

shouted: "Don't mess with me!". He went even further by surrounding himself with like-minded prisoners to enhance his prison persona.

It took nearly twelve years into his sentence for Shea to realize that the way he was behaving was wrong and unacceptable. He remembers what first caused him to reevaluate his negative lifestyle. It was a phone conversation he had with his brother-in-law when Shea was asked how would he succeed (with his life) if he were to suddenly be given the opportunity of freedom by being released from prison? Shea had no answer for that simple question. At that time Shea noticed that other inmates around him could not answer that same question for themselves and the more Shea dwelled on the fact that no answer was forthcoming for himself the more he felt himself moving towards the beginning of change.

However, no matter how large the desire for change is, it does not happen overnight. It takes seven days to form habits and much longer to change behavioral patterns that one forms over years of delinquency. A few years after that conversation with his brother-in-law, Shea began to experience a turning point, a true transformation. In 2013, Shea's self-destructive choices resulted in him being placed in segregation. He called his mom to let her know what had happened and she broke down into tears upon him telling her that he was in segregation. The sound of her sobbing uncontrollably broke and shifted something inside of him. The many personas he would fall into so that his immature behavior would be easier to deal with began to crack and fall from his being, and he started realizing that he wouldn't truly be happy unless he would just be himself. At that moment Shea promised himself he would never do anything to cause his mother pain, distress, or tears again. For the first time in his life Shea recognized he had put his mom through a living hell and he was tired of letting her down. She used much of her finances to pay for his mistakes as a young child and later on as a teenager. Shea is fully accountable for her losses, and during that phone conversation with her he came to realize that he didn't want to continue being a disappointment to her.

Shea can say now that the seeds of change have come and taken root. His family and friends can see this true change in him, and even more his shift towards respecting and following rules no matter how small they may be. This change did not come without struggle though, nor without setbacks and multiple failures. It's been a rough uphill battle, but Shea is committed and determined to live a lawful and positive life. He has learned that the man he thought he was, whom he thought he had to be, is a facade conceived out of a childhood of being a victim of sexual abuse, pain, drug abuse, trauma, and of course his own selfish behavior. He had to break down the walls that he had built to keep others out, to keep him safe from harm that he feared would come his way, and to quit deflecting responsibility for all the wrong