A Comprehensive Offender Based Self-Help Study Program

Developed by
James Leland DeBacco
2011
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I am free, I was never promised an easy life, and I have not lived one.

I am free, the bonds that confine me physically, do not define me internally.

I am free, the situations around me, do not dictate my choice to be free.

I am free, only I have the power to see myself in the moment, for who I truly am.

I am free; I openly embrace the challenges of life, on my path... to human understanding.

James Leland DeBacco
May 30, 2011
FOREWORD

Positive Interventions is the next stage in the Bridges to Freedom series. Having expressed the knowledge to prepare a parole candidate for his/her parole board hearing, the question then became for me, “Now what?!” I was struck by the fact that all inmates share a common interest: to be free. Whether a life term prisoner or determinate term prisoner, the common desire is freedom. Freedom however, is always preceded by the responsibility that consequences can be endless and life long.

The purpose of developing Positive Interventions is to meet the goal of helping all inmates achieve their own sense of individual freedom; by developing the basic skills necessary for behavior modification and interactive rehabilitation regeneration. As prisoners, we should not just acknowledge that our actions have consequences. Rather, we should embrace and internalize that our criminal behavior comes from our own lack of responsibility, or of meaning.

Positive Interventions offers a self-help program of instruction designed to support and teach all inmates, that transformation is possible through the intervention of behavior change. Prisoners who participate in Positive Interventions will collectively learn what it means to be human, and strive for something outside of themselves. The general purpose of Positive Interventions is to encourage prisoners to develop pro-social values centered on learning how to overcome negative attitudes, behaviors, and self-talk, by accepting the positive merit of emotional, psychological, and spiritual balance.

The scope of Positive Interventions is to provide self-study in promotion of finding serenity through self-understanding and positive change. As prisoners, we have all faced situations that led to making poor choices. Positive Interventions will help all prisoners discover the value of claiming back their life, improving and strengthen relationships with others, and finding sense of purpose in his/her life.

In conclusion, I’m reminded by the age old saying: “It is never to late to change.” Dr. Viktor Frankl in “Man’s Search for Meaning” emphasized this best with “There is no shortcut to life. To the end of days, life is imperfectly learned.” We all have the ability to transform our lives. The question is “To what degree do we accept that sacrifice becomes inevitable with change?” The meaning of life originates from the unique experiences we encounter with others and in loving relationships. It is here that Positive Interventions takes you down the path of self-discovery in the effort to achieve self-poise on the path to human understanding.

James Leland DeBacco, Creator/Writer
Positive Interventions
Calipatria State Prison (2011)
Program Expectations

Welcome to Positive Interventions. This program is an offender based self-help study program that focuses on rehabilitation through regeneration. This program is not designed to point fingers or fix a directed blame for the suffering your negative behaviors of the past have caused. You are here because you want to be here. You will be required to participate in every group discussion and questionnaire exercise, cell study, and maintain a journal entry log. You have willingly agreed to volunteer for this program with the full and complete knowledge that this program is to help you develop pro-social values focused on three primary points of behavior: emotional, psychological, and spiritual balance.

This program is not determined by the length of time it takes to complete the outlined lessons within the six month program period. Rather, this program is determined by the outcome and results of personal growth and development in the individual's effort to work on developing pro-social values, and the ability to grasp the significance of what it means to be pro-social in any environment. The progression of each lesson will be determined by two factors: 1) the primary facilitator’s belief that the lessons are being fully comprehended, and 2) the ability of each program participant fully comprehending the lessons provided.

Each program participant’s questionnaires will be evaluated by their group peers. There will be no percentage grading system. Each evaluation will be given a point value numbering 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest, and 5 being the highest value)

Each program series will begin and close with the participants reciting the Affirmation of Self-Freedom.

Group participation is interactive, requires self-examination, and self-reflection from each participant. To achieve optimal understanding of the program lessons, each participant should expect to be called upon to state what the instructional material represents to them. This will be at the discretion of the instructors. It is advisable to read the program material ahead of time to provide responses to questions accordingly.

At the end of the program each participant will be required to make a class presentation on "Why life is not fair, but worth it." Each participant will be required to apply the lessons learned and tools acquired throughout the program. The length of your presentation will be one page. Your topic of discussion will focus on the pro-social values learned during the program of instruction. You are encouraged to use your journal entry notes for this final assignment. This assignment will be required to successfully complete the Positive Interventions program. 

GOOD LUCK!

James Leland DeBacco
POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS

"Rehabilitation Through Regeneration"

Program Outline

Phase 1: Workshops 1-4
Segment: “Claiming Back Your Life”

Lesson 1. The Imperfect You
- Small steps; discussion of common format.
- Introduction to general purpose of the PISG workshops; Looking through to You; Finding Your Way; and Imperfect You.
- Instruction on participant expectations, rules and regulations, and reward of Program Certificate of Completion.
- Introduction to the anticipated course of instruction outline: to include, but not limited to, a discussion on schedule of assignments, questionnaires, interactive group exercises, and individual journal writing.
- Opening questionnaire exercise: Why am I here? What do I hope to gain from the Positive Interventions program? What steps have you taken to promote emotional, physical, and spiritual balance in your life? Identify the value of having your life in balance.
- Q&A, Forum Discussion
- Cell Study: What do you think? Read the “Affirmation of Self-Freedom” and write in your journal, in your own words your understanding of what it represents to you to have self-freedom. How would claiming back your life change one of your negative behaviors? Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Lesson 2. Changing Your Health Behaviors:
- Discussion on Origin of our Behavior; major factors that influence behavior and behavioral-change decisions; identifying three general categories: predisposing, enabling, and reinforcing.
- Instruction on beliefs, attitudes, self-efficacy and self-esteem.
- Instruction on what is external vs. internal locus of control?
- Group questionnaire exercise: How do your family and friends influence your behavior? Why is it important to seek out the support and encouragement of friends who have similar goals and interests as you?
- Q&A, Forum Discussion
- Cell study: What do you think? In general how would you rate your internal or external locus of control? Can you describe a situation where you demonstrated an internal locus of control? Can you think of some friends who you'd describe as more
internally controlled? Externally controlled? How have you seen these demonstrated? Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Lesson 3. Motivation and Readiness to Change:
- Instruction on the process of motivation and the synergy with readiness (state of being) that precedes behavior change.
- Instruction on the six stages of change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination.
- Introduction to behavior change techniques: shaping, visualization, modeling, controlling the situation, reinforcement, and changing self-talk.
- Group questionnaire exercise: What can I do to change an unhealthy habit? How can the people in your life help you change?
- Q&A, Forum Discussion
- Cell Study: What do you think? Review the Signature Strengths, Self-Rating Scale (adapted by Jonathan Haidt, from M.E.P. Seligman, 2002: Authentic Happiness) and identify your top five strengths and at least five strengths that are least true or applicable to you. Record your findings in your journal. Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Lesson 4. Plan Positive Behavior Change:
- Instruction on self-assessment: defining antecedents and consequences.
- Discussion on recognizing the antecedents of a behavior and acting to modify the antecedents as a method of changing behavior; setting realistic goals.
- Instruction on self-assessment: analyzing personal behavior.
- Examination on the components of personal behavior: frequency, duration, seriousness, basis for problem behavior, and antecedents.
- Group exercise: Creating a behavior change contract:
- Q&A, Forum Discussion
- Cell study: What do you think? Do you think goal setting is a useful strategy for behavior change? What can you do in the future to help you achieve your goals?
Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Phase 2: Workshops 5-8
Segment: “Improving and Strengthening Relationships with Others”

Lesson 5. Social Interaction with Family, Friends, Loved Ones, & Others
- Discussion on the importance of social health.
- Instruction on the concepts of social bonds and social support (tangible/intangible).
- Discussion on characteristics of strong social support.
- Group questionnaire exercise: Why is support from family and friends a vital component of your social health? How does a lack of social health in society contribute to aggressive acts of prejudice toward other individuals or groups?
- Q&A, Forum Discussion
• Cell study: What do you think? What are your key strengths in your social health? What are your key deficiencies? What are two things you can do to enhance your strong areas? To improve your weaknesses? Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Lesson 6. Spirituality and Relationships:
• Discussion on What is spirituality?
• Discussion on self-confidence and serenity; spiritual growth and relationships, and values.
• Group questionnaire exercise: Analyze your spirituality and define what small things you can do everyday that can significantly impact the way you feel about yourself and loved ones. How can building up your self-esteem improve relationships with others?
• Q&A, Forum Discussion

