

UNBOUND

*Breaking
the chains
that bind us*

Facilitator's Manual

A Program of Change

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Forward

Facilitator Note

Distribute the first "Where are you now" graph test.

Prison, our savior

Getting locked up should be the worst and best thing that ever happens to us in order for the process of incarceration to be successful. We should hate it enough to take the necessary steps to avoid it in the future, thus making us better people and allowing us to live a normal life.

Unfortunately no one sits us down and says those words to us when they slap the cuffs on us. It's a sink or swim environment and it's unfortunate that more people are ruined by the experience than saved.

This being the case, it's up to us to see prison as an opportunity to fix the problems in our thinking and prepare ourselves for our eventual release. This is a true example of life giving us lemons and us making lemonade.

This program is designed with the hopes of getting its participants to take advantage of this low spot in their lives by understanding how things deteriorated to this point.

This can only be achieved by having an open mind. If you fight a process instead of giving it a chance you will never benefit from the process.

Finding ourselves in prison should be evidence enough that we are doing something wrong. For many the message doesn't sink in. Hopefully this program can shed enough light on the key issues that will allow each of you to see that a change in our lives is not only possible, but necessary. And that a failure to do so can only result in a life spent behind bars, one commitment at a time.

If you find yourself becoming defensive during this program that's to be expected, since it is indeed how you choose to live that will be called into question. That can be a tough pill to swallow for anyone. Just keep in mind that there is nothing to be angry over. This program is built on the assumption that its content will be opposed since its aim is to call into question the decision making capabilities of grown men. No one is going to tell you what a great guy you are; that's what happens if you are accepting the Nobel Peace Prize. But you will hear some advice that just may change your life, if you can find enough humility to accept it.

One thing can't be argued with: We are all human. We all have made, and will continue to, make mistakes. This being the case, there is always room for improvement in our lives and the way we think. If you deny the logic of that you may be truly beyond help, here or anywhere.

You're not being asked to give this program a chance; you're being asked to give yourself a chance.

Introduction

This program is one of a kind. It has no soft edges. Nothing is sugar coated. No form of denial is allowed. The only concession that is made here is the hands-off approach to crimes committed in your past. It would be counter-productive to expect you to confess to past crimes. Besides, this program is designed to keep you out of prison, not place you in it.

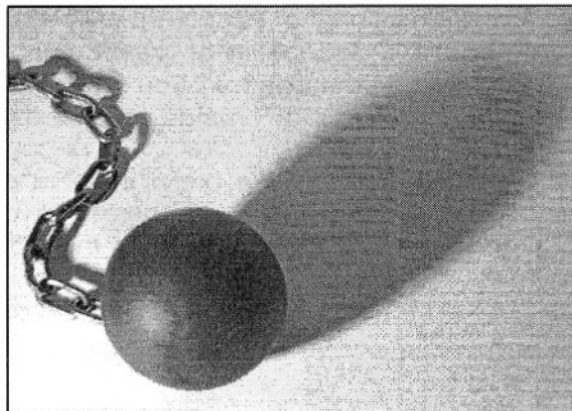
The change that is expected to take place with this program must take place in your head. Since that change cannot be truly measured due to the average criminal's attempts to deceive those around them, it is up to you to save yourself from yourself. This program is simply a hard shove in the right direction.

You are human. You have flaws. More than you will ever know; that is what being human is all about. But if you are reading these words then chances are that you have more flaws than most and are choosing to ignore them. You are now, no doubt, saying to yourself, "Hey, I have some good qualities." And that is true. We all do. But keep in mind that a shady used car salesperson may point out the fact that a vehicle has new tires. The car is still a clunker. You cannot allow the existence of redeeming qualities to blind you to the faults in your thinking and your life.

You are at a crossroads in your life. If you choose to sulk or deny and argue your way through these sessions it should be a loud warning bell in your own head that you are in denial about how you have been living.

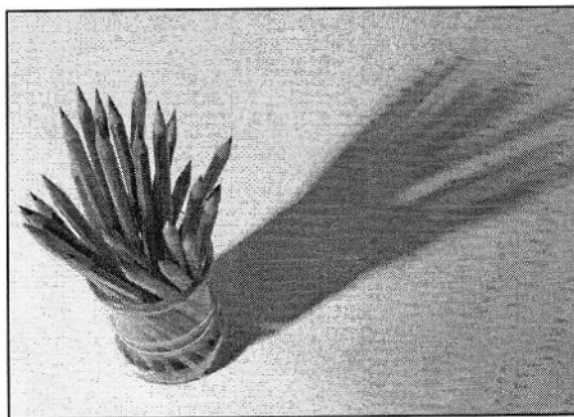
If you feel that this program is for losers, you are absolutely right. But the true losers never recognize that they are one of us. They remain apart from the group, waiting for it all to be over. If this is you, don't worry. Sooner than you think you will be out of this program and sitting around doing nothing to improve yourself once again.

Everyone is different. We do have our good points as well as our bad. Some of us are already on the road to self-awareness and recovery; where some of us are simply on a path of self-destruction. None of us are angels, but with this program, some serious looks into why we do what we do, and the courage to admit our faults, we just may be able to shed our horns.



Rules of Class Conduct

1. No raised voices, arguing or fighting.
2. One person talks, everyone listens. Do not attempt to take over the class.
3. Active participation is required, no reading, writing or anything not course related.
4. No mention of actual crimes is to be made at anytime. This includes crimes we have committed in our past, crimes we plan to commit in the future, or the crimes of others.
5. Do not expect to have the words in this program changed to meet your expectations or beliefs. It's you that must change to meet the expectations of this program.
6. Do not attempt to shift the focus of attention onto another member of the class or on to the facilitators.
7. During this course there will be questions posed to the group. You will be required to participate in this process. Raising your hand to agree is a choice. Not raising your hand is also a choice. Either way, your action will be noted as a decision made on your part.



Why are You in This Class?

This is a voluntary program for people who feel that it is time for a change in their thinking and thus, their lives.

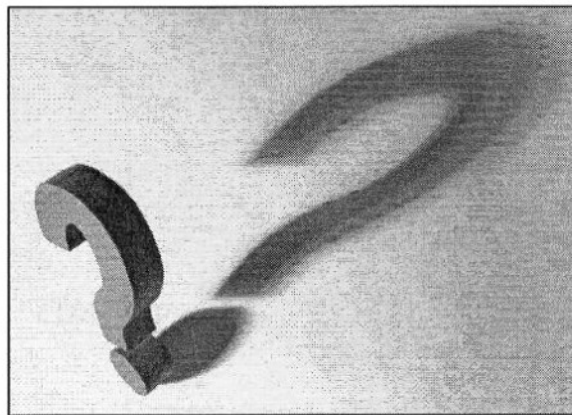
If you are in this class it is assumed that you *want* to be a part of it. You have not been forced to participate and you can quit at any time.

The main intent of this program is to challenge your way of thinking. With many people this will be seen as an attack upon you as a person. This is not the intention of this course, nor are any of the facilitators attacking you on a personal level. It is a requirement of this class to call into question your decision making capabilities.

If you feel that you are not emotionally strong enough to be the focus of this type of scrutiny, this class may not be for you. If you decide to start this class and find yourself becoming angry at the facilitators it is *your* responsibility to control yourself.

You may not hear this much in life, but your anger may be a good thing, at least in this class, if you can see it for what it is; the beginning of change.

If a facilitator says something that angers you it is a sign that one of your core beliefs being challenged, not you as a person. If you are holding on to a core belief that is being called into question in the class it is *your* responsibility, once again, to focus not on the facilitator, but the belief being questioned. This moment is truly important because it indicates that one of your broken spots is being exposed. Like a dentist poking at a rotten tooth that needs to be removed, the facilitator is at a pivotal moment. Only you, by directing your attention to your true attacker, your own twisted thinking, can allow yourself to be guided down the path of logical thought. Then you will begin to see that you possess the power to heal yourself of self-destructive thinking.



What is a Certificate?

A certificate is a piece of paper that is physical proof of the completion of a class or course. A certificate is an important aspect of any program we may participate in. It not only proves that we took the course, but it's our tangible evidence of a skill or knowledge that now resides inside our minds.

But in actuality, that small piece of paper is totally worthless if we simply sat back in a class and didn't learn anything. The true reason someone should become involved with a course is to better themselves, not collect another certificate.

This course issues certificates for those of you who successfully complete it. But with this course the main goal is to impact the participant's lives on such a profound level that it results in a change of attitude that leads to a life of continued freedom.

