

# Things I Wish I Knew 9 Years Ago

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1. **It can always get worse...** at CCA I thought nine months segregation pre-trial was wretched and surely illegal torture.. at Englewood low, I was stunned by the harassment that SIS would engage in and the bullshit they put my family through... At Florence medium I was enraged by how long it took emails and books to get through... since I've gone **YEARS** without visits, calls, mail, radios, I've been **hospitalized by staff**, been deprived basics like clothes, **food** and **mail**... They can always turn up the heat... And they **will in accordance to your spirit and resistance**.
2. Most people you meet won't be anti government, anti cop, or even anti prison... they will hate these institutions in relation to how they oppress them, but not the wider spectrum... This is why radicalization inside is so important and difficult; convincing someone who thinks Michael Brown "deserved it" that they are wrong and misguided is infuriating, yet **necessary work**.
3. No matter what custody level you're at being respectful and having a routine is VITAL. Eric McDavid hipped me to this at Englewood, but because I was surrounded by creeps, narcs and old folk, it didn't seem relevant. I would learn though. Having the routine gives you a day structure and a bit of purpose, it gives meaning to a life that at times can feel meaningless. Being active keeps your brain up also... with respect, it's just a good idea in prison and in life really. About 80% of my issues implied can come from reckless talk and could have been avoided.
4. You'll meet some really good people. People who will look out for you, **fight for you, celebrate and mourn with you**. You will not always agree on ethical or political issues, but if you push away everyone you will be wildly isolated and that is dangerous ... You need people to have your back from other prisoners and from staff... Accept the friendship and use it to try to open minds and hearts.
5. People who "support" you can be real friends, keep yourself open and don't worry about posturing to impressed... To feel as if you "deserve" support or friendship... Some will stick around, some will fall off, neither is an implication of your worth... **it's OK to be you**... To love Taylor, to feel for Ted, to have a complicated relationship with the church, to love English football while hating the English empire... be yourself and to be open to love and friendship.
6. You don't have to accept support from people or groups that make you feel conflicted... there's no obligations... you can speak up and say "no thanks" without feeling guilty or self sabotaging. Trust yourself.
7. Grow out your hair. Having long hair is fun, though also being a pain in the ass to dry.
8. ASK For the help you want, trust the people who love you to back you. Be

proactive with projects you want to start, believe in yourself and your ideas I took too long and people had to tell me it was OK to have wants and needs and to voice them. **Prison is more enjoyable when you're involved in things that make you feel good.**

9. Being anti fascist, anti racist, or a political prisoner does not remove you from the bullshit inside. You still live in this realm and have to follow basic guidelines... feeling outside it all will cause issues early on... you gotta find ways to walk the line while maintaining your ethics... you have to eat with potentially hateful people, but you don't have to laugh at their nastiness. Be creative, you'll find ways... like you can't work out with other races, but you can teach and take classes with them... there are ways, but be safe. You are not above it all.
10. Don't let people try to buddy hustle you for drug money under the guise of mutual aid... folks will try to use your ethics against you... manipulation is real and so is scheming. People will pretend to share radical ideology, pretend to be interested... then use solidarity to scheme, steal addresses, steal phone minutes ect. Fuck them. There are trash people inside, just like outside.
11. Never, ever, let yourself be a victim.
12. Feel the hurt, be vulnerable with those you love and trust, let yourself stay human, not an institutionalized robot. You're in this world, but it isn't your world, there's so much more to your life an existence than your captivity.
13. **Fight to win.**

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