



A Prison of Our Own Making

Reflecting the glow of recovery from Starlight at Tamassee

By Jon Holland, CEO of Tamassee DAR School



I've never been to jail. A couple of tickets, but nothing worthy of arrest or incarceration. That's a good thing since I lead a trusted non-profit in our community, but I have to tell you some of my greatest heroes have spent time in the slammer. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. caused all kinds of good trouble and spent plenty of nights behind bars. History is filled with those who stood for the right, when those in power favored the wrong, and they paid the price for it. My king certainly did. He spent a night in jail between mock trials before religious and political power colluded to nail him on a cross.

I've also known far too many people who lived in a prison of their own making. Every soul I've known who struggled with addiction had imprisoned themselves in their own harsh beliefs and feelings.

You see, when we experience trauma, especially in childhood, that trauma is not only the seed bed in our brain wiring and chemistry for addiction but also the prison cell filled with a host of inmates of cruel lies and painful emotions. Nearly everyone who suffers trauma develops false beliefs about themselves, others, the world, and God.



You'll hear them say things like: I can't trust anyone; I'm worthless; No one can love me; I'm all alone; I have to take care of myself; I don't need anyone; I have to be in control or else; I'll always fail no matter how hard I try; God's never there for me; and ultimately I can't live without... When those are our deepest beliefs, no wonder we look for something to make the pain go away. Those negative, destructive beliefs are nothing short of a gulag.

If that's not enough, those who experience trauma and fight addiction deal with a concentration camp of emotions like shame, fear, and anger. Abuse and neglect make us feel rejected and unlovable, dirty and abandoned. Domestic violence and family instability make us terrified of the next eruption. Who wouldn't feel angry living behind such emotional bars? Who wouldn't want to escape? Then a pill, needle, or a bottle comes along, and for a while it all feels better. We finally feel normal, but we wake up to find the bars slammed shut still. It can feel like a hopeless cycle.



But it's not! There are those who have broken out. They have a message of hope and an escape plan to offer. Ultimately, there is One who has broken every bar and trampled every cell by his victorious death and resurrection. He sets us free from the prisons of our own making. At Starlight at Tamassee, we believe mothers and children can find freedom from wounded beliefs and emotions. We believe trauma and addiction can be healed. To learn more about Starlight, visit starlight.tdarschool.org, or contact us at starlight@tdarschool.org or 864-944-1390. If your church or civic group is interested in a presentation on recovery, contact Jon Holland at jholland@tdarschool.org.