can express many different concepts. Are we talking about freedom inside the walls of a prison? Or are we talking about freedom inside of one's mind, spirit, and soul? Both, of course. But how about the freedom to be all one can be...to strive and accomplish...

(continued on page 3)

Neale D. Walsch:
On Freedom

“Freedom. That is the soul's essence. It is that, and it can never be anything else. It can experience itself as something else, but it can never be anything else. You are the soul. The soul is you. You are, therefore, freedom itself. [...]

The only question in life is not whether you are the essence of freedom, but when you will experience that. The day on which you experience it fully will be the day of your liberation. [...]

Require nothing, deny nothing, enjoy everything.

That is mastery in living. That is liberation.”

From the newsletter,
Conversations
July 2001

Tuesday, September 11, 2001

As I prepared to send this newsletter, the bombing of the World Trade Center and of the Pentagon occurred. I could not, in good conscience, send it to you without taking a moment to pause and reflect on this terrible tragedy.

How much pain there is in the world! It is amazing to me to see how much more we willingly create for ourselves.

I know you join me in sending blessings to all the people who were hurt by these explosions.

But let us not forget to bless the perpetrators of this deed. I cannot imagine the amount of pain a person has to feel in order to make this kind of action not only possible but so important as to willingly give up your life for it. It takes great conviction in one's beliefs to choose to die to make a point.

Few of us would be willing to do that. Imagine the conviction behind those acts!

I am, of course, not saying I agree or even admire the people who orchestrated and implemented this plan. I feel much compassion toward them, though. And I wish them peace as I do to all the people affected by today's happenings.

Let us be united in sending love and light into our world. It certainly needs it today!

How can I say how profoundly the events of this day are affecting me? There do not seem to be enough words, or at least not big enough to do the job.

*I feel a great deal of sorrow for the people who were passengers in the hijacked planes.
I feel a great deal of sorrow for the people who were in or around the affected buildings.
I feel a great deal of sorrow for all their families and friends.*

*But I also feel enormous sorrow when I hear all the talk of finding the guilty parties and punishing them.
When I hear talk of retaliation.
When I hear the anger and the fear underlying it all.*

*I am reminded of the words of a beautiful son:
"Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."*

*Let me have no thought of anger and fear, judgment and retaliation.
Let me be a haven of peace for those around me.
Let me be a source of understanding.
Let me be a source of light and love
Now and always
Starting here, starting now, starting with me.*

So let it be,

In love and light,

Janine

to improvise , adapt, and overcome the obstacles before us? What about that freedom? Yes, that too. That is a freedom that can be had inside.

You must be thinking, "This guy is nuts! What kind of bull is he trying to spew?" But I can assure you, my friends, my fellow prisoners, that what I'm telling you is true. Deep in your hearts, you know it. You know

We simply need to let it happen, to make it happen, to unlock the chains that bind our hearts and minds. And we can do it. (Yep, you guessed it!) inside.

No, my friends, I'm not spewing any bull. I'm not nuts (well, maybe just a little, but not about this!). Let me explain.

But how does one explain a concept so abstract , so...so...out there? I almost can't grasp it myself, let alone define it; make it real. I might need some help on this one. Let me begin by telling you how I've felt.

While incarcerated, I've felt trapped. I've felt so alone that my pancreas hurt. I've felt unable to cope, unable to continue my struggle, unable to deal with the enormous obstacles and problems associated with incarceration: being apart from my loved ones, settling my financial obligations from the street, etc. And then there's the whole legal farce.

I've felt misled, cheated, duped, mocked, and shunned. I've felt ashamed, miserable, ambushed, lost...heck, you name it. I've felt, I'm sure, like most prisoners feel when they're torn away from their lives and slammed into a tiny box, becoming an outcast of society. I've felt like...a prisoner. I've felt, well...um...not free. I've felt not free, inside.

But now, all that is changing. All that is getting better. I have begun (just begun) to find a measure of peace. I've been able to cast away some (but not all, yet) of my anger, my sorrow, and my guilt. I've regained a lot of my personal pride. I've come a lot closer to achieving what I once thought was a myth, an untruth, wishful thinking concocted

"While incarcerated, I've felt trapped, I've felt so alone that my pancreas hurt!"

by those who know nothing of prison life. And in some ways, I've already achieved

freedom inside.

So back to the original question. What is freedom inside? How can it be explained? Defined? How can a simple guy like myself wrap his mind around such an absurd sounding concept? I don't know, I really don't. I only know that it's real.

What do you think? How would you explain it? Have you found it? If you have not, keep reading. If you have, keep reading anyway. The pages of this newsletter are filled

"But not all that is changing. All that is getting better (...)

And in some ways, I've already achieved freedom inside.

with freedom. And right now, that freedom is in your hands, with you, inside.

I'd love to know...I almost need to know

what you think freedom inside is and how it can be described. Please write to FI and let the world know your take on this.

And always remember, my friends,

We gotta be in prison
But prison doesn't gotta be in us.
No, prison certainly doesn't gotta be in us.