Lesson 7. Managing Anger and the Toxic Relationship:
• Instruction on the four myths of anger: anger is a biochemical-determined event; anger and aggression are instinctual in man, frustration leads to aggression, its healthy to ventilate.
• Discussion on character disorders that contribute to a negative relationship.
• Instruction on cognitive restructuring; developing a reality based perspective.
• Instruction on anger transformation: creatively, socially, spiritually, and existentially (Higher power).
• Group questionnaire exercise: List separately five ways that you can creatively, socially, spiritually, and existentially, transform anger. In your own words discuss how being in a toxic relationship can potentially lead to criminal relapse.
• Q&A, Forum Discussion
• Cell study: What do you think? Evaluate your own relationship history. Do you agree that anger is necessary in a relationship? Define domestic violence and describe why you think people stay in abusive relationships. Describe how your past/present actions contributed to a negative relationship. Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Lesson 8. Developing Positive Relationships in Friendships Partnerships, & Marriages:
• Instruction on characterizing and forming intimate relationships; defining four characteristics of an intimate relationship: behavioral interdependence, need fulfillment, emotional attachment, and emotional availability.
• Discussion on accountability and self-nurturance; effective communication.
• Discussion on establishing positive friendships.
• Group questionnaire exercise: Examine one of your current friendships. What characteristics can you identify in that relationship that keeps your friendship intact?
• Discussion on the three Pillars of a healthy intimate relationship: friendship, passion, and love; actions of behavior that result in a positive relationship; basic techniques for a long lasting relationship; keys to preserving a marriage.
• QA, Forum Discussion
• Cell study: What do you think? Why are the four characteristics of an intimate relationship important in relationship development? List five actions or behaviors that result in a positive relationship. Do you think communication is important in a positive relationship? Justify your answer. Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Phase 3: Workshops 9-12
Segment: "Finding Sense of Purpose In Your Life"

Lesson 9. Balance through Meaning & Harmony:
• Discussion: What is logotherapy? (health through meaning) in ("Man's Search for Meaning" and the “Pursuit of Happiness”) by Victor Frankl, PhD.
• Instruction on steps to logotherapy.
• Group questionnaire exercise. What gives meaning in your life? How do the choices you make reflect what you hold as your purpose in life?
• QA, Forum Discussion
• Cell study: What do you think? Why is it important to cultivate meaning and harmony in your life? Describe how becoming a more loving person can bring you greater self-confidence and serenity?

Lesson 10. A Healthy You:
• Discussion on your personality; the unique characteristics that distinguish you from others.
• Instruction on what it means to have learned optimism vs. learned helplessness.
• Discussion on psychosocial health and the four dimensions of psychosocial health: spiritual, emotional, mental, and social.
• Group questionnaire exercise: What factors affect you psychosocial health; discuss the positive steps you can take to enhance your psychosocial health.
• QA, Forum Discussion.
• Cell study: What do you think? Assess Maslow’s theory, do you agree with Maslow's assessment that people behave badly socially when their needs are not being met? Describe why a mentally healthy person is likely to respond to life’s challenges constructively.

Lesson 11. Right Thought-Right Action:
• Discussion on altruism; selfless service to others.
• Discussion on the qualities of mindfulness
• Discussion on meditation: The practice of empty mind.
• Group questionnaire exercise: How have you accepted total responsibility for the choices you made in building your life? Do you believe that forgiveness should be expressed to those whose missteps have affected you? Describe a situation where you readily expressed forgiveness to someone whose missteps affected you.
• QA, Forum Discussion.
• Cell study: What do you think? Think of a person in your life that has experienced suffering as a result of your actions. Spend a few minutes contemplating forgiveness toward this person, then write him/her a letter apologizing for any offense you may have given and offering your forgiveness in return. Wait for a day or two before deciding whether or not you are truly ready to send your message. Record this experience in your journal. Journal entry: What did I learn today?

Lesson 12. Freedom of choice:
• Discussion on Rehabilitation through Regeneration.
• Discussion on true freedom comes about one day at a time.
• Presentation by program participants on “Life is not fair, but worth it.”
• Final group discussion on the next chapter in your life; closing thoughts by Positive Interventions Group Sponsors; Inmate Instructional Body.
• Presentation of Certificate of Completion to participants who successfully complete the Positive Interventions program.
• Close Workshop segment with “Affirmation of Self-Freedom”
The Imperfect You

Looking through To You

Throughout our lives who we are in the moment becomes the measure of how we are viewed in self-image, not for the true self we are, but for the superficial character of life we have become. From the early stages of our life we become transformed by the reaches of a society intent on making us feel different about self-image. We cling to the artificial images of happiness, joy, pleasure, contentment, and love; the trappings of our needful behavior. For the most part, we learn to develop our behaviors around pro-social values early on in our formative years of behavioral development. We separate ourselves from the irrational and form an appreciation for whom we are, what we are in the moment, and we possess a sense of self-purpose on our golden path to a goal oriented direction. Others however, evolve through this process of life learning imperfectly.

Drawing on the experiences of my own life, I have often sat down and reflected on the precursors that led to my negative behaviors. When I put real thought into my life, I found myself being transformed into the snapshot of my unbalanced existence. My mind became veiled in a myriad of disconnect and ambiguity. The experience left me feeling as though I was looking into two sides of a black-and-white picture of who I am. Through this window of my life, I reached out to the reflection, my touch distorting the ripples of the other me. In these fragmented moments of uncertain transparency, I am confronted with no longer being concerned of portraits past. I have learned to accept that there is no need for my irrational resentment. It is okay that my childhood was not the pictures of happiness, joy, and love, depicted in the cutouts of magazines.

In looking through to my life, I have gained clarity in embracing the moments of my internal depths of loneliness, depression, and despair. I accept that to begin a new me, I had to face the emptiness and ruin of my life. My self-examination, meditation, and prayer, became my eventual changes in my behavior and mental perceptions. My transformation began
by acknowledging I had to sacrifice my ego, allowing humility to replace
my narcissistic self-centered personality. In looking through to my life, I
realized that what I was looking at was the dark side of me, that all these
years I refused to look at that ruled me. My self-examination further allowed
me to reflect on what I needed to change about myself. I needed to be
willing to look at the dark side of my life in order to heal my mind and heart,
accepting that is the bridge to my personal freedom. In essence, I learned
that in looking through to me, I was able to walk into my darkness to find
the light and walk into a fearful past, to find peace in the moment. In these
moments of self-reflection I began to understand my purpose in life; to help
others understand they are not alone on their path to human
understanding. This is the balance of rehabilitation through regeneration.
This is Positive Interventions.

Finding Your Way

For many of us we allow ourselves to become hostage to the things in our
life we have no control over. The hope we seek however, lies in the way we
think in the moment. We can learn to change our behaviors by simply
altering the way we think. In changing your negative self-talk and behavior,
we are able to learn that our thoughts create our future. What will I be
tomorrow is determined by what I think today. Aligning yourself in balance
will not be easy. At times, it was difficult even for me. But, I welcomed the
challenge, as you surely will as well. Though challenging, your results will
become constructive. Finding your own way requires you to become
humble in your own look through life examination. Once you have been
able to find your serenity and peace, become content with who you are in
the moment, and accept that there is great self-reward in having the ability
and receive love, and offer service to others, then you will be able to go
forth daily in your life with a willingness to be honest, decent, and socially
responsible, on your own path to human understanding.

Imperfect You

Have you ever done something only to question if whether you should be
doing it in the first place? Do I go left, right, or simply nowhere? These
basic actions /inactions are pieces of who we are in the moment. The
pieces of who we are now, and what we are to become, are formulated by
what we have learned from the past. Our choices, decisions, and actions
are patterned from what we have learned early on in the stages of our
understanding of behavior value. It is ingrained in our human
understanding from the moments of that first thought of “do I, or don’t I?”
that we have the capacity to learn the values of right and wrong.
Our collective conscious, the warehouse for all our learned impulses of life, fire on the choices we rely on in our subconscious state. Our behaviors become the pretext to our continuing breath of life. When we question our thoughts we are questioning our behaviors learned. You would not know how to question your thoughts if your being was not equipped to learn to do so. If you are being restrained by the confines of prison, does this mean that you failed to connect with the good side of who you are? No, it simply means YOU chose to make the wrong decision because in that moment, you wanted to make a negative imprint in your life.