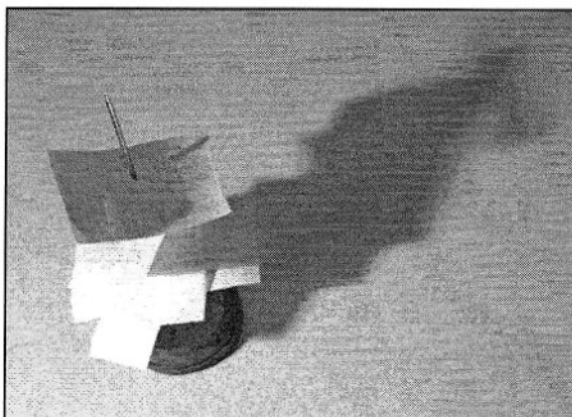
If you miss three classes, excused or unexcused, you will be forced to take the entire course over if you want to graduate.

If you do not turn in any assigned lessons, even one, you will not graduate.

If you become argumentative, and want to challenge the curriculum or the facilitators on a continuous basis, again, due to such an outward sign of denial, you will not graduate.

If you sign in but do not participate in class, or get up and wander around the building instead of being involved, you will be considered as absent and you will not get credit for the class.

The bottom line is this: This class is for someone who wants to change themselves for the better, not certificate collectors. The chance to change your life in a positive way should not be wasted. The number of students in this class is limited. A spot occupied by a certificate collector could have been given to someone who was looking to better themselves. If you feel you cannot live up to the attendance requirements of this class it would benefit everyone if you didn't start this class, disrupt it, then drop out. Granted, we need examples of people who are still on the path of self-destruction, but not at the cost of someone missing their chance to change their lives.



Missing Pieces of the Puzzle

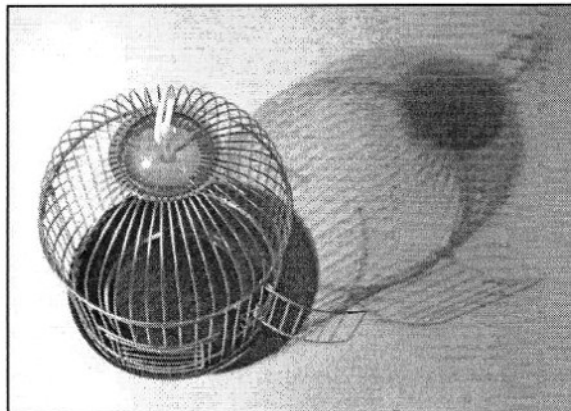
Sometimes we will hear a joke that we just don't get. The people around us will laugh when the punch line is delivered, so it must have been funny; just not to us at the time.

During this course you may encounter concepts or certain factors that you don't agree with, or simply don't understand. This is normal. It's a part of any growth phase. When you hear something that makes you uncomfortable, or sounds alien to you, it's a sign that you are being introduced to a new way of looking at something. Considering how badly many of us have done in the past, this should be a welcome event. But for many of you, the importance of the words you will hear in this course will not become clear until possibly years later. That's normal too considering the shape some of us are in.

For some of you this course, and what you learn in it, will be one of the missing pieces of your puzzle, and now that you are armed with this new insight you can begin to turn your life around.

For some of the younger members of the class it may require a few more downfalls in life before the concepts taught here gain meaning. But one day, with a little work on your part, you'll get the punch line and stop *being* the punch line.

Keep your ears open, your mind free of preconceived notions, your sight focused on something better for yourself than life in a cage, and perhaps this course might give you a second chance. And another piece of the puzzle.



Facilitator Note

Group Question: Do you respect someone you perceive as weak? If not, then why? Would you consider someone as weak if they couldn't control their own urges? (People who have their act together see us as weak, as someone not strong enough to make it like everyone else.)

What is True Strength?

You are not strong or powerful if you succumb to urges or desires that lead to your own destruction. Doing these things is proof of weakness. If you can't overpower your own urges, how can you consider yourself to be strong? Strong is more than muscle; it is will, courage, and self-discipline. It's doing what's right; not taking the path of least resistance. It's facing what you are, seeing the problems in your life, and fixing them.

Might does not make right; it's proof of the bully within. It's proof of a sociopath doing what he wants without concern for those in the way.

Doing the right thing in life is a display of true inner strength. Another display of strength is to admit when you are wrong. But in many cases seeing that we are wrong requires a strength that proves to be beyond our capabilities.

What does this mean?

There are millions of people in prison. Most of them consider themselves to be more or less good people. A slim few profess to be bad. Who is right and who is wrong? Are there truly good people in prison? Or is our prison system an example of a flawed system that incarcerates the innocent? Each person is an individual and each case has its own issues. But as for the *flawed system* that many people choose to blame; it's not going to go away. As imperfect as it may be, it's the only one we have and it will chew you up and spit you out before you know what has hit you. Ignoring the most powerful institution on the face of the earth is total insanity! Do you truly think that you can wander through life in a drunken or drug induced stupor and do whatever you want and avoid detection forever? Do you actually believe that treating people however you wish will not lead to worse and worse things in your life?

You want to know what strong is? Strong are the handcuffs, leg chains and waist chains that bind us. Strong is the knowledge that the person on the other side of the table, visiting you with tears in their eyes, may be gone from your life forever. Strongest yet is knowing that all of these wounds in our lives are self-inflicted. Until we open our eyes and see ourselves for what we are, we don't have a chance. True strength requires humility. Humility is required to admit that we are flawed. This admission is the only thing that can save us. Strength is self-awareness.

Does anyone disagree?

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Facilitator Note

Group Question: Do you remember your first day of school?
Do you think you have changed since that day? (Change is real.)

Changing the Way We Think

Just because we have gotten by with acting a certain way is no indicator that we can't do better. For many of us we tend to overlook the fact that being alive and going through the aging process is going to change us. We change on many levels and in many directions as we live. For some of us the changes have been for the worse. Once this negative path is taken it is a hard one to get off of. Even the threat of prison or death is not a strong enough deterrent to save some of us.

People can and will change if they see a benefit to it, but not everyone wants to see it. For instance, think about the saying; "If it's not broke why fix it?" This old saying is the perfect disclaimer for someone in denial. This mindset is geared towards the easy way out and is a well know tactic for people who are oblivious to existing problems, or are trying to avoid the need for change.

Here is the reality of it: If we do not make a serious effort to change our ways of thinking from where they are now to something less self-destructive, we are indeed going to return to prison or worse. Can you see the benefit in being free? Can you see the benefit of not dying behind bars? Can you see the benefit of not being treated like an animal for twenty or thirty years? Or do you simply feel that you are immune to having these things happen to you? Do you feel that you are simply too slick to find yourself facing those types of situations? If so, you are truly a fool.

You are sitting in a class designed to help people who have hit rock bottom. You are not immune. You are not slick. Whether you see it or not is irrelevant. No one is going to ask you if you saw it coming when they lock you back up. It will not matter once the machine starts to chew you up, again. The system is like the sun. If you are stupid enough to get too close it will do what it does and burn you up, without one shred of remorse.

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Facilitator Note

Group Question: How many times have you gotten away with breaking a law?
(But eventually we get caught. It only takes once. It's like walking a tightrope: a thousand successful walks end with the first fall.)

These are the facts: We cannot simply do as we like in this world. There are consequences to our actions. We may have been lucky in the past and have avoided detection; but the past is over. We are now on the radar of the most powerful law enforcement entity on the planet. We are not going to beat its technology, its man power or its prison walls. We are now down to two options: Stay on our current courses or change. Is that plain enough for you? It's broke - fix it!

Just because it's Legal Doesn't Make it Right

Laws were created to keep us in line and protect others, not to place us in prison. Prison is the place for those of us who ignore the laws.

What about right and wrong? Does the concept of law equal what is right and what is wrong? Not always.

Is it ok to get drunk in your own home as long as you are of drinking age and you paid for the alcohol? Not necessarily. You drink to alter your thinking; to reduce the clear lines in your life. But think about this: If you drink until you are drunk, and blur those lines, and lose your ability to make decisions the same way you would if you were sober, how can you be sure that you will still respect the same laws you respected before you got drunk? Is this fair to yourself, this disablement?

Is it ok to yell at your kids? Is it ok to ignore the emotional needs of your spouse? Is it ok to lie to people, or to say hurtful things to them? It may be legal, but it's not right.

Doing these things, and many more like them, are indicators that our life is out of control and that we do not respect ourselves or those we claim to love. Taking advantage of the legality of an action when you know it is not right is simply a stepping stone to breaking laws. Just as visiting a bar can lead to drinking, treating people badly can lead to committing crimes upon them. Granted, not everyone who walks into a bar drinks, but if you are reading these words its safe to assume that you have already failed yourself and those around you. You are definitely the one being referred to.