Respect,

JM
Arizona

Poetry Corner

*"Though darkness may reign,
I am light,*

*Though deceit holds me down,
I am truth,*

*Though chains may bind,
I am empowered,*

*Though ignorance presides,
I am wisdom,*

*Though fear captures my mind,
I am my soul,*

*And with my soul I take flight
to greet the essence of the divine,*

So sweet Angel that you are;

*Be still, be here, so you may see
your refection in love and joy,
and believe in the truth
of who you really are,*

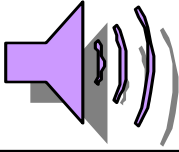
*For I speak of you,
and I speak of me,*

our oneness is the reality."

*Christine H.
England*

Do you have a poem that reflects the message in *Freedom Inside*? If so, send it in, it just may be chosen for a future

Poetry Corner



The Mail Bag

Where You Have a Voice

Hi everyone!

Well, this is it. The first newsletter. The first Mail Bag. This may be the first and only newsletter or the first of many. It depends entirely on you, the reader. As you may have noticed, all the articles of this newsletter were written by people in Arizona. This is because that is where I live and where I know inmates. I hope, through this newsletter, to change that situation in a hurry. It is my dream that FI will become the voice of inmates across the Nation and beyond.

Some wonderful people have written me with questions. It is with great pleasure that I include some of them here.

Janine,

I keep going over my past, and it is really troubling me. Things I cannot change, but they seem to be haunting me. I am having a hard time with living in the now. I can see light, but it is pretty dim from where I am standing. Help me out here.

I guess a lot of what is haunting me about my past is the fact that I chose drugs over my family for 6 1/2 years. Janine, I never even called them. How can I forgive myself for that? How can I make it up to them? Sometimes I feel so guilty, I want to run away from everything again. I feel like I've been a big disappointment to everyone. Myself included. And I am afraid that is all I ever will be! Any words of advice to help me put my past behind me?

AP

Arizona

Dear AP,

I can hear your pain in every word you write. I'm sure all the readers can, too. Where does that pain come from? And why do we all relate so well? It is because we all live with expectations and we all know the pain of the disappointment when our expectations are not met.

Dearest AP, you have lived with an idea, an image, of perfection: what a perfect person is; what a perfect parent does or doesn't do; who a perfect son or daughter acts; what a perfect life looks like. The problem is that we are not here to live a perfect life, to be perfect little soldiers walking a straight line all through our lives...unless we are, of course.

But most of us walk a different path. Most of us make choices that do not always work for us and then we must choose again. All of us choose every moment of every day, it's just that most of the time we automatically choose the same things over and over again. Very rarely do we make new choices consciously.

You, AP, are at a crossroads in your life. You are questioning your choices and are ready to make new ones consciously. How incredibly beautiful to be able to do that! And how much courage it takes to face your past mistakes and choose differently, with awareness of who you are.

You are doing that now, AP. By all means look at your past to help decide who you choose to be now. Your past can be a great teacher. What did you do that made you the happiest? You might want to do more of that. What did you do that made you the most miserable? You might choose not to do that again.

All your past brought you to this beautiful moment of choice. Bless every single moment of that. It is an amazing gift. You are a light in the world. Shine brightly. The world needs you.

Dear Janine,

I don't know what to do about my relationship with my boyfriend. Sometimes things are great but often he seems to drag me down, degrading me with verbal abuse. But I love him and I can't imagine my life without him. I need him. Isn't needing him a part of loving him?

RC

Arizona

Dear RC.

Needing and loving are just about the exact opposite of each other. When we love, we give. When we need, we take. One is about having so much you can't help but sharing it. The other is about fear, feeling that you are not enough on your own to make it.

Which do you choose to have in your life?

I have a question I ask myself to judge if I am in a good relationship, whether with a romantic interest, or a friend, or a family member, a co-worker, or any kind of relationship at all. The question is, "Am I at my best with this person?" If the answer is, "Yes", it's a good relationship. As with everything else, no relationship that I know of is perfect. We just need to choose again when we find ourselves being less than our best.

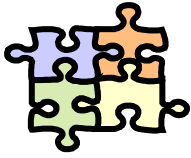
Can you stay and be your best or do you leave the relationship?

You're the only one who can decide what the answer is for you.

Listen to your innermost feelings. They are the language of your soul. They ARE love and freedom.

I wish you well,

Janine



I'd like to tell you how the *Conversations With God* books, especially the first one, impacted my life.

I've been addicted to drugs and/or alcohol since 1976 when I was 17 years old. At first it was just a great social lubricant, but then I found I couldn't do without it. It was the typical story—doing one drug made it okay to try the next, and so on and so forth.

At 23, I went to prison for the first time, and there I learned to use a needle, to shoot dope. I did 3 1/2 years and got out, but I was only out for 10 months. The quest for drugs landed me in prison again, this time for 5 years. I was 33, and I tried (kind of) to correct my life, but I ended up back in prison again after a few short years. I 'only' did 13 months this time, and was released for the third time. I tried good jobs, drug rehab, & 12-step meetings, but I continued to use.