It does not matter the nature of the crime or action involved in the crime, because any negative impact to a civilized humanity results from the misplaced values we all learn as we develop our individual free will to life. For the vast majority of the people sitting in prison, we can honestly acknowledge that at some point, we did know what we were doing, when we were doing it. Often, we try to argue and defend our actions, choices, and behavior, by relying on the intricacies of the judicial laws designed to keep a civilized society in balance. We become detached from our individual value system and we have lost touch with the goodness of our human understanding. Its only after we leave a negative imprint on society that we may find ourselves questioning the merit of our actions and behavior.

Who we are in the moment is only dictated by who we choose to be in our value of behavior. Who we are in the moment is nothing more than who we are. It doesn't alter the moment itself. It only changes the outcome of what we choose to achieve in that moment for ourselves. There are no fixed rules to guide you on the path to rehabilitation through regeneration. There is only the compass to building a new you, which leads to right, wrong, and balance.

Lesson #1 – Setting Reasonable Expectations for Group Participation

Group Questionnaire Exercise

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. Why am I here?
2. What do I hope to gain from the Positive Interventions Program?

3. What steps have you taken to promote emotional, psychological and spiritual balance in your life?

4. Identify the value of having your life in balance.
Lesson #1 – Setting Reasonable Expectations for Group Participation

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Read the “Affirmation of Self-Freedom” and write in your own words your understanding of what it means to you to have self-freedom.

2. How would claiming back your life change one of your negative behaviors?

3. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Changing Your Health Behaviors

Origin of Our Behavior

From the time of our birth, our parents and other family members have given us strong cues about which actions are and are not socially acceptable. Some of the actions we learn as we grow include brushing our teeth, bathing, and chewing food with our mouths closed are behaviors that our family probably instilled in us long ago. It is a good bet that your family and local culture influenced your food choices, your religious beliefs, your political beliefs, and many of your other values and actions. If you deviated from your family’s norms, a family member probably let you know fairly quickly. Strong and positive family units provide care, trust, and protections; are dedicated to the healthful development of all family members; and work to reduce problems.

When the loving family unit does not exist or when it does not provide for basic human needs, it becomes difficult for a child to learn positive health behaviors. Often, healthy behaviors get their start in healthy homes; unhealthy homes breed unhealthy habits. This is not to say that all unhealthy homes breed unhealthy habits, taking into account that every household environment is different, and involves different dynamic family structures. Healthy families seemingly however, provide the foundation for a clear and necessary understanding of what is right and wrong, what is positive and negative. Without this fundamental grounding, the building of pro-social values, behavior, and skills, become fragmented as we grow-up in difficult environments and family structures.

Major Factors that Influence Behavior and Behavioral-Change

What do we know about unhealthy behaviors? I think it is safe to say that many people engage in unhealthy behaviors even when they know these behaviors are risky. So, the question begs “Why do we do it?” Major factors that influence
behavior and behavior-change decisions can be divided into three general categories: predisposing, enabling, and reinforcing.

- **Predisposing factors.** Our life experiences, knowledge, cultural and ethnic heritage, and current beliefs and values are all predisposing factors that influence behavior. Factors that may predispose us to certain health conditions include age, sex, race, income, family background, educational background, and access to health care. For example, if your parents smoked, you are 90 percent more likely to start smoking than someone whose parents didn’t. If your friends or peers smoke, you are 80 percent more likely to smoke than someone whose friends don’t.

- **Enabling factors.** Skills and abilities; physical, emotional, and mental capabilities; community and government priorities and commitment to health; and safe and convenient resources and facilities that make health decisions easy or difficult are enabling factors. Positive enablers encourage you to carry through on your intentions to change. While negative enablers work against your intentions to change. For example, let’s say you would like to join a health club but discover that the closest one is four miles away, closes at 9:00 p.m., and the membership fee is $500. These might be negative enablers that convince you to stay home. By contrast, if your nearest Community fitness center is two blocks away, stays open until midnight, and offers a special community membership for half the cost, these might be positive enablers that convince you to join. Identifying positive and negative enabling factors and devising alternate plans when the negative factors outweigh the positive are part of planning for behavior change.

- **Reinforcing factors.** Reinforcing factors include the presence or absence of support, encouragement, or discouragement that significant people in your life (friends, family, loved ones, others), bring to a situation. Whether it be employer actions and policies; health provider costs and access; community resources; and access to health education. For example, you decide that you want to quit smoking. You tell your family and friends, but they continue to smoke in front of you and in your presence. You may be tempted to start smoking again. In other words, your smoking behavior is reinforced by the actions of the people you are in contact with. If however, you are overweight, you lose a few pounds, and all your friends and family tell you how terrific you look, your positive behavior now is reinforced because you appreciate the way others are noticing your weight loss. You will be more likely to continue losing weight.

The manner in which you reward or punish yourself in the process of change also plays a role. Accepting small failures and concentrating on your successes can foster achievements. Berating yourself or using negative self-talk because you over-ate during a soup spread or haven’t found the time to wash your visiting clothes, may create an internal environment in which failure becomes most inevitable. Telling yourself that you are worth the extra effort and giving yourself a
pat on the back for small accomplishments are often overlooked factors in positive behavior change.

Beliefs and Attitudes

We often assume that when rational people realize their behaviors put them at risk, they will change those behaviors and reduce the risk. But, as we do know, this is not necessarily true. Consider the medical professionals who smoke, consume junk food, and act in other unhealthy ways. They surely should know better but their "knowing" is disconnected from their "doing." Why is this so? Two strong influences on behavior are found in our beliefs and attitudes. A belief is an appraisal of the relationship between some object, action, or idea (for example, "smoking is expensive, dirty, and causes cancer," or, "smoking is sociable and relaxing"). An attitude is a relatively stable set of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies in relation to something or someone.

Having this insight, our attitudes tend to reflect our emotional responses to situations and follow from our beliefs. The more consistent your attitude is toward an action, and the more you are influenced by others to take action, the more likely you are to be motivated to change the behavior and to ultimately succeed in doing so. The key is being able to recognize potential barriers that you may face as you try modifying your behaviors.

External versus Internal Locus of Control

At first thought, you are probably wondering, what the heck is a locus of control? The best way to describe this is to accept the conviction that you have the power and ability to change. This is a powerful motivator during the process of change. Here is why. When individuals feel that they have limited control over their lives, they might find it more difficult to initiate positive changes. If they believe that someone or something else controls a situation or that they dare not act in a particular way because of peer repercussions, they may become easily frustrated and give up (J.M. Twenge, Z. Liqing, and C. Im, "It's Beyond My Control": A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis of Increasing Externality in Locus of Control, 1960-2002.).

People who have a stronger internal locus of control believe they have the power over their own actions. They are more driven by their own thoughts and are more likely to state their opinions and be true to their beliefs.

Having an internal or external locus of control can vary according to circumstances. For instance, let's say that you find out that diabetes runs in your family, you may resign yourself to one day face the disease, instead of taking an active role in modifying your lifestyle to minimize your risks of also developing diabetes. On this front, you would be demonstrating an external locus of control. But now let's look at a different situation. Your friends are encouraging you to
smoke marijuana, you know that you do not want to smoke marijuana and do not want to risk the potential consequences of the habit, so you tell your friends you won’t be smoking marijuana. This is taking charge of your life by resisting the pressures from others to smoke marijuana. In doing so you developed and have maintained an internal locus of control. In general, developing and maintaining an internal locus of control can help you take charge of your healthy behaviors.

Lesson #2 – Changing Your Health Behaviors

Group Questionnaire Exercise

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. How do your family and friends influence your behavior?

2. Why is it important to seek out the support and encouragement of friends who have similar goals and interests as you?

Lesson #2 – Changing Your Health Behavior

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.
1. In general how would you rate your internal or external locus of control?

2. Can you describe a situation where you demonstrated an internal locus of control?

3. Can you think of some friends who you would describe as more internally controlled? Externally controlled?

4. How have you seen these traits demonstrated?
5. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Motivation and Readiness to Change

The Process of Motivation and the Synergy with Readiness to Change

Let’s first begin by breaking down what “synergy” is, followed by readiness that precedes behavior change. Synergy, in simple words, is something working in combined action or operation. Readiness that precedes behavior change is essentially the “state of being” that exists within us before an action or operation occurs. Now, let’s analyze this by using basic examples of motivation.