There is a big difference between being a good person and living within the law; the goal in life is to do both. Keep in mind that a lot of famous gangsters were known for being untouchable because they were not breaking any laws. It means nothing. They were still bad humans.

So, do not think that not being arrested equals not breaking any laws. It is what you do in life, not what you get caught for. Think this over for a minute: If you would have been caught for every single law you have broken, and moral infraction you have ever committed, what would your life be like right now? Every speeding ticket, every lie, every extra-marital affair, every meanness?

You would be in prison, you would be friendless, and you would be alone - if you were still alive that is. The very act of someone placing these words in your hand is proof of your last crash. You are not as smart as you think you are. Many people were able to see the crash in your past and you could not. You were not fooling one person in your life, with the exception of yourself.

There is only one way to get our lives in order. That's to admit that we have thinking errors and correct them. Starting right now, accept that you are damaged goods in need of repairs and start the process of change. Acceptance is the key. Without it you will never unlock the internal chains that bind you nor escape the real ones that hold. We are all born as flawed creatures, some more than others. Until we accept our flaws we have no chance of fixing them. You make a repair to your car only after realizing that it needs to be fixed. The same goes for the way we think. Once a problem makes itself apparent in our thinking it is an indicator that we need to fix that as well. Acceptance of your flaws is a mandatory part of this program and your recovery.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Have you ever heard of someone who committed a crime just so they could get locked up?

The Relief of Prison

Did you intentionally send yourself to prison so you could lift from your shoulders the burden of trying to make it in a free society? Sound crazy? I'll tell you what crazy is: continually coming to prison over and over again. That's pure gut-wrenching insanity in its purest form.

The only other explanation is a subconscious desire to throw in the towel and escape the hardships of life and put ourselves in prison. More craziness.

So which of the two is it? Is this program crazy for suggesting it or are we crazy for doing it? I'll help you here; statistics show that a vast majority of people who get out of prison find themselves back in trouble within three years.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: How many of you are afraid to walk this compound?
(You must not be having problems; you're making it.)

When we find ourselves locked up it's truly nothing like the movies. In fact, over time we find ourselves adapting to the structured days and lifestyle. Then one day we look up and several years have passed us by and we realize, "Hell, I can do this." Though it may have been insidious in its approach, our fear of prison bleached away to nothing and along with it our built-in defense mechanism to avoid it.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: How many of you were doing alright financially before you were arrested? Were you what could be considered rich, legally?

Now, if our life on the streets was truly chaotic and full of self-induced hardships it's possible to make the leap of logic that coming to prison may have actually been a step up. For these people the act of coming to prison was the equivalent of taking a vacation or "getting rescued." Free food, no rent, everything in walking distance, free clothes... who could ask for more? But in reality, nothing is free in here. We pay for everything we get with the wasted years of our lives. What a factor to overlook.

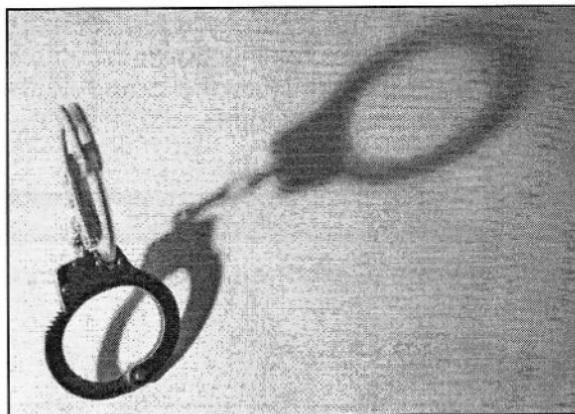
And who are these people, these prison vacationers? They are the ones that keep coming back. The only thing these people are getting from the prison experience is a wasted life.

For some the experience of coming to prison is a life-changing event in a positive direction; as it should be! These are the people who are attempting to make the necessary changes in their lives that would reduce their chances of returning to prison. Granted, these people may very well find themselves back in prison for various reasons as well. The difference is that these people are taking steps to make corrections in their thinking and actions to avoid returning to a life they hate.

If the experience of coming to prison does not motivate you to take an inventory of yourself you have serious problems. If you have been taken away from everything you love due to your actions and you refuse to take steps to change those actions, you hate prison less than you love your freedom. One reason for this may be a strong case of denial. And that is indeed your one way ticket back inside these fences.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Who agrees with this? Some people are able to avoid returning to prison, why?



Facilitator Note

Group Question: Are there any perfect people in this class? So is that an admission of problems? (Remember, before you become defensive, just because you don't see your problem doesn't mean it doesn't exist.)

Knowing Ourselves

There is no single step we can take to get our thinking, and thus, our lives in order. But to know ourselves for what we are is a good start.

This process, which is the key goal of this program, can be a painful one, especially if we do it correctly. Knowing ourselves requires us to step outside ourselves and view ourselves as others see us. We must analyze why we do what we do, make no excuses for those actions, and, when needed, correct those actions. By doing this we can pinpoint the things that continue to cause harm to us and those around us. If we have no idea that we have issues that need correcting there is no chance of addressing and correcting those issues.

Do you consider yourself to be someone who has their act together? Well here's a paradox for you (a paradox is a person or thing that possesses contradictory qualities): If you think you have your act together, you probably don't. If you think there is incredible room for improvement in your life, you're doing pretty good, because without a true understanding of one's own shortcomings there is no awareness of a need for improvement.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: As you have aged, has something you have heard years before, suddenly clicked into place?
(Get them to admit that it does happen.)

This is the area that some of you are not ready for. The words on these pages may take several years to sink in. But that is the nature of denial, and growth. The bonds are great but with enough of life's failures raining down on you, combined with people being honest with you about how your actions are the cause of the failures, the bonds can be broken. But you must be the one to break them.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Have you ever gotten away with a crime or moral indiscretion?
10? 100? (Show of hands).

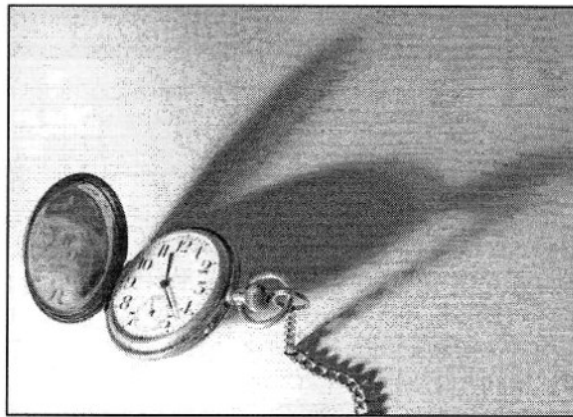
You want the first step to knowing yourself? Here it is: You are in prison; chances are that your actions led you here; you have gotten away with a lot more crimes than you were

caught for; you are unhappy with your station in life; and you probably feel that at least half of everything you have heard so far in this program is wrong.

Does anyone disagree?

Though there is more to being "you" than was covered in the previous paragraph, Those are the main factors that have led to, and resulted in, your downfall in life. And yes, being in prison is considered a downfall. That's why we say, "I've been down for ten years" and so on. Until you come to grips with the fact that you were accurately described in the previous paragraph you have very little chance of understanding yourself any time soon, and the clock is ticking.

Know thyself and free thyself.



Getting it all Wrong

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Who do you trust more than yourself?
(We need to learn to trust those in our lives who are making the right decisions).

How much should we trust our own ability to get ourselves through life? I mean, who could possibly be looking out for our best interests more than we are? Unfortunately, considering the state our lives are in it's obvious that we surely can't be trusted to do it.

Being who we are, hard heads with strong opinions that in many cases are based on false beliefs, we tend to follow a path in which we are often wrong but never unsure.

What does this mean?

How many arguments occur where both parties are *sure* they are right on an issue? Sometimes these arguments turn into fights or even result in death. All because someone trusted their own judgment or beliefs to the point of overlooking the fact that they may indeed be wrong.

If you are listening to these words it's safe to assume that you have been wrong about at least one thing in your life, because here you sit.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: What would have kept us from coming to prison?
(See if it was getting caught.)

Finding ourselves in prison should be a wake-up call that informs us that we are doing something wrong. Unfortunately, many of us feel that "getting caught" is where we screwed up. These people will be back. It's the person that traces the problem to its true root source that has a chance of changing their thinking and staying out of prison. And I'll give you a little clue; our distorted thinking is the source of our own problems.

