

Peer Perspective June 2021

“There are a variety of functions for which the prefrontal cortex is responsible. Although significant development of the prefrontal region occurs during adolescence, experts argue that it continues until (at least) our mid-20s.” (<https://mentalhealthdaily.com/2015/02/18/at-what-age-is-the-brain-fully-developed/>).

I remember when I saw a news article, like the article the above quote was taken from, on the brain not being mature until mid-twenties. While I was around that detrimental development time of maturity, I was trying to figure out what the brain function of “reasoning abilities” was and if I had survived this long without “reasoning abilities” then it must not be that important to have. I would think the worst “maybe it is just boring and unexpressive”. Unlike the absence of reason, I started to think maybe I should sober and clean up my unruly ways, try to get into an apartment and at least let my brain heal from the years of damage. It dawned on me “when I am ‘inappropriate’ what is the reasoning in that?”. Sorting out my intentions for why I behaved like I did or why I reacted like I did became my main goal to figure out; and figuring was difficult. I had some slips. I started to realize how damaged my brain was from the falls to the drugs to the trauma. I not only hoped my brain would heal I assumed it would heal. I ran with “me” being the priority to myself; sure enough, recovery followed. What I started to say to myself was “This is not boring or unexpressive; this is needed, and I better take it seriously.”

Within moments of me questioning my intent of going through this metamorphosis I found out I needed a list of things if I was going to make this work. All of this was easy to shrug off; heck I had been doing the “shrug” like a well-rehearsed dance for my entire life. However, number one on that list was safe dependable housing. I moved into Adult Foster Care and checked the box there. This also gave me the room mates I needed; they too were going or had gone through trauma. I moved slow with showing my vulnerabilities such as realizing right away I was susceptible in every way. If you have never analyzed your susceptibilities, you are probably acting on them. Within this house I built a community that already existed, got a doctor for preventative and ongoing care, got a therapist through ACT services (although I went through many individual therapists before I found the ACT team I see now, and the ACT team and I are a great match).

I was so scared. To be honest I do not know how I got to this point other than blind faith in a concept I did not want because I thought it was going to be boring or I would be wrong, or it might be my fault. I found out later, after embracing myself, when my susceptibility to traumas in my life started to heal with radical acceptance, humor, and forgiveness; my brain's ability to “reason” my thoughts as if my thoughts were on the Dewey Decimal System was the maturity and healing power, I needed to be able to soundly express myself with the radical acceptance, the humor, and the forgiveness we all deserve.

- Kirsten D. Certified Peer Support Specialist, Northway IRTS CMMHC