

Peer Perspective Newsletter

Opening my heart to friends was a new concept to me. Growing up I had been to 8 different schools by the time I was able to graduate high school. I knew how to meet people, but I did not know how to keep them as friends. It wasn't until I moved into Adult Foster Care, after a long battle with Mental Health problems, that I decided, "Things have got to change". I just busted at the seams, sat down at the kitchen table and started up a conversation with my new roommates.

I assume that at times I talked their ears off, apologizing for my desperate attempts at friendships, but we laughed and cried and after a long time we all have remained friends. Keeping friends takes some work though. Not to blame them for my own inadequacies. I get impatient, fussy, and as a great friend says, "I'm sorry I have to go change my crabby pants". However, I have come to realize not only does forgiveness go both ways, but I need to forgive myself also. Let go of the turmoil and accept the humanity of friendships.

I had to learn what my part meant in the turmoil as well as my own humanity. Calling people on a regular basis, calling people back, being willing to visit at their destinations as well as mine. I know it seems so obvious but there is a ton more that I have learned along the way and that ton was to become humanely non-judgmental. It sounds so easy. It sounds so appealing but when I learned how to forgive myself and not to be susceptible it was then that I was able to grasp being non-judgmental.

In the beginning I had no idea and I was blowing in the wind. I was convinced I had a mental illness but was sure I was not going to admit it to even the doctors. Now that I can realize how important it is to get over being susceptible, I can trust myself around people. I don't have to give into peer pressure or feel as though things are never going to change. I can choose to keep people in my life that have the same positive goals and if I meet someone that is not living a healthy lifestyle I am not afraid of them because I stand my ground. Getting over that fear is detrimental to being non-judgmental and in return so important when opening my heart to friends.

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