On any given morning, many of us get out of bed and resolve to change a given behavior that day. Whether it be losing weight, drinking less, exercising more, being nicer to others, managing time better, or some other change, we start with enthusiasm and high expectations. However, a vast majority of people return to their old behavior. Wanting to change is a prerequisite of the change process, meaning it is necessary for the change process, but there is much more to the process of motivation. Motivation must be combined with common sense, commitment, and a realistic understanding of how best to move from point A to point B.

Readiness is the state of being that precedes behavior change, and those who are ready are likely to make the actual effort. People who are ready to change are able to do so because they possess the right attitudes, knowledge, skills, and are able to tap into their internal and external resources that make the transformation of positive change possible.

Six Stages of Behavior Change

Have you ever started the day with saying “I will make an effort to stop criticizing others today?” But then during the course of your day, something happens and the first thing you are doing is finding yourself in a position of judging someone negatively. This is because we started out thinking about the change itself first,
and failed to have a plan that would reinforce our thought to make the necessary change. Our chances of actually stopping criticism of others will be greatly enhanced if we have the proper reinforcement. This can be achieved by understanding and exercising the stages of behavior change.

1. **Precontemplation.** People in the precontemplation stage have no current intention of changing. They may have tried to change a behavior before and given up, or they may be in denial and unaware of any problem. Sometimes a few direct yet kind words from friends may be enough to make precontemplators take a closer look at themselves.

2. **Contemplation.** In this phase, people recognize that they have a problem and begin to contemplate the need to change. Acknowledgment usually results from increased awareness, often due to feedback from family and friends or access to information. Despite this acknowledgment, people can be stuck in this stage for years, realizing that they have a problem but lacking the time or energy to make the change. Often, contemplators need a push to get them started.

3. **Preparation.** Most people at this point are close to taking action. They have thought about what they might do and may even have come up with a plan. Rather than thinking about why they can't begin, they have started to focus on what they can do. Start your preparation to change by setting large and small realistic goals.

4. **Action.** In this stage, people begin to follow their action plans. Those who have prepared for change, thought the alternatives, engaged social support, and made a plan of action are more ready for action than those who have given it little thought. Without a plan, without enlisting the help of others, or without a realistic goal, failure is likely.

5. **Maintenance.** Maintenance requires attention to detail, willingness, and long-term commitment. In this stage it is important to be aware of the potential for relapse and to develop strategies for dealing with such challenges.

6. **Termination.** By this point, the behavior is so ingrained that the current level of willingness and vigilance may be unnecessary. You have reached the point where your new behavior has become an essential part of your daily living.

**Choosing a Behavior Technique**

Some of the most common strategies you can use to change your behavior begins with first analyzing all the factors that influence your behaviors, and considering what actions you can take to change negative ones. Once you have
done this, then you can look to the actions that could help you change. These actions might include behavior-change techniques such as shaping, visualization, modeling, controlling the situation, reinforcement, and changing self-talk.

**Shaping:** Regardless how motivated you are, some behaviors are almost impossible to change immediately. To reach your goal, you may need to take a number of individual steps, each designed to change one small piece of the larger behavior. This is the process of shaping. For example, suppose you have not exercised in a while on the prison yard. You decide that you want to get into shape, and your goal is to jog 3 miles every other day. But you realize that you’d face a near-death experience if you tried to run even one lap around the yard in your current condition. So you decide to build up to your desired fitness level gradually. During week 1, you will walk the track for 1 hour every other yard day at a slow, relaxed pace. During week 2, you will walk for the same amount of time but speed up your pace and cover slightly more ground. During week 3, you will speed up even more and try to go even farther. You include some conditioning exercises using the pull-up bars, dip bars, and doing some push-ups. You continue taking such steps until you reach your goal.

Whatever the desired behavior change, all shaping involves the following actions:

- Start slowly, and try not to cause undue stress during the early stages of the program.
- Keep the steps small and achievable.
- Be flexible. If the original plan proves uncomfortable or you deviate from it, don’t give up! Start again, and move forward.
- Don’t skip steps or move to the next step until you have mastered the previous one.
- Reward yourself for meeting regular, previously-set goals.

Remember, behaviors don’t develop overnight, so they won’t change overnight.

**Visualization:** Mental practice can transform unhealthy behaviors into healthy ones. Athletes and others use a technique known as imagined rehearsal to reach their goals. By visualizing their planned action ahead of time, they are better prepared when they put themselves to the test.

**Modeling:** Modeling, or learning behaviors by watching others perform them, is one of the most effective strategies for changing behavior. For example, suppose that you have a difficult time talking to people you don’t know very well. One of the easiest ways to improve your communication skills is to select friends or family whose social skills you think could help you improve your communication with people you don’t know. Observe them. Do they talk more or listen more? How do other people respond to them? Why are they such good communicators? If you observe behaviors you admire and isolate their components, you can model the steps of your behavior-change technique effectively.
Controlling the Situation: Sometimes, the right situation, right setting, or right group of people, will have a positive influence on your behaviors. Many situations and occasions trigger certain actions. For example, you know that your cellmate is studying for his college exam. You have an agreement not to play your TV sound loud when he/she is studying. You recognize that your environment is enclosed and confined and it would not be appropriate to cause unnecessary noise while your cellmate is studying. However, you do turn on the TV and then use your headphones on your head to listen to the TV. This is known as situational inducement. The term situational inducement refers to an attempt to influence a behavior by using occasions and social settings to control it. In this case, the social setting would be the confines of the cell and your cellmate's study time while you are present also in the cell. You know that by having your TV volume emitting sound from your external speaker, you will disturb the environment within the cell as your cellmate studies. But, you can control the situation by watching your TV and using your headphones to hear your TV. You have now managed a behavior-change technique. By carefully considering which settings will help and which will hurt your effort to change, and by deciding to seek the first and avoid the second, you will improve your chances for change.

Reinforcement: Another way to promote positive behavior change is to reward yourself for it. This is called positive reinforcement. Each of us is motivated by different reinforcers.

Most positive reinforcers can be classified into five categories: consumable, activity, manipulative, possessional, and social.

- Consumable reinforcers are delicious edibles, such as candy, cookies, or good food.
- Activity reinforcers are opportunities to do something enjoyable, such as read a good book, or watch TV.
- Manipulative reinforcers are incentives, such as getting a higher privilege status for working a prison job.
- Possession reinforcers are tangible rewards, such as a new pair of shoes or a new CD, etc...
- Social reinforcers are signs of appreciation, approval, or love, such as loving looks, affectionate hugs, and praise.

When choosing reinforcers, determine what would motivate you to act in a particular way. Be careful not to overkill your rewards following your behavior. Using this technique, the difficulty often will lie in determining which incentives will be most effective. Initially, you may receive your enforcers from others. Over time you can expect to see positive change in yourself.
Changing Self-Talk: Self-talk, the way you think and talk to yourself, can also play a role in modifying health related issues. Self-talk can reflect your feelings of self-efficacy, discussed earlier. When we don’t feel self-efficacious, its tempting to engage in negative self-talk, which can sabotage our best intentions. Saying to yourself that you are worthless, that you can’t do something, or you don’t think you can do something, is a form of negative self-talk. One of the strategies I use is blocking/thought stopping.

By purposefully blocking or stopping negative thoughts, a person can concentrate on taking positive steps toward behavior change. For example, suppose you received a Dear John/Jane letter from an ex-partner in your life. There is not much you can do, especially with being locked up and in confinement. You consciously stop thinking about the letter and force yourself to think about something more pleasant (perhaps an upcoming visit with family). By refusing to dwell on the negative images and forcing yourself to focus elsewhere, you can avoid wasting energy, time, and emotional resources and move onto positive change. Changing self-talk is not as difficult as it might sound. You simply have to learn how to focus your negative energy that arises in your self-talk and transform that energy in a productive force of rational, self-believing, positive reinforcement.

It is a good bet that we have all used negative self-talk at some point in our lives. This might be evident by the fact we are incarcerated. The question however, is now that the tools to successfully make the positive changes in your life have been revealed to you, is it beneficial to you to change the negative aspects of your life? We all face hardships and difficult choices in our daily lives. The defining moment in our decision making process is how we choose to make the decision to be positive during a negative situation. Making the right decision makes the difference for the duration of our life.
Lesson #3 – Changing Your Health Behaviors

Group Questionnaire Exercise

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. What can I do to change an unhealthy habit?