Being our own worst enemy is a hard thing to accept, but if we don't accept it we will never take the first step on the path of change. We are all flawed creatures simply by being human, some more flawed than others. The sooner we accept that we have been getting it all wrong the sooner we can start to save ourselves from ourselves.

We all know the guy that argues more than anyone else in our dorm. (If you can't think of anyone that fits this description you're probably him.) He is the walking, talking example of the thinking process that takes place inside many of our heads. He's just more vocal about it. He exposes his views to those around him; then the people around him begin the process of attempting to talk sense into him. Sometimes it's comical, other times it's not.

Being in prison is proof that we have followed flawed thinking pattern. The only thing that can save us is change. Though we are seldom inclined to trust the people in our lives, sometimes we simply have to let go and take a chance. This is one of those times.

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Facilitator Note

Group Question: What has coming to prison done to us?
(Positives and negatives.)

What are We Today?

Our pasts obviously hold the proof of flawed thinking and poor decision making. But who are we now, right this minute? Are we the same person we were at the start of our prison sentence? Are we someone who has learned from our mistakes, or have we regressed deeper into a life of denial and distorted thinking? Perhaps, if we look deep enough we'll see a little of both.

Coming to prison can be a soul-crushing experience that can add as many bad aspects to our lives as good. We can find ourselves hating the very prison walls that forced us to look at ourselves in the first place. Like it or not, the stench of prison is going to rub off on us and leave its mark forever. It's up to us to control the size of the impact and the direction it takes.

Prisons are notoriously recognized as schools for crime. A million schemes for getting rich quick are constantly being hatched and honed. It's a badge of honor to fight, or any other number of infractions that could land us in confinement. To take steps to avoid a fight, or getting into trouble is seen as "soft" or "afraid." Which is just the opposite of the lifestyle that can keep us free if we ever get out. And the truly unfortunate part is that it's simply the nature of the beast; it's never going to change. But we can.

A rectangular box with a dark background and light text, containing a facilitator note. It is decorated with small icons in the corners.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Can we be in prison without it taking over who we are?
(What does this mean?)

Allowing prison to destroy us is unacceptable. We can, in spite of our incarceration, control who we become. But just like anything else it requires us to make the effort. Coasting through life can work for some people if they are lucky. Unfortunately we are already locked up, and by being so we no longer have the luxury of being able to passively approach life and hope that things work out. We must accept the fact that we are in the most counterproductive environment for positive change possible. We also must take an active role in avoiding the dangerous thinking patterns that can develop due to our circumstances.

Embracing a life of crime is purely giving up on ourselves. We are dooming ourselves to a lifetime in prison, either on installments or in one long stretch. We can and must take the steps to mold our identities into something that will give us a chance at a better life.

This program, right now, today, is something that is being presented to you. This is something that you can reject as an attempt to brainwash its participants with garbage, or you can use it as an eye opening tool that will allow you to go forward and improve your way of thinking.

Who you are changes every day. Remember, your views are altered by the input of new data. Your ability to make decisions is improved with education. Being in control of who you are, everyday, is the only way to direct the course of your life. It isn't an option, but a requirement of change.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Have you ever been talked into doing something that resulted in a problem in your life? (How did you feel afterward? Like you should have known better?)

Herd Mentality

Sometimes we allow ourselves to be influenced by others. In fact, advertisers spend incredible amounts of money because they know we can be influenced to buy their products if the commercial is successful.

Like the advertisement agencies there are people we will encounter who will exploit a "follower" mentality. These people have several possible reasons for their actions. They need a "fall partner" to either: take the heat if things go wrong; create a "safety in numbers" scenario; build their own confidence; or increase their odds of being successful in whatever it is they are up to.

These people can be strangers, friends, coworkers, or even family. What these people can't be is someone looking out for your best interest. They may make their sales pitch sound like it's a foolproof plan and that you can benefit greatly by going along with it, the truth of the matter is that if things were as simple as they make them out to be, these sociopaths would have done it themselves so they didn't have to cut you in on things.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: What is a moral code?

On many occasions we allow ourselves to be led on these "sure things" only to find out that the only "sure" thing was getting caught. The reason we allow ourselves to be talked into these stunts varies from person to person. We can be influenced by peer pressure, fear, greed or other factors.

The real reason we allow ourselves to be coerced into these schemes is due to the fact that we have no set "moral code" in our lives.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: What are some of the reasons we may allow ourselves to be talked into committing a crime or moral indiscretion? (Greed, lust, anger, etc.)

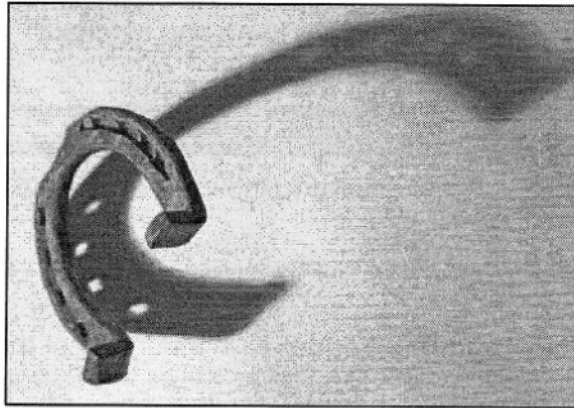
The advertisers who hope to sell you something are looking for people who haven't made up their mind on a product. For instance, if you love a certain soft drink because of its

taste no amount of advertising is going to convince you to start drinking something you dislike. But if you don't have a preference you are considered a potential customer.

The same goes for those who would exploit us. If we have a set moral code that dictates what we will and will not do in our lives, and live by that code, never wavering, we will be a person who is in control of our own future as much as it's possible to do so. But if we have no moral code in place – and it will be obvious by our actions – there will be people we will encounter who will be more than happy to exploit it and help us to ruin our lives.

Some of the people in this room are the exploited, some the exploiters, but everyone has been a part of this cycle of manipulation at one time or another. It's real, it's destructive, and it's something you must avoid at all costs.

Group Discussion





Facilitator Note

Group Question: What is "owed" to us by the simple act of being alive?
(Fame? Fortune? Who says?)

Entitlement

Many of us possess a twisted sense of entitlement. Not only do we feel we are owed something simply by being alive, but in many instances we feel that it's normal to do whatever it takes to get it.



Facilitator Note

Group Question: Upon release would you accept a job flipping hamburgers?

The normal thinking adult has a need to be successful in life. The definition of "successful" varies from person to person. Some people would be content with an average paying job that allows them to obtain an apartment, transportation, and average clothes on their back. Others feel that success requires fame and fortune.



Facilitator Note

Group Question: Which one are you? (Show of hands. Check percentage.)

Most of the people who find themselves in prison are of the second group. We tend to feel that we are too good for such a simple life as the first group. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say that they are not going to get out of prison only to find themselves flipping hamburgers. I'll also be the first to admit that I wouldn't want to have that type of job either. That's why it's important to learn a trade and get an education. But to avoid employment all together because it's beneath us is pure foolish pride.

Like it or not the average person in this country has to work for a living. And most of them are earning wages that the average sociopathic ex-con would turn their noses up at. We tend to feel that these people are idiots to work like they do for such little pay. They'll never be rich, they'll never be famous, and it's all they can do to make ends meet. What fools they are! We on the other hand prefer to spend our lives in prison by trying to avoid the trap these foolish people are in. We choose not to get an education, a trade, or a job, then wonder why things aren't working out for us. We sit around mad at the system for failing us and never take into consideration that we are failing the system.

You can be rich. You can be famous. But you probably won't be. Doing something illegal or immoral to get that way just about insures you won't be. You may think working for a living is a fool's bet. But those free people out there driving to work today, right this very second, know where the true fools are. We're in this room.

A rectangular box with a dark header and a white body, containing a group question. The header is labeled "Facilitator Note". The body contains a group question about a million dollars and a code of conduct.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: If offered a million dollars is there anything you will not do if so required? (This proves the code already exists; it just needs expanding.)

Developing a Moral Code of Conduct

There are things we will not do in our lives. For some of us the list is long; for others the list is short. But the longer your list of "will nots" is, the better your chances are of staying out of prison and living a productive life.

There are many reasons for not doing something, but only one reason counts. We should choose to not do something when it could lead to harm for ourselves or others.

By seeing the emotional, physical or financial harm in an action it allows us to categorize it into the little compartment in our minds that keeps us safe. Without this set of rules to keep our life on track, we can plan on a derailment somewhere along the line.