My life became so miserable during this time that I decided that being dead would be better than my life as it was. I slashed my wrist several times, but couldn't find the good artery, so I got into my truck and piped the exhaust into the cab where I sat. I was discovered, I didn't die, so I shot dope until my arrest (again) in '97 at age 39. So there I sat, in prison, with 9 1/4 years in front of me, and life was really a bummer.

I have a sister who was living out of the country at that time, but she wrote me and told me of a book she'd read that she thought I'd like. "OK", I said. So she arranged for a copy of *Conversations with God* to be sent to me. When it arrived, I read it.

I remember my first impression was, "Cool, this is a great book". It doesn't sound like much of a reaction to such a good book, but I think a process was begun inside of me when I first read it. I found myself going back to different parts and re-reading them for the good feeling it left me with. Admittedly, the book sat idle sometimes, but the process was begun and I continued to go back to it. I think that what I especially likes about it was that when I first read it, it felt like the truth. It gave me a God much closer than I was previously taught, and a meaning and purpose for being here.

As I look back I can see that my drug abuse was my attempt to fill a void in me. Good job, money in my pocket, a house, a car, a good girlfriend, none of these could fill it. Drugs didn't fill it, but made me forget about it for a while.

I found that the void, what was missing in my life, was God. The *Conversations with God* books (I have all of them) were what got me going on the spiritual path where I can feel God's presence every day. I still have 3 1/2 years of this sentence to go, but I've never been happier, or more peaceful than I am right now.

By reading that first book, the veil of darkness that had been over me for 39 years was lifted just enough to let God's Light shine through, and every day I thank Him for that.

Mike T.
Arizona

QUOTABLE QUOTES

*Worry is like a rocking chair,
It gives you something to do but gets you nowhere*

- Glen Turner

*I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand
as in what direction we are moving*

- O.W. Holmes

*God is not hard to find.
In fact, God is impossible to avoid!
There is simply no place where God is not.
God is here.
God is now.*

- Deepak Chopra

What is Freedom?

Freedom can be termed love, joy, happiness, enlightenment, godliness, etc. [...]

Many people seek freedom inside and can really appreciate it. This is especially an issue with incarcerated souls. To have freedom inside you need to possess a perspective that allows you to experience freedom, to benefit from freedom, and that enables you to give freedom away.

If you can give freedom to another person, then you have freedom inside. In other words, you cannot give to another anything that you, yourself, do not have. In those instances when we help our sisters and brothers understand that

there are other ways of being in the world, we are giving them the freedom to choose other ways to grow and be happy with themselves. When another soul is burdened or confused about some issue, and we “be there” for that person, or when we are able to shed some light on the situation, in those moments, we have brought freedom to that individual.

Finally, when we “show and tell” another soul that we love them, accept them, and appreciate them, we are granting them the freedom to be as they are.

In conclusion, freedom inside is freedom everywhere. [...] The process of suggesting and striving

Each day or Each Eternal Moment of Now I create myself in the highest or grandest version of my highest vision. I define myself with the consequences of my actions. I choose who I am. I’m responsible for the outcome of my choices, so I try to choose wisely!!

Now, to be Free Inside, to be

liberated, and to be free while in prison—yes, it is oxymoronic!—but very true. It’s first to find love for yourself. Once you love yourself, you unlock the door to your soul. Wow, check this out! It’s like plugging in to the internet. Once in tune with love, you can love your fellow man or woman!

for the realization of “Oneness” is our freedom inside.

Henry J.
North Carolina

Thank you, Henry, for those lovely thoughts. I understand completely what you meant and agree with you. I would like to suggest, though, that souls are never incarcerated. They are always where they chose to be. Bodies and personalities are incarcerated. Egos are incarcerated. They do give us a lot of trouble, though, don't they? You seem to be on a lovely path of self-realization.

I wish you well.
Janine

First, find love, find yourself, freedom comes from within!

Freedom is a state of mind. Freedom is the essence of your soul!

Richard C.
Texas

poetry Corner

Many people think that buzzards look like vultures and condors, but these buzzards are more like giant crows or blackbirds. They are quite graceful as they soar and loop around the sky. I saw them as a metaphor for the Spiritual Journey and the fact that our Souls can never be kept down. This poem is the result.

Buzzards

*I love to watch the buzzards
Wings spread, soaring high.
Free.*

*I stare into the afternoon sky;
Jealous of the floating grace.
The effortless circles.
Gliding on the wind.
Free.*

*I am the wind; I am the sky;
Embracing all.
Free.*

I love to watch the buzzards.

Tom S.
Kentucky

Quotable Quotes

“The price of freedom is to allow freedom. Very few people are willing to pay the price.”
-Leonard Jacobson

“My definition of a free society is a society where it is safe to be unpopular.”
-Adlai Stevenson

“When people are free to do as they please, They usually imitate others.”
-Eric Hoffer

“Be kind to unkind people, they need it the most.”
-Anonymous

If you have a story, comment, question, poem, or anything else you would like to submit for publication, please send it to:

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*Thank you,
Janine*