2. How can the people in your life help you change?
Lesson #3 – Changing Your Health Behavior

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Review the Signature Strengths, Self-Rating Scale (adapted by Jonathan Haidt, from M.E.P. Seligman, 2002: Authentic Happiness) and identify your top five strengths and at least five strengths that are least true or applicable to you.

2. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Signature Strengths, Self-Rating Scale  
(Adapted by Jonathan Haidt, from M.E.P. Seligman, 2002: Authentic Happiness)

Everyone has a characteristic set of strengths and virtues, that is, things that they are "good" or "strong" on. Research in Positive Psychology suggests that there are (at least) 24 strengths and virtues that are recognized in most cultures. Please read the descriptions of the 24 strengths and virtues below. As you read them, write a "+" in the margin next to the ones that you think describe you well. Write a "-" in the margin next to the ones that you think do not describe you well. Leave the rest unmarked. Then look through the ones with a "+" next to them and try to rank order your top 5. That is, place a "1" in the left-hand column for the one that you think best describes you, then a "2" in the next best one, etc. Finally, look through the ones with a "-" in the margin and try to rank the five that are LEAST true or applicable to you. That is, put a "24" next to the one that is least like you, then a "23", etc., out to 20. These might be considered your "weaknesses." But bear in mind that everyone has strengths AND weaknesses, and being honest about both will help you plan out a life that takes maximum advantages of your strengths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Curiosity</td>
<td>You are curious about the world and you strongly desire experience of it. You are flexible about matters that don't fit your preconceptions. Curious people do not simply tolerate ambiguity but they like it and are intrigued by it. You seek out novelty, and you are rarely bored.</td>
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<td>2.Love of learning</td>
<td>You love learning new things, whether you are in a class or on your own. You always loved school, reading, museums - anywhere and everywhere there is an opportunity to learn. There are domains of knowledge in which you are the expert, and others value your expertise. You love learning about these domains, even in the absence of any external incentives to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.Judgment</td>
<td>You think things through and examine them from all sides. You do not jump to conclusions, and you rely only on solid evidence to make your decisions. You are able to change your mind. You are very good at sifting information objectively and rationally, in the service of the good for yourself and others. You do NOT just think in ways that favor and confirm what you already believe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.Ingenuity</td>
<td>When you are faced with something you want, you are outstanding at finding novel yet appropriate behavior to reach that goal. You are rarely content with doing something the conventional way. This strength is also called &quot;practical intelligence&quot; or more bluntly common sense or street smarts.</td>
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<td>5.Emotional intelligence</td>
<td>You are aware of the motives and feelings of others, and of yourself, and you can respond skilfully. You notice differences among others, especially with respect to their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions, and then you act upon these distinctions. You also have finely tuned access to your own feelings and the ability to use that knowledge to understand and guide your behavior.</td>
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<td>6.Perspective</td>
<td>You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense to others and yourself. Others seek you out to draw on your experience, and you are often able to help them solve problems and gain perspective. You have a good sense of what is really important in life.</td>
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<td>7.Vvalor</td>
<td>You do not shrink from threat, challenge, pain, or difficulty. Valor is more than bravery during physical threat. It refers as well to intellectual or emotional stances that are unpopular, difficult, or dangerous. The brave person is able to uncouple the emotional and behavioral components of fear, resisting the urge to flee and facing the fearful situation. Fearlessness, boldness, and rashness are not valor; it is facing danger, despite fear, that marks valor.</td>
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<td>8. Perseverance</td>
<td>You finish what you start. You take on difficult projects and finish them, usually with good cheer and minimal complaint. You do what you say will do and sometimes more, never less. Perseverance does not mean dogged or obsessive pursuit of unattainable goals. Rather you remain flexible, realistic, and not perfectionistic.</td>
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<td>9. Integrity</td>
<td>You are an honest person, not only always speaking the truth but also living your life in a genuine and authentic way. You are down to earth and without pretense. You representing your intentions and commitments to others and to yourself in sincere fashion, whether by word or deed.</td>
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<td>10. Kindness</td>
<td>You are kind and generous to others, and you are never too busy to do a favor. You enjoy doing good deeds for others, even if you do not know them well. Your actions are very often guided by other people’s best interests, even when these override your own immediate wishes and needs.</td>
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<td>11. Loving</td>
<td>You value close and intimate relations with others. You have deep and sustained feelings for others, who feel the same way about you. This strength is more than the Western notion of romance; it is about very deep ties to several or many people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Citizenship</td>
<td>You excel as a member of a group. You are a loyal and dedicated teammate, You always do your share, and you work hard for the success of the group. You value the group goals and purposes even when they differ from your own. You respect those who are rightfully in positions of authority, like teachers or coaches, and you identify with the group.</td>
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<td>13. Fairness</td>
<td>You do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about other people. You give everyone a chance. You guided in your day-to-day actions by larger principles of morality. You take the welfare of others, even those you do not know personally, as seriously as your own, and you can easily set aside personal prejudices.</td>
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<td>14. Leadership</td>
<td>You do a good job organizing activities and seeing to it that they happen. You are a humane and effective leader, attending to getting the group's work at the same time as maintaining good relations among group members. You are additionally humane when you handle intergroup relations &quot;with malice toward none and charity toward all.&quot;</td>
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<td>15. Self-control</td>
<td>You can easily hold your desires, needs, and impulses in check when it is appropriate. It is not enough to know what is correct; you must also be able to put this knowledge into action. When something bad happens, you can regulate your own emotions. You can repair and neutralize your negative feelings, and generate positive emotions on your own.</td>
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<td>16. Prudence</td>
<td>You are a careful person. You do not say or do things you might later regret. You wait until all the votes are in before embarking on a course of action. You are far-sighted and deliberative. You are good at resisting impulses about short term goals for the sake of longer term success.</td>
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<td>17. Humility</td>
<td>You do not seek the spotlight, preferring to let your accomplishments speak for themselves. You do not regard yourself as special, and others recognize and value your modesty. You are unpretentious. You see your own aspirations, victories and defeats as pretty unimportant in the larger scheme of things.</td>
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<td>18. Appreciation</td>
<td>You stop and smell the roses. You appreciate beauty, excellence, and skill in all domains: nature, the arts, science, and the wide range of abilities that other people possess. You often see or hear things cause you to feel profound feelings of awe and wonder.</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
<td>19. Gratitude</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
<td>20. Hope</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
<td>21. Spirituality</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
<td>22. Forgiveness</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
<td>23. Humor</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
<td>24. Zest</td>
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A much longer and more accurate version of this test can be taken at: www.authentichappiness.org

For more information about strengths, happiness, virtue, and flourishing, see www.happinesshypothesis.com
Plan Positive Behavior Change

Self-Assessment: Antecedents and Consequences

Before you begin the process of behavior change, it is important to take stock of the factors that have made you maintain the current behavior. One of the ways to do this is through self-assessment. Assessing the causes of your behaviors will help you to determine where you need to make changes.

Behaviors, thoughts, and feelings always occur in a context; that is, in a situation. Situations can be divided into components: the events that come before and those that come after. Antecedents are the setting events for a behavior; they stimulate a person to act in certain ways. Antecedents can be physical events, thoughts, emotions, or the actions of other people. Consequences - the results of behavior - affect whether a person will repeat that action. Consequences also consist of physical events, thoughts, emotions, or actions of other people.

Suppose you are not comfortable with having to stand up in front of your peers and speak about what you have learned in this program. The antecedents include walking into the workshop, feeling uneasy, wondering whether you are capable of doing a good job, and being able to remember the thoughts from your earlier lesson review and journal entries. If the consequences are negative—if your peers laugh or you are heckled—your fear about speaking in front of others will be reinforced, and you will continue to dread this kind of event or situation. In contrast, if you receive positive encouragement from your peers, and the instructor provides positive feedback for your presentation, you may actually learn to overcome your fears with taking in front of others and learn to appreciate the experience.