These inner commitments to ourselves will allow us to make stands on issues that could lead to our downfalls. These commitments will also send a message to the people in our lives that we do indeed live by a code of conduct that is not swayable. Thus, leading to fewer and fewer people making efforts to drag us along with them down a path of self-destruction.

Unfortunately for most of us, we do not find ourselves hanging out with many people who live by a code of conduct. The reason for this varies. For some people it's a family thing. If my parents have no code of conduct, how can they effectively pass one on to me? For some of us our parents did everything they could to get us to try to do right, but their best efforts fell of deaf ears. This is part of the epic "Nurture vs. Nature" debate.

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Facilitator Note

Group Question: Do we need laws? Could society exist without them?
(Speed limits save us all.)

Whatever the reason for our rudderless lives, without a code of conduct we have found ourselves in prison as a result of it. Laws, rules, prisons and police were all developed and put into place to keep people with no moral code of conduct in check. Because, in spite of our self-delusional insistence that "everyone" breaks laws, the contrary is true. Many people live their entire lives without intentionally breaking any laws.

The other side of this line of reasoning is this: The more laws we have the more chances there are of breaking one. And that's what is important to keep in mind at all times.

This program is designed to aggressively pound home the idea that doing wrong and/or breaking laws has led to the downfalls in our lives. To overlook the fact that we are the problem children who seem to have difficulties with this concept is unrealistic. So here it goes, plain and simple: Laws and rules exist and always will. We have already shown that we

do not respect these laws and rules or the government's attempts to enforce them. We have proven that we were overconfident in our own abilities to escape detection for breaking these laws or rules. At the same time underestimated the government's ability to catch and convict us. This being the case, we must make it our top priority to know that we do these things and take steps to break the cycle of self-delusionment that ruins our lives.

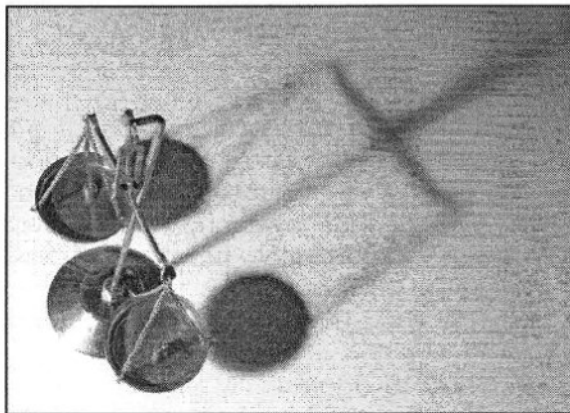
Facilitator Note

Group Question: How does being an ex-con affect our chances of getting a job when we get out? (Ask for experiences of those who have gotten out.)

When we set foot outside these fences it means that we are "ex-cons". To the public this makes us people who are going to bring problems into their lives if they hire or associate with us. This being the case, the deck of life is going to be stacked against us. This isn't new; it's been happening for as long as there have been prisons. So why not take the steps necessary to combat these problems before we get out?

All we truly have in our lives that can impact those around us is how we act and think. Developing and living by a moral code of conduct is the most important step we can take to alter how other people perceive us. We must prove ourselves to people in order to gain their trust. Without a moral code of conduct all we can expect is for people to treat us with the scorn and avoidance we deserve. No one wants someone in a game when they are known to break the rules. So don't be surprised when no one wants to hire you into an organization that is trying to be successful if you present yourself as someone who is wandering through life waiting for their next crash.

If you develop and live by a moral code of conduct you may not see great things start to happen to you overnight, but you will reduce your chances of self-destruction and improve your chances for success.



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Facilitator Note

Group Question: What is a gray area?
(Give examples. Is it ok to do something like litter since we probably won't get locked up for it?)

Gray Areas

Some people can participate in what is considered "social drinking". Whereas, in the case with alcoholics, social drinking is not an option. With many alcoholics all it takes is one drink to lapse into a drinking binge that may very well ruin their lives as well as the lives of others. The self-aware alcoholic knows that they are always one drink away from disaster. Maybe we should take note.

With many things in life there are gray areas, or exceptions to rules that allow a little blurring of the edges of certain issues. These gray areas are acceptable when dealing with something unimportant like how much salt to add to a recipe. But to bend or break a moral code or a law that could hurt someone or send us to prison is a recipe for disaster, not a grey area.

In order for any of us to remain free we need to stop doing things that are going to lead us to prison. Don't confuse "getting caught" with "doing things". I mean not breaking laws or committing moral indiscretions. What does that mean? For instance: Is it ok to litter since it's something minor? Or how about cheating on our wife? No one ends up in prison for that, or do they?

Like many of the big events in our lives, coming to prison is usually made up of a series of small events, decisions and actions. We evolve into the messes we are. Through a constant erosion of our morals and respect for the law's ability to catch us we eventually develop a "bullet proof" outlook on life that leads to our downfall.

The small act emboldens us to move on to a larger one, and so on. Until one day we find ourselves sitting in a class listening to someone telling us how many problems we have.

A rectangular box with a dark header containing the text "Facilitator Note". The box is decorated with small square icons at each corner. The main body of the box contains a group question and its context.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Have you ever heard the term, "I'm all in now"?
(So, does this mean that we *do* get to a point, after a building up process, that we realize that the many small things we have done have now caused a big problem.)

The only way to avoid some of the bigger problems in our lives is by avoiding some of the smaller stepping stones that lead up to them. Like the alcoholic, some of us are one small step from ruin. It's up to us to be able to spot these small steps before we take them, and then, at all cost, avoid them.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: What do you think about having to walk inside the yellow lines? Why do you do it? (Consider it practice.)

There are no gray areas when it comes to something that can ruin our lives or the lives of others. We need to avoid these small acts of erosion not only when we get out; we need to start now! Like an Olympic weight lifter, we need to practice "before" we get to the Olympics. Not wait until it's time to actually do the lifting. By putting into practice a lifestyle that forces us to abstain from wrong doings now it gives us a much needed head start on the real event of being free.

If you feel this is a "giving in" or a "bending down" to the system, think about this: The system exists and it's the most advanced and powerful one on the planet. You are a lone person governed by this system. Your past approach to "beating" the system got you locked up. You eat what they tell you. You sleep on a steel bunk. You live with who they tell you to live with. They make you say "sir" or "officer" to them at their discretion. You can't be with your woman or family. You think this program is asking you to "bend down" to the system? It appears you have "bent" yourself down low enough already. This program is trying to teach you how to stand again – one harsh reality at a time.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Is having a rubber band in your locker a DR offense? (When we become lax its easy to look up one day and realize we are using that same rubber band is getting us in trouble.)

We are going to encounter small issues in our lives that would truly not lead to harm. We will also encounter small issues that we choose to undertake that could. Just because life throws these little gray areas at us is no reason to give up on trying to stay out of trouble. We must always be on point when it comes to staying out of trouble- gray areas and all.



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Facilitator Note

Group Question: If you are speeding in your car and you look up and see a cop, what is the first thing you do? (Lift your foot off the gas.)

Good for the Sake of Good

Being on our best behavior during certain times is simply an indication that there is either no motivation for us to do something wrong, or that the risk of us getting caught is too great. Another meaningless display of being on our best behavior is when no opportunity for mischief is presenting itself. For instance, if a bank robber is in prison, then stays out of trouble for ten years, only to rob another bank upon his or her release, it simply proves that the person was on a ten year streak of good behavior due to a lack of the opportunity to rob a bank.

Being good should be a core belief, not an act of obedience out of the fear of being caught and punished. Each of us knows where we stand on this issue. We know, deep in our hearts, if we would return a found wallet filled with money. We also know that our own current financial situation at the time of finding the wallet could influence our decision. But what we should know is that there are no grey areas when dealing with an act that could lead to harm for ourselves or others.

It may be a difficult decision to do the right thing at times. But it is much easier than winding up in trouble for the path we have chosen by doing the wrong thing.

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Facilitator Note

Group Question: What does the term tortured logic mean?
(Give examples of getting caught opposed to doing right.)

Some of us tend to have distorted feelings about right and wrong. Thus we find ourselves in trouble. For many of us, getting caught is simply confirmation that we have to be more careful the next time. This is pure tortured logic; an indication that we are as far from redemption as we can get.

That line of thinking would mean that if a person were to get bit by a snake while petting it they should simply try to be faster next time. It sounds funny here, in that context, but that is the same concept. Instead of avoiding the snake, we try to outsmart it. To make matters worse, sometimes we are indeed able to outsmart the snake. Until one day we find ourselves bit and blaming the snake for doing what it is designed to do.

