

Chuck B. Story (Being Released from Custody)

Subject: Our son Chuck (not his real name)

From: J.B.

Date: Tue, March 17, 2015 8:02 pm

To: "Mike Speakman" <mike@mikespeakman.com>

Hi Mike,

I believe you said we could ask you questions. I don't want to abuse that privilege. But, I do have one question.

First, do know that we did meet the life coach Tim. I think we're going to try to see him again at the PAL meeting April 2 or in a personal meeting the next day or two afterwards. We don't know now how he might be involved, but we're working on it.

Anyway, the question. Chuck tells us by letter, telephone and through his brother who he also called, that he needs the Corrections Officer (CO3) at this prison to learn from us where he is going to be staying on release. We have given Chuck the info for Teen Challenge, Dream Center and House of Refuge. The first two are probably out now, due to the lateness of date.

Don B. has said that Chuck is eligible but would have to meet with him first. But, Chuck wants us to call the prison and somehow get a message to his CO3 about where he will be staying. We could call and say House of Refuge and give the address, but we don't know that Chuck will actually pass the interview. Whoever transports Chuck would probably go to House of Refuge with him first for an interview and then if that doesn't work they'd take him somewhere else, maybe Crossroads?

Chuck says he has been trying to get with the CO3 but he never follows up with him. So, he's putting it on us.

What do you recommend we do? Nothing? Send Chuck another letter saying outlining the options we know of The three mentioned above? Call the prison and tell them Chuck can't live at our house but we've checked out House of Refuge and it seems he could live there but he'll need to pass an interview?

I already think I know your answer but I'd like to hear it.

J

Subject: Our son Chuck
From: Mike Speakman <mike@mikespeakman.com>
Date: Tue, March 17, 2015 10:20 pm
To: J.B.

J. and R,

Your question is essentially, "how much should we help Chuck and how much should Chuck be helping himself." It's very possible for you to fall into that old familiar trap where you feel responsible for him, like he's a child instead of an adult. If that happens, you will feel that old, familiar *sick* feeling in the pit of your stomach. I'm not saying this is the case. But, it is one of the predictable, potential situations that can occur and I want you to be aware of it.

When it comes to his transition from prison, the ideal situation is for Chuck to do as much as he can and you do as little as you can. What does that look like? I don't know. That's a *general guideline* and it's up to you to fill in the specifics. It would be so much easier "*The old way*" where you just do everything you can and more. That has to change and you are in the process of learning how to make that change. When you do less, Chuck is allowed to be responsible for his own life, and can then do more.

Likewise, it would also be easier *to do nothing* about the details of his transition, except give him words of encouragement, and maybe pay his first month rent at a half-way house in order to give him time to get a job. By the way, I believe this is a valid choice for you and is light years better than doing everything. Ask yourself: If you were in Europe and out of contact with the states for three months, what would Chuck do? You can bet he would find a way to leave that prison on his release date, with or without a helpful CO3 or a family member. So yes, you can be of assistance in the process, but be aware of the pitfalls and also know you are not essential to this process. Ultimately, the prison and our many societal support systems are responsible for helping prisoners transition back to society, not you. If I were in your place, I would ask Chuck, in a letter, what he expects you to do. And, I would send a letter being very clear he's not coming home. **Something like this:**

"Chuck, your dad and I love you and want to help you. We are looking to you to guide us by being specific in what you want us to do for you. We are done thinking for you, planning for you, and trying to rescue you from situations you can handle without us. We are getting help from a life coach who is teaching us how to treat you like the man you are, instead of the child you once were. So we are putting more responsibility for your life choices, squarely on your shoulders, where they ought to be. Your returning home upon your release, is not an option. Tell us, where you want to go: A treatment facility? Half-way house? Sober living home? or what? We are not making that decision for you. You will decide and we will help you to the extent we feel is fair. Please accept our apology for treating you like a child for so long, and we hope you will forgive us for that. Love always, mom and dad."

Call me anytime and God bless you in this important time in you and your son's life. -Mike

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