Learning to recognize antecedents of a behavior and acting to modify them is one method of changing behavior. A journal noting your undesirable behaviors and identifying the settings in which they occur can be a useful tool.
Self-Assessment: Analyzing Personal Behavior

Successful behavior change requires determining what you want to change. All too often we berate ourselves by using generalities: “I’m lousy to my friends; I need to be a better person.” Determining the specific behavior you would like to modify in contrast to the general problem - will allow you to set clear goals for yourself. What are you doing that makes you a lousy friend? Have you been a taker rather than a giver? Were you just acting selfish? Or are you really a good friend most of the time? Let’s say the problem you have is rumor mongering or spreading rumors. You can analyze this behavior by examining the following components.

- Frequency. How often do you spread rumors - all the time or only once in a while?
- Duration. How long have you been doing this?
- Seriousness. Is your rumor mongering just idle chatter, or are you trying to injure other people? What are the consequences for you? For your friends? For your relationship?
- Basis for problem behavior. Is your rumor mongering based on facts, perception of facts, or deliberate embellishment of the truth?
- Antecedents. What kinds of situations trigger your rumors? Do some settings or people bring it out in you more than others do? What triggers your feelings of dislike or irritation toward your friends? Why are you talking behind their backs?

Once you have assessed your actions and are able to determine what motivates you, consider then what you can do to change your behavior.

Setting Realistic Goals

As discussed above changing your behavior is not going to be easy, but sometimes we make it harder on ourselves by setting unrealistic and unattainable goals. To start making positive change, ask yourself the questions:

- What do I want? What is your ultimate goal? To lose weight? Exercise more? Reduce stress in your life? Have a lasting/meaningful relationship? Or to simply be a better overall person? Whatever it is, you need a clear picture of the target outcome.

- Which change is the greatest priority at this time? Often people will decide they want to change several things all at once. Does this seem realistic to you? The best way to weigh your greatest priority in deciding which behavior you want to change is to choose the behavior that constitutes your greatest problem, and tackle that first. You can always work on something else later. In prioritizing your behavior changes, remember to take small
steps, experiment with alternatives, and find the best way to meet your goals.

- Why is this important to me? Think through why you want to change. Are you doing it because of your health? To look better? To win the approval of someone else? Whatever your reason, usually doing something because it is right for you, rather than to win the approval of someone else, is a sound strategy. This is something I can easily identify with. The problem with trying to win someone else's approval is what happens when that person is no longer around? You should keep in mind that the reason you are changing your behavior is because YOU want to change. You will find a greater reward and appreciation in the way you will feel about yourself, once being able to achieve your desired behavior change.

- What are the potential positive outcomes? Here, you simply ask yourself what do I hope to accomplish.

- Are there family or friends whose help I can enlist? Social support is one of your most powerful allies. Getting a friend to exercise with you, asking your partner to help you quit smoking by quitting at the same time you do, and making a commitment to refrain from participating in negative behaviors - these are basic examples of how people in your life can help you and how you can help each other make positive changes.

The key to change is to explore the anticipated problems, the reason for change, and the expected outcomes. Having a plan and course of action should be a course of action suited to the individual need(s). And remember, in order to change, you must first be ready to acknowledge your negative behavior. You may be surprised at who is ready to help support you on your path to behavior change. The outcome however, is all up to you.

Lesson #4 – Plan Positive Behavior Change

Group Exercise

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Fill out the Behavior Change Contract on the next page. Show how you intend to use this exercise to help you set a goal, anticipate obstacles, and create your own strategies to overcome obstacles. Use group feedback to help you complete your contract.
BEHAVIOR CHANGE CONTRACT

My behavior change will be:

______________________________________________________________

My long-term goal for this behavior change is:

______________________________________________________________

These are the three obstacles to change (things that I am currently doing or situations that contribute to this behavior or make it harder to change):

1. ____________________________________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________________________________

The strategies I will use to overcome these obstacles are:

1. ____________________________________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________________________________

Resources I will use to help me change this behavior include:

a friend/partner/relative: __________________________________________________________________

a prison-based resource: ___________________________________________________________________

a community-based resource: __________________________________________________________________

a book or other inspirational resource: __________________________________________________________________

In short order to make my goal more attainable, I have devised these short-term goals:

short term goal __________________________ target date __________ reward _________________________
short term goal __________________________ target date __________ reward _________________________
short term goal __________________________ target date __________ reward _________________________

When I make the long term behavior change described above, my reward will be:

______________________________________________________________

I intend to make the behavior change described above. I will use the strategies and rewards to achieve the goals that will contribute to healthy behavior change.

Signed: ___________________________________  Witness: ___________________________________
Lesson #4– Plan Positive Behavior Change

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Do you think goal setting is a useful strategy for behavior change?

2. What can you do in the future to help achieve your goals?

3. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Improving & Strengthening Relationships with Others

Social Interactions with Family, Friends, Loved Ones, & Others

The importance of social health is necessary to the overall wellness of any working social interaction. Social health refers to the ability to have satisfying interpersonal relationships, including interactions with others, adaptation to social situations, and appropriate daily behaviors in society.

A broader concept of social health includes your interactions with others on an individual and group basis, your ability to use social resources and support in times of need, and your ability to adapt to a variety of situations. Socially healthy people have a wide range of interactions with family, friends, and acquaintances and are able to have healthy interactions with an intimate partner. Typically, socially healthy people are able to listen, express themselves, form healthy attachments, act in socially acceptable and responsible ways, and find the best fit for themselves in society. The importance of having a positive relationship with family members, friends, and significant others, influences the overall well-being and healthy longevity of the relationship. This becomes an important part of your overall psychological health.

Social Bonds

Social bonds represent the degree and nature of interpersonal contacts. Social bonds reflect the level of closeness and attachment that we develop with individuals. They provide intimacy, feelings of belonging, opportunities for giving and receiving nurturance, reassurance of one’s worth, assistance and guidance, and advice. Often, social bonds take multiple forms, the most common of which are social support and community engagements.

Social Support
The concept of social support is more complex than many people realize. In general, social support refers to the networks of people and services with whom and which we interact and share social connections. These ties can provide tangible support, such as sending you a quarterly package or money to help purchase a food sale item or handicraft order, or intangible support, such as encouraging you to share intimate thoughts or thoughts of how your day has developed through the challenges of prison living. Sometimes, support can be felt as perceiving that someone would be there for us in a crisis. Generally, the closer and the higher quality of the social bond, the more likely a person is to ask for and receive social support.

An example of might be your 13 inch flat screen TV has stopped working. You don’t know why, or what caused the TV to simply stop working. You did your best to take care of it, but it was not enough. You know that a TV to watch in the cell is a privilege and helps you to occupy your social time while in the cell. You’re not sure who to turn to, to ask for help because you don’t want to be a financial burden on family and loved ones. Whom could you turn to help you with the purchase of a new TV, and who would do everything in their power to help you receive a new TV?

Another example would be a more basic scenario. Let’s say your car broke down on a dark city street in the middle of the night. Whom could you call for help and know that they would do everything possible to get there? Though the examples I use are very different, they both focus on the description of turning to people who you have a strong personal support and connection with. Some of the common descriptions of strong social support include the following.

- Being cared for and loved; with shared intimacy
- Being esteemed and valued; having a sense of worth
- Sharing companionship, communication, and mutual obligations with others; having a sense of belonging
- Having “informational” support - access to information, advice, community services, and guidance from others.

Social health also reflects the way we react to others. In its most extreme forms, a lack of social health may be represented by aggressive acts of prejudice toward other individuals or groups. Remember, support from your family and friends is a vital component of your social health. Your general sense of well-being can be strongly affected by the positive or negative nature of your social bonds.
Lesson #5– Social Interactions with family, Friends, Loved Ones & Others

Group Questionnaire Exercise

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. Why is support from family and friends a vital component of your social health?

2. How does a lack of social health in society contribute to aggressive acts of prejudice toward other individuals or groups?
Lesson #5 – Social Interactions with Family, Friends, Loved ones, & Others

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. What are your key strengths in your social foundation?

2. What are your key deficiencies?

3. What are two things you can do to enhance your strong areas? To improve your weaknesses?

4. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Spirituality and Relationships

Spirituality: The Inner Quest for Well-Being

What does it mean to be able to achieve optimal well-being? For many of us, the difficult to describe element that gives meaning to life is the spiritual dimension. In general, spirituality can be defined as an individual's sense of purpose and meaning in life; extending beyond material values.

For many of us, we practice spirituality in many ways, including religion; however religion does not have to be part of a spiritual person's life. To achieve a sense of spirituality we are in essence also achieving spiritual health. Spiritual health refers to the sense of belonging to something greater than the purely physical or personal dimensions of existence. For some, this unifying force is nature; for others, it is a feeling of connection to their people; for still others, the unifying force is a god or other higher power.