Going unpunished for a vast majority of our transgressions gives us a false sense of security. The small infractions tend to grow into larger infractions as our confidence in our own ability to avoid detection proves sufficient. This is one of the worst things that can happen to us: to be imprinted with a false belief that crime does pay, or that we are so good at it that we will *always* get away with it. These beliefs can ruin our lives.

Right now, as you are reading these words, some of you are smirking or shaking your heads. If this is you, you may be beyond the point of no return and this program may not be able to save you from your own distorted views. For an unfortunate few, even a ruined life and twenty or thirty years in prison won't open your eyes. You are blind to you own warped thinking and the catastrophic event of coming to prison won't be able change your way of thinking.

Some people seem to be born good. They seem to be inherently equipped with a moral compass that never wavers. But some of us seem to have more of a problem with the concept of "goodness" than others.

Is it possible for someone to consider obeying the law as being a bad thing? Many people will show open scorn for those who obey, or are respectful of the law. This belittling of the "Do-gooder" is done in an attempt to justify the actions of the law breaker. By their way of thinking, if the "Do-gooder" is somehow in the wrong, then by default, the law breaker must somehow be in the right. Its weak, its distorted, and nothing could be further from the truth; but it's used every day.

Here is the bottom line: In spite of our past, and our seemingly broken moral compass, we can get our act together if we try.

Being good is hard work; you can not be lazy and expect results. Being good requires an understanding of our own flaws; you can not be in denial. Being good requires an understanding of goodness. Goodness is quietly conducting yourself in such a way that offends no one, hurts no one, and deprives no one of their life, liberty or their pursuit of happiness. Being good is treating others as you want to be treated. And last, but not least, being good may be the only thing you can do at this point in time that can save your life. So, being good is good for you.

I'm sure this sounds naïve and idealistic to most of you. After all, we live in a world that sees very little goodness out of its inhabitants. But keep in mind where being bad has gotten us. That should be enough reason right there to be the best person we can be every day of our lives.



A rectangular box with a decorative border of small images at the corners. Inside, the text is centered.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: How many life sentences are sitting in this room? Why shouldn't we simply give up and just wild out every day? (Because we have life sentences, not an ended life. Hope is the most powerful force on the planet.)

Why Care Now?

Considering the way that some of us rationalize our actions, it's not surprising that we would use our current situation - being incarcerated - as our latest excuse for sabotaging ourselves. It's a common path for many people to take, especially those of us who use external factors to fuel our excuses for not changing.

But in reality the reason we should apply ourselves to caring about right and wrong is the same reason we should have applied ourselves before our incarceration: it's the right thing to do for us, and those around us. Had we done this before we came to prison we wouldn't have ever seen the inside of a cell. And if we apply ourselves now we may avoid another one in the future.

Let's look at it from this standpoint: We are only going to live for a limited amount of time. Our days are truly numbered. Why would anyone in their right mind want to risk doing something that would send them to prison for any part of that limited time? I'll make it easy for you; only a flawed and dysfunctional person is going to find themselves making decisions like that - period.

Don't cry about tough laws. Don't use the excuse of there being over 2 million in prison in the U.S. alone. That is the spoiled child of denial rearing its head.

A rectangular box with a decorative border of small images at the corners. Inside, the text is centered.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: What does the fact the there are over 2 million people in prison mean to you? (Are they overlooking the fact that there are 348 million out of prison?)

The laws were tough the day before we committed our crimes. If there are 2 million people in prison in the U.S. it means that there are 348 million people free! We, the incarcerated shirkers of moral obligation are to blame for our own condition and situation. And we are the only ones that can do something about it. We must see ourselves for what we are and use our own desire for a better life as the driving force for our own change. We got ourselves into this mess, now it's time for us to get ourselves out of it. That's why we should care now. To save ourselves.

A rectangular box with a dark, textured header containing the text "Facilitator Note". The box is framed by a thin black border and has four small decorative icons at the corners.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Would you drink poison that smelled like your favorite soft drink? Would you want to because of the smell? (Wants are powerful driving forces that can harm us.)

Reasons for Crime

There are several reasons why we either break laws or commit moral indiscretions. In spite of the seemingly random or senseless aspects of a crime, there is always a motivation for it. For those of us who are unaware of our own reasoning it can be a hard life. The key to turning our lives around is to understand why we do what we do. But like all things in life that deal with inner change, we must go forward with our eyes wide open and avoid all signs of denial of our own actions and motives.

We commit most, if not all, crimes in order to get what we want. With crimes of theft it is because we want whatever it is we are stealing, or what we can get for what we steal. For crimes of a sexual nature it's inner urges that drive us. These urges cause us to want to commit the crime or moral indiscretion, and so on.

Seen in this light it is obvious that simply wanting something does not mean that we should act upon it. For instance, just because a child wants to play with a pair of scissors is no reason for a mother to allow it. The mother would instantly recognize the danger of it. But once we are away from our parents our external safety net has been removed and it is up to us to know what is good for us and what is not. For many of us, we fail the test.

Why we fail to question the wisdom of our wants varies from person to person. For some it may be that our parents never made the attempt to set our thoughts in order on the matter. Whereas others were told, time and time again, that doing certain things were wrong and they still chose to do what they wanted in spite of the repercussions.

While we may be hard pressed to force ourselves to not want what we want, we can recognize the dangers of pursuing our wants. If you are reading these words it is a safe bet that you have already failed the test of being good simply for the sake of it. So with that in mind we need to focus on the only thing that can save us from our own self-destructive wants: a better understanding of what is going to happen to us if we can't get our wants under control.

A rectangular box with a dark, textured header containing the text "Facilitator Note". The box is framed by a thin black border and has four small decorative icons at the corners.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: What is the sentence for a car jacking in Florida? Do you feel that the sentence fits the crime? (These people are serious about locking us up. We need to be serious about staying free.)

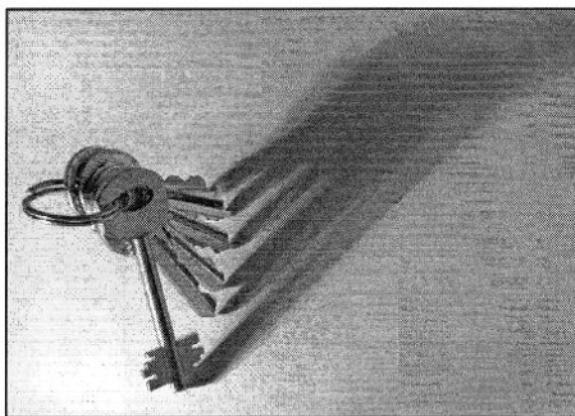
Is it really worth spending years in prison for a high that lasts a few hours? Or to hurt someone? Or to commit just about any crime imaginable? The laws have intentionally set the punishment for a crime to be greatly out of proportion to the crime. This was to act as a deterrent to those who may break a law. For the most part this keeps a vast majority of society in line. But for a few of us it just doesn't work. And the reason is denial. We are in

denial about our chances of being caught. We are in denial about our chances of being convicted if we are caught. We are in denial about how much time we will receive if we are convicted. We are in denial about the chances of a successful appeal if convicted. We are in denial about how much time we will actually serve. We are in denial about how prison life will be. We are in denial about how it will affect us and the mess it will leave our lives in after our release. All of these arbitrarily remote possibilities are not real enough in our minds to act as the deterrents they should be.

If you don't believe me consider this: How many crimes have you committed openly and in front of police officers knowing you would be caught? And if you will not be honest with yourself now, just remember those thoughts the next time you look around for a cop before you pull your next stunt. We are the type of people who do what we do because we think we can get away with it and the thought of how much harm we may be causing ourself or others never crosses our minds. And if it does, our wants override any concerns we may have had.

Though we may have gotten away with a lot of things in our lives the truth of the matter is that right now, this very minute, the eyes of the law are upon us. We are in prison because we have been fooling no one but ourselves. They know how we are and they will be waiting for us to pull our next stunt when we get out.

We commit crimes and moral indiscretions because we think we can get away with doing whatever we want in life as long as we do indeed get away with it – period. And the entire time we have been under this misconception we have been ruining our lives one screw up at a time. Welcome to reality.





Facilitator Note

Group Question: Not including ourselves, or any actual victims of our crimes, who have we hurt the most by getting locked up?

Who Are We Hurting?

Getting into trouble with the law can hurt more people than you will ever know. Getting sent to prison is a family affair. When one member of a family gets locked up it affects every other member of the family.

Unfortunately for those other family members, you, the reader, did not care about their say in the matter. And if you are feeling like, "Hey! I'm the one that's in prison. What are they complaining about?" Then I am especially talking to you, the sociopath. And if you just emitted another, "Hey!" I'll make it easy for you:

Sociopath:

Of, relating to, or characterized by asocial or antisocial behavior.