On a day-to-day basis, many of us focus on acquiring material possessions and satisfying basic needs. But at some point, we eventually reach a point when we discover that material possessions do not automatically bring happiness or sense of self-worth. As we develop into spiritually healthy beings: we recognize our identity as unique individuals and gain a better appreciation of our strengths and shortcomings in the universe.

Self-Confidence and Serenity

Many of us attempt to satisfy our needs for belonging and self-esteem by acquiring material possessions. But at some point we come to realize that the new CD player, CD, shoes, sweat pants, or special brand of pudding cups don't necessarily make us happy or improve our sense of self-worth. Granted, it is very satisfying to receive such as described above but, when it is all said and done, each of those tangible items are temporary and do not define your sense of self-respect, or self-worth. When the tangible things don't necessarily improve our
sense of self-worth, that's when many of us begin to contemplate another side of ourselves: our spirituality.

The difficulty with defining spirituality is because spirituality represents different meanings to different people. Although part of the universal human experience, it's highly personal, not to mention intangible, and so it tends to defy the boundaries that strict definitions would impose. The root spirit, in many cultures, refers to breath, or the force that animates life. When you are "inspired," it is believed that your energy flows. You're not held back by doubts about the purpose or meaning of your work in your life. On the other hand, maybe you personally define your spirituality as a personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, relationships, and sense of meaning in life, beyond the trappings of material values.

**Spiritual Growth and Relationships**

Have you ever wondered if someone you were attracted to is really right for you? Or, conversely, if you should break off a long term relationship? Have you ever wished you had more friends, or that you were a better friend yourself? Have you ever tried to make a connection with some sort of presence or Higher self? For many people, such questions and yearnings are natural triggers for spiritual growth. As we contemplate whom we should choose as a life partner or how to mend an argument or quarrel with a friend or loved one, we begin to foster our own inner wisdom. At the same time, healthy relationships are a sign of spiritual well-being. When we treat ourselves and others with respect, honesty, integrity, and love, we are manifesting our spiritual health. Assessing our self-esteem and self-efficacy is an important component to building a healthy spiritual and intimate relationship with those we hold close to and dear to our heart.

As described earlier, self-esteem refers to the way we value or sense of self-respect or self-worth. Self-efficacy is the behavior of believing in ourselves in being able to successfully engage and execute a specific behavior. This becomes important to the interrelation to intimacy in a relationship because it tends to support we share in having personal values about ourselves and our intimate partner.

**Values**

Our personal values are our principles - not only the things we say we care about, but also the things that cause us to behave the way we do. For instance, if you value honesty, then you are likely to tell your wife what your day was really like when she asks "Hey honey how was your day?" Rather than make up a story and hide the fact that you and your friends did not go to work that day, instead you went fishing. In other words, our value system is the set of fundamental rules by which we conduct our lives. They are the principles for which we stand. When we attempt to clarify our values, and then live according to those values, we are engaging in spiritual work. Being spiritually balanced is characterized by having a strong personal value system.
Lesson #6– Spirituality and Relationships

Group Questionnaire Exercise

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. Analyze your spirituality and define what small things you can do everyday that can significantly impact the way you feel about yourself and loved ones.

2. How can building up your self-esteem improve relationships with others?

Lesson #6– Spirituality and Relationships

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.
1. Do you agree that a person with high self-esteem possesses feelings of self-respect and self-worth?

2. Discuss the importance of having self-respect and self-worth in a relationship.

3. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Managing Anger & the Toxic Relationship

The Four Myths of Anger

What is anger? To some, anger may represent a spontaneous, usually temporary, biological feeling or emotional state of displeasure that occurs most frequently during times of personal frustration. While to others, anger may represent a variety of ways to express intensity from mild irritation to rage. This may be acted out as cynicism (an unbelief, disbelief, distrust, or suspicion), sarcasm, intimidation, frustration, impatience, quick flaring of the temper, or anxiety. Anger is not however, a biochemical-determined event, instinctual in man, responsible for frustration leading to aggression, or a healthy form of ventilation.

Adapted from Dr. Victor Frankl, (Man's Search for Freedom)

- Myth 1: Anger is a biochemical event - Stimulation of the brain does not create an aggressive response unless the response was previously learned. For example, a child who is allowed to go to the movies following a tantrum learns to repeat the behavior. A spousal abuser learns to repeat the behavior when he/she interprets the abuse works and there are no consequences. And children's coping strategies for dealing with stress are acquired through modeling and imitating their parents.

- Myth 2: Anger and aggression are instinctual in man – Except for rare pathologies the genes do not produce individual's predisposed to violence. Throughout history, status within the group has been achieved by the ability to cooperate. We cry, relax, problem-solve, or get angry. We may be predisposed for alcoholism, but this does not guarantee alcoholism, nor provide an excuse to drink. It only provides information for life management strategies.
• Myth 3: Frustration leads to anger – Aggression is related to anger arousal plus thought. Frustration only occurs when an expectation, through a memory or wish, is not fulfilled. Men are not angered by mere misfortune but by misfortune perceived as injury. We learn to use anger to express frustration. However, there are many ways to express frustration - creatively, socially, spiritually, and existentially.

• Myth 4: It’s healthy to ventilate – People prone to dump their anger tend to get angrier, not less. Expressing feelings is different from ventilating anger and aggression. Relief from anger can be a learned activity.

Often, people who are taught not to express anger in public do not know how to handle it when it reaches a level where they can no longer hide it. Family background may be the most important factor. Typically, anger-prone people come from families that are disruptive, chaotic, and unskilled in emotional expression. It is important to understand that anger usually results when we feel we have lost control of a situation or are frustrated by a situation that we can do little about. You should have a plan in place whenever you feel an urge of negative anger rising. One example might be the plan I use: ESCAPES. The ESCAPES plan involves Expressing, Suppressing, Anger, by Pacifying Environmental, Stressors. This is only one of many individualized solutions to managing your anger in a negative or toxic relationship. You should keep in mind that expressing anger in an assertive rather than aggressive way is always healthier in a relationship.

**Character Disorders that Contribute to a Negative Relationship**

Without question toxic personalities can poison your life. Such people have psychological conditions where certain character traits are exaggerated and interfere in relationships. Usually such people lack insight into their thinking and are inflexible when they feel they have to deal with a crisis. Three most troublesome personality types in a relationship are:

• Passive aggressive - This type of personality frustrates a relationship with covert hostility, sneaky insults, and calculated inefficiency. This personality may be the most difficult to deal with. This person is negative and obstructionist. Nothing that anyone else says or does is good. This personality is moody, likes to see other people miserable, and gets pleasure from seeing someone else squirm. This person will push buttons to see how fast you react. **How do you cope?** First, keep cool. If you can, try to make an ally of this person. Don’t let this person see you get angry. It is a good bet that’s what the person wants. Reward them for behaving well. Give praise when appropriate. Walk away if it’s a no-win situation. Look for alternatives to solving problems.
- **Hysteric** - This type of personality over-dramatizes problems and makes minor ones into major ones. Acts as a victim. How do you cope? Do not buy into the drama. Reward the person each time he/she takes responsibility for their life.

- **Narcissist** – This type of personality tends to be in love with themselves. Wants the benefits of the relationship without having to work for it. He/She is manipulative and feels inferior. At the same time, the person is often arrogant and feels they are special and that others should treat them as being special. The think they know it all. How do you cope? First, if the person is truly a narcissist, don't expect to change them. You will be wasting your time and efforts. Second, set boundaries and limits. The narcissist is famous for dumping work onto others while they sit back and reap the benefit or credit. You can learn much from a narcissist in terms of how to handle others with confidence and style.

- **Sociopath** – This type of personality is the irresponsible charmer who seems to be without a conscience. The sociopath cons friends, partners, or significant other. How do you cope? Set boundaries and limits. Learn to recognize the difference between those who give without expectations and those who don't. Also, practices saying "No" until you feel comfortable.

- **Obsessive-Compulsive** – This type of personality tends to be caught up in the moment details. Loses sight of the overall picture and the main tasks that need to be done. Their thinking is in black-and-white terms. They have few people skills and are very critical of everyone and everything. How do you cope? First, don't get caught up in the perfectionist game. Just do your best. Also, don't beat up on yourself if you are not living up to the obsessive-compulsive standards. Remember that even if they are a perfectionist, you don't have to be.