Antisocial:

Hostile or harmful to organized society; especially being or marked by behavior deviating sharply from the social norm.

Now, if you do not think you fit the definition I will give you another one you can think over.

Denial:

A psychological defense mechanism in which confrontation with a personal problem or reality is avoided by denying the existence of the problem or reality.



Facilitator Note

Group Discussion: If you argue with someone who is trying to save you from self-destructive behavior, that's denial.

The unfortunate thing is that they all usually go hand in hand. This gives the true sociopath, or a person with sociopathic tendencies, little chance of leading a normal, productive life. But perhaps, with this program, and a lot of inner confessions to yourself about what type of person you truly are, you may be able to turn things around.

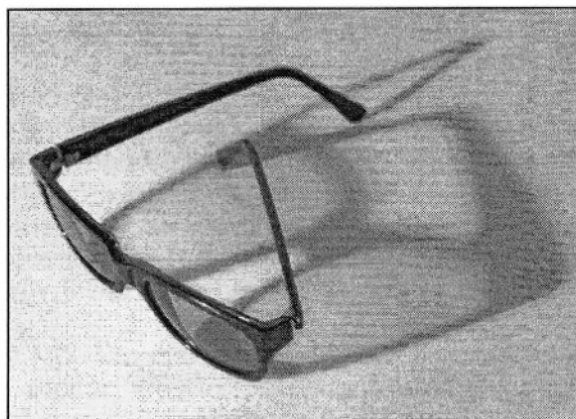
Imagine yourself sitting in a prison visiting area. The guard brings your daughter in through a door and stands watch as you two spend an hour together. At the end of the visit your daughter is told she only has a few more minutes before the visit is over. Your daughter becomes agitated because she doesn't want the visit to be over. She becomes so agitated that the guard has to call other guards to subdue her. Over the next few minutes you

witness your daughter, on the other side of the bullet proof glass get slammed to the floor, maced, handcuffed, and led back to her cell in the prison and you are told that you can go home now.

What's wrong? Had your roles reversed? Did you think it was you in prison? Not this time. This time it's your turn to be worried sick at the thought of what may be happening to your baby. It's you who must try to raise money for lawyers and bail. It's you that is wondering what could have possibly gone wrong. It's your child raising principles that are now being called into question by your own guilty mind, wondering if it was something you did wrong in raising your child that could have led to this tragedy.

Now if you are thinking to yourself, "Hey, I would gladly trade places with my poor free family member!" Well good for you. Spoken like a true sociopath. And if you are getting a little tired of all the name calling, think this one over: If you are in this class you can rest assured that you have been called far worse than anything you will encounter within these pages. Remember, we placed ourselves in this position and now we are going to have to deal with the product of our actions. And if you are struggling with this you are just going to love returning to prison. When you walk into the cell with your toothbrush, bar of soap and sheets for your steel bed, once again, remind yourself that you wouldn't listen to these words.

Who are you hurting? Got a mirror?



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Facilitator Note

Group Question: Did anyone in this room think things would turn out like they did while committing their crime?

Knowing Better

Up until this point there has been a lot of finger pointing at ourselves. The reason for this is due to our own actions; we have been doing things we should not be doing. But the question has to be asked: Did we indeed know that our actions would lead to the harm we have caused - for ourselves and others? If this was the first time you ever did wrong in your life then the answer could be that you did not. But chances are that this is not your first time for doing wrong; it could be your first time getting caught for doing wrong.

Allowing someone to continue to do as they please, leaving a wake of pain and destruction, is not an option for those sworn to uphold the law. Anyone who expects to be allowed to do as they please is out of touch with reality.

A rectangular box with a dark, textured header containing the text "Facilitator Note". The box is framed by a thin black border and has small decorative icons in each corner.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: Are there crooked cops? Are there good cops? Are either one going to let us run wild?

Right now the question is this: Have you ever been forced to look at yourself and the results of your actions before now? As shocking as it may sound to some, many people are able to wander through life without giving a second thought to the harm they cause.

If you claim to be aware of the damage you have caused yourself and others, what are you doing about it? Are you here to get your life in order? If so, hopefully for you this program is successful. Because chances are that for quite some time you have been oblivious to your own actions, or you simply did not care if you did harm to yourself and others.

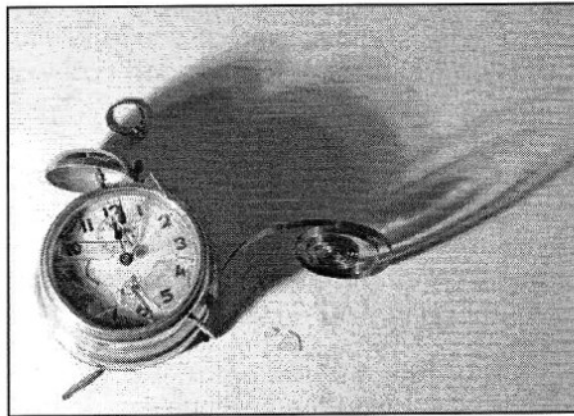
And of the two which is worse? If you are oblivious, things can begin to right themselves by becoming aware of the impact of your actions. But if you don't care it is going to require you to mend your moral compass, which may take a considerable amount of work. And what about those of us who are oblivious and do not care that we are? That too, can be corrected. But the truth of the matter is that the odds are stacked against you getting your act together without some serious humility on your part. I say humility because until we admit to ourselves, and those around us, the condition our thinking is in, we are never going to change without our life being nearly destroyed. And that can change even the worst of us; if we let it. Though it may not seem like it, humility requires strength. Only a strong person can humble themselves.

Facilitator Note

Group Discussion: What does this mean?

This program has been written based on the opinion that some people are capable of changing their thinking patterns into something that will allow them to live a productive life. Free from harming themselves and others. It is also understood that this program is not going to be enough to get through to some of the more extreme cases. Are you an extreme case? Can you be reached? Good questions.

Like every single thing in your life, you have to choose which path you are going to take. Once enough pain has been endured due to your own actions to cause the choice to be made, you can change whatever it is you set your sights on. Just as someone chooses to quit smoking due to health fears, it is a battle, but it can be done. With smoking there is a constant message being sent by the media that it is dangerous to smoke. But being irresponsible, immoral or criminal minded does not come with a warning label. This program is going to have to act as your warning. Whether you listen to this warning or not is up to you. Just keep in mind that the life you save will indeed be your own.



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Facilitator Note

Group Question: What do you do with your spare time?
(Are you wasting your time or bettering yourself. What are some examples of bettering yourself?)

Hitting Bottom

During the course of living it's sometimes difficult to stop and take a look at our own actions. Like the old story that reminds us that when we're surrounded by alligators it's hard to remember that we're there to drain the pond.

Life, being what it is, doesn't come with fool proof instructions for how to get it right. Too many factors are involved. Each of us are different; every situation we encounter has its own variables, especially when we are doing things wrong to begin with. Sometimes it would be great if we could simply stop for a minute and catch our breath and try to figure things out.

"Hitting Bottom" is a term used to describe when someone is at what they perceive to be the lowest point in their life. Hitting bottom is a relative term. Hitting bottom for me is something different than the next person. Being in prison is considered hitting bottom for most people. Hitting bottom also indicates a stop to the decent, the completion of the process. What better time could there be to dust ourselves off and try to fix ourselves? Hitting bottom is an opportunity for improvement. To see it as anything else is a great way to stay on the bottom.

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Facilitator Note

Group Question: If a car is broke down, do you send it to the garage to be repaired, or to the junk yard? (We are the car, don't allow yourself to rust away.)

Being in prison is a lot of things. What it *should* be is a time of education, introspection and growth. Being incarcerated can be time lost, or time making improvements to ourselves. What possible excuse could there be for someone to get out of prison in worse shape than they came in? I can't give you an excuse, but I can tell you why it happens: We choose to.

Doing nothing is a choice, just like *not* raising your hand in this class. Inaction is a choice not to take action. This being the case, having no motivation or being lazy can ruin our lives. No one is going to hold us down and pour information into our brains. We have to go out there and get it. It's our responsibility to ourselves as humans, as sons, as fathers, as brothers.

Doing something is a choice. Action is a direct result of making the choice to take action. Did I mention that being in prison is considered hitting bottom? Get the picture?

A rectangular box with a dark horizontal bar at the top containing the text "Facilitator Note". Below the bar, the text "Group Question: What do you expect out of life? (Point out there are right and wrong ways to go about getting them.)" is centered. The box is decorated with small square icons at each corner.

Facilitator Note

Group Question: What do you expect out of life?
(Point out there are right and wrong ways to go about getting them.)

The Fairness of Life

Life is obviously not fair. Someone is born king, and someone is born blind. But being born does not entitle us to anything with the exception of death. To see ourselves as a victim due to our station in life is a sure way to set ourselves up for a fall. Chances are that you are playing the role of victim right now. And in a strange way you're correct: you are a victim of your own thinking. So yes, it seems unfair that we should find ourselves in such a situation in life; being our own worse enemy. But since you can't get away from yourself it only leaves you with two options. Accept whatever it is you keep doing to yourself that is methodically destroying your life, or change.

This course is a hardcore approach to get you to take a long look at yourself with the hopes of changing your life for the better. Very little has been said about the fairness of your current circumstances. And the truth of the matter is that the fairest thing that can happen to you is this program. No one is asking you for anything that will harm you. It is not being done to you, but for you.

You are expected to take the insight you receive from this program and try to change the way you think and interact with others. That's a pretty tall order. But it can be done. Fair or not, flawed or not, this program has been designed to give you one more chance at saving yourself from yourself. You are worth the effort of saving, but no one can do it for you. This program can point you in the right direction, but it can't do any of the work for you. Just as a nail can't drive itself into the wood, it requires someone to swing the hammer.

The end of this program is not the end of the growth phase, but the beginning. Living is a learning experience and it is something that should be improved upon each day. Mistakes will be made and bad decisions will occur, but a conscious effort must be made to reduce the errors in our thinking. Continuing to do the things that bring sorrow into our lives is a sure sign of ignorance or insanity. It requires a strong will to overcome some of the thinking errors in our lives. We will have to distance ourselves from people who are guilty of the same type of self destructive thinking. We are going to have to admit to ourselves that we are a flawed human in need of repairs. And we are going to have to forgive ourselves for the damage we have caused ourselves and others. None of it will be easy, but it is a lot easier than dying in prison alone with the thoughts that you could have changed.

Yes, it's a bad hand that most of us have been dealt, but to throw away our only ace is compounding our problems. Don't complain about the bad hand, grow from it.

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Facilitator Note

Group Question: Are you mad that you're in prison? If so, why? (We only have our selves to blame.)

Who Should We Be Mad At?

The world is a cold hard place, or at least it can be if we make enough bad decisions. So, who do we blame?

Chances are that the hand that has dealt the most grief in most of our lives is attached to the end of our own arm.

Granted, the world can deliver some pretty cruel blows that are totally unexpected and unwarranted. But these are not excuses to compound our problems by allowing our thinking to become corrupted. By this I mean that we must not give up on ourselves and simply stop playing by the rules at the first sign that the rules are flawed or that the deck is stacked against us.

It is our responsibility to hold ourselves to a moral standard that helps to avoid problems in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Adversity is a part of life, not an excuse to give up. But what if we do give up and destroy our lives or the lives of people we know or love? Is there a way to dig ourselves out of the mess we have caused by giving up and landing in prison?

This is a tough one because everyone is dealing with a different degree of damage and guilt. But one aspect of this is simple enough: In order to begin the process and start to pick up the pieces of a broken life, we must first acknowledge our role in things and eventually forgive ourselves for what we have done.

Think about this: If someone has wronged you grievously enough and you simply have not forgiven the person, you do not want to accept their apology. You may not even want to look at them. A level of forgiveness must take place in the wronged person's mind before they are willing to work things out. The same goes for when we wrong ourselves.

Before we can move on with our lives after derailing ourselves we must not only face ourselves, but forgive ourselves. Leaving out this necessary step will leave a hole in our lives that can prevent a true recovery after the fall. Just as we must be forgiven by others before we can continue the relationship with them, we must repair the damage to how we view ourselves. Walking around seeing ourselves as a self-proclaimed failure is no way to make a positive change in our life. We must see our own potential before we can live up to it.

In order to face those around us after all of the harm we have caused, we must first be able to face ourselves. Once we do this and make the necessary changes in our thinking to prevent future harm, to ourselves and others, only then can we expect the change to be permanent and not based on the fear of incarceration or other temporary external factors.

We must never forget what has led us to our crimes against others, because this is a valuable tool to remind us of the person we can be if left unchecked. But we must forgive ourselves if we expect to move forward with our lives and make positive changes in our thinking and actions. Failure to forgive ourselves is one of the surest ways to continue down the path of self destruction.

Warning Signs

What is a warning sign that you may be considering self-destructive behavior?

- A feeling of anxiety: If you are feeling afraid or hyper about something you are considering doing it is a sign that, at least on a subconscious level, you are sensing danger to yourself or others.

Group Discussion

- Feeling unsure: If you are having second thoughts about doing something, you are once again probably tapped into your subconscious and it is sending a warning signal. Just because you cannot put your finger on the reason for concern does not mean the danger does not exist.

Group Discussion

- Dread: If you have a feeling of dread about an action you are considering it is because you have a preconceived feeling about the potential outcome – you know you could get in trouble.

Group Discussion

- A need for quietness or stealth: This need to avoid detection is an obvious sign of wanting to evade detection for a current or upcoming event.

Group Discussion

- Obsessing: Having your thoughts continuously return to an act, or a person that you harbor ill will towards, is a sign or your mind justifying its intentions.

Group Discussion

- Denying these warning signs their true importance: If you feel that even one of these warning signs is in fact not a warning sign, but simply normal thinking, you are in obvious denial about your ability to stay out of trouble.

Group Discussion

These warning signs are some of the tools you should use to save yourself from your own intended self-destructive behavior. If you experience any of these signs you may feel that the signs themselves are the actual tools you need to protect yourself from harm. But in actuality these are simply thinking patterns that are designed to keep you from being caught for doing something wrong. To attempt to use these thinking patterns as a tool to avoid detection is a fool's choice. The key to avoiding trouble is to avoid the act that could get you in trouble.

In Conclusion

This course can only be seen as a tool to spark an inner change in its participants. Any course or self-help class, regardless of its length or curriculum, is never enough to truly start and complete a life long change in a person. The best that can be hoped for is awareness of a better way to live. To hope for anything else would be oversimplifying the problem.

A life being lived to its fullest does not require us to be rich or powerful. In many cases just the opposite is true. But it does require us to give ourselves a fair shot at happiness. Living our lives behind bars can't be considered as a fair shot.

Many bright candles find themselves snuffed out because of being unsatisfied with life; not having enough, or it not being exciting enough. Unfortunately for these people they chose to overlook the repercussions of their actions when trying to change their life for the better.

This course has been a true opportunity to change your life for the better, if you choose to see it for what it is.

By applying the principles and concepts offered to you in this course you can shed yourself of the self-defeating ways of life that have only failed you in the past. And if you are reading this you are indeed considered a failure by society.

But armed with what you have learned in this course there is no reason for you to continue down the path you have walked in the past. Gone is the ability for you to say "I didn't know". Gone is the day when no one had pointed out your flaws to you for your own inspection. And gone is the day that you didn't know that a different way to live existed.

What still remains is the person who has, for years and years, lived the life of self-destruction. This person, you, is still human and will require a constant unflinching self-monitoring in order to stay on track. Failing to do so will result in reverting back to the ways that have led to your down fall.

Drug users and alcoholics are considered to be very hard to save due to the nature of their addictions. But compared to the nature of the sociopath their addictions are tame and manageable. The drug user or alcoholic requires something to be added to their system to begin their descent. But with the sociopath the problem is a part of the thinking process - no assembly required. That's why the constant self-monitoring of our own actions is the only thing that can save us from ourselves.

The only chance we have to live any semblance of a normal life is to know ourselves for what we are and to never forget what can happen if we choose to ignore our own ability to self-destruct.

You have successfully completed the UNBOUND program. But due to the complex nature of the human mind it will be some time before a determination can be made concerning the effectiveness of the program. Only your future holds that answer.

When you water a plant some of the water gets absorbed by the roots, some of it soaks into the surrounding soil to be used later, and unfortunately, some of it is lost. Much like with plants, in spite of how much information is thrown at someone, it's ultimately determined by the listener if any of it sticks.

Like anything you truly learn, this information will be a part of you for the rest of your life. I hope it comes in handy.

Never forget that we are usually our own worst enemy. Seldom will we encounter anyone or anything that can hurt us worse than our own self-destructive thinking. Always be on point. Always be aware. And never forget that the hand that delivers the worst blows to us is usually at the end of our own arm. Good luck.