**Cognitive Restructuring**

You may be wondering how cognitive restructuring interplays into the managing of anger and the toxic relationship. Well, because the focus of cognitive restructuring places emphasis on present-focused, and active strategies for coping with life's difficulties. Some of the principles involved with cognitive restructuring are:

- You are responsible for your own emotions and actions.
- Your harmful emotions and dysfunctional behaviors are the product of your irrational thinking.
- You can learn more realistic views and, with practice, make them a part of you.
- You'll experience a deeper acceptance of yourself and greater satisfactions in life by developing a reality-based perspective.
The Reality-Based Perspective

Building a reality-based perspective begins first with identifying you *must*. Once you have admitted that you distort your own emotions and actions, then determine precisely how. Usually the culprit lies in one of the three core *musts*.

1. Demand on self: “I must do well and get approval or else I am worthless.”
2. Demand on others: “You must treat me reasonable, considerately, and lovingly, or else you’re no good.”
3. Demand on situations: “Life must be fair, easy, and hassle-free, or else it’s awful.” This thinking is associated with hopelessness, procrastination, and addictions.

Anger Transformed in a Relationship

One of the ways that you might consider building a reality-based perspective is by finding ways to transform your anger. You can transform your anger creatively, socially, spiritually, and existentially (higher power).

- **Anger transformed creatively**
  Anger may be transformed creatively through artistic works, writing poems, short stories, journal writing, learning how to play an instrument, etc. When imagination is fueled and powered by anger, anything could happen.

- **Anger transformed socially**
  Anger may be transformed socially through positive activism and political struggle. Social interests and acts of altruism can also indirectly reduce one’s angry feelings.

- **Anger transformed spiritually**
  Anger may be transformed spiritually through experiences of prayer, meditation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We perceive that we are no longer alone in our efforts to control our anger, because we can turn to Divine inspiration according to our beliefs and traditions of faith. Anger gives way to praise.

- **Anger transformed existentially**
  Anger may be transformed existentially (higher power) with wisdom, serenity, and a higher purpose through enlightened acceptance, detachment and self-transcendence. Anger can awaken the defiant human spirit and propel one to heroic efforts in serving a cause greater than oneself.
Building a reality-based perspective is key to managing the intimacy in your relationship. Without having a strategy to propel you through the difficult and toxic periods, you are left with only temporary solutions to manage a lifetime of negative energy. Keep in mind that a relationship cannot endure successfully if only one person works to better the conditions of the relationship overall. To be complete, there must be a whole.

Lesson #7 – Managing Anger and the Toxic Relationship

Group Questionnaire Exercise

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. List separately five ways that you can creatively, socially, spiritually, and existentially, transform anger.

2. In your own words discuss how being in a toxic relationship can potentially lead to criminal relapse.
Lesson #7– Managing Anger and the Toxic Relationship

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Evaluate your own relationship history. Do you agree that anger is necessary in relationship?

2. Define *domestic violence* and describe why you think people stay in abusive relationships?

3. Describe how your past/present actions that contributed to a negative relationship.

4. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Developing Positive Relationships in Friendships, Partners, & Marriages

Characterizing and Forming Intimate Relationships

We can define intimate relationships in terms of four characteristics: behavioral interdependence, need fulfillment, emotional attachment, and emotional availability. Each of these characteristics may be related to interaction with family, close friends, and romantic partners.

Behavioral interdependence - refers to the mutual impact that people have on each other as their lives and daily activities intertwine. What one person does influences what the other person wants to do and can do. Behavioral interdependence may become stronger over time to the point that each person would feel a great void if the other person were gone.

Intimate relationships also fulfill psychological needs and are a means of need fulfillment. Through relationships with others, we fulfill our needs for:

- Intimacy – someone we can share our feelings with freely.
- Social integration – someone we can share our worries and concerns.
- Nurturance – someone we can take care of and who will take care of us.
- Assistance – someone we can turn to help us in times of need.
- Affirmation – someone who will reassure us of our own worth and tell us that we matter.

In intimate relationships that are mutually rewarding, partners and friends meet each other's needs. They disclose feelings, share confidences, and provide support and reassurance. Each person comes away from interactions feeling better for the experience and validated by the other person.

In addition to behavioral interdependence and need fulfillment, intimate relationships involve strong bonds of emotional attachment, or feelings of love. When we hear the word intimacy, we often think of a sexual relationship. Although sex can play an important role in emotional attachment, a relationship
can be very intimate and yet not sexual. Two people can be emotionally intimate (share feelings) or spiritually intimate (share spiritual beliefs and meanings), or they can be intimate friends. With such a range of possibilities, it would be difficult to judge the intimacy level of two people’s personal experience by those outside the relationship.

**Emotional availability**: the ability to give up and receive from others emotionally without fear of being hurt or rejected, is the fourth characteristic of intimate relationships. At times, all of us may limit our emotional availability. For example, I’m sure that there are many of us who have experienced a break-up while in prison or on the outside of prison. This may have been a painful break-up and we decided that we would not jump into another relationship immediately, or we have held back from talking to our friends about the break-up. Holding back can offer time for introspection and healing, as well as for considering lessons learned. However, some people who have experienced intense trauma find it difficult ever to be fully available emotionally. This limits their availability to experience true intimate relationships.

**Accountability and Self-Nurturance**

You have probably heard the notion that you must love yourself before you can love someone else. What does this mean? Learning how you function emotionally and how you nurture yourself through all of life’s situations is a lifelong task. This is not suggesting that you postpone intimate connections with others until you achieve this state. However, a certain level of individual maturity helps in maintaining a committed relationship.

Two concepts that are especially important to any good relationship are accountability and self-nurturance. Accountability means that both partners see themselves as responsible for their own decisions, choices, and actions. They don’t hold the other person responsible for positive or negative experiences. Self-nurturance, which goes hand in hand with accountability, means developing individual potential through a balanced and realistic appreciation of self-worth and ability. To make good choices in life, a person must balance many physical and emotional needs. When the balance is disrupted, as you can expect it to be at times, self-nurturing people are patient with themselves and try to put things back on course. Sometimes it can take a person the better part of their years before they learn to live in a balanced and healthy way. Partners who are both on a path of accountability and self-nurturance are suited for much better chance of maintaining a satisfying relationship with each other. The key is to believe in your relationship. When you believe in each other the benefit comes from knowing that you relationship is unconditional. You will find true reward when you and your partner accept the work necessary to maintaining a healthy intimate relationship balance.

**Effective Communication**

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In every relationship we struggle to be understood. We may flail our arms, cry, scream, smile, and make sounds and gestures to attract attention, or get a reaction from someone we care about, or have someone understand what we want or need from him/her. Each of us develop our own unique way of communicating to others, whether it is with gestures, words, expressions, or body positions. Communication is essential to a meaningful relationship. Effective communication includes the way you define yourself (self-concept) and the way you evaluate yourself (self-esteem).

Your self-concept is like a mental mirror that reflects how you view your physical features, emotional states, talents, likes, and dislikes values and roles. Are you a father, mother, an activist, a music lover? How you define yourself is your self-concept. How you feel about yourself or evaluate yourself constitutes your self-esteem. Self-perceptions influence communication choices. If you feel unattractive, uncomfortable, or inferior to others, you may choose not to interact with them or to avoid social settings. If you are self-conscious and ill at ease around people who seem different, you might avoid or be suspicious of them. On the other hand, if you are secure about your unique characteristics and talents, that positive self-concept will make it easier to interact with a variety of people in a healthy, balanced way.

Relationship communication is very unique as well. Being positive, happy, and able to share openly with your partner is an important skill in relationships. Being assertive in your relationship communication will show your partner that you are in touch with your feelings and values, and can communicate the relationship needs directly and honestly when defending choices in a positive manner. Like the building of a relationship, communication in that given relationship also takes time to develop effectively. Being able to communicate and listen to what your partner is saying becomes a vital part of interpersonal communication. You and your partner should feel comfortable with being able to express shared feelings, concerns, wants and needs, and your intimate thoughts and valued opinions. Communication is Key to a lasting, and enduring loving intimate friendship and partnership.

**Three Pillars of a Healthy Intimate Relationship**

What defines a healthy intimate relationship? For me, it is friendship, passion, and love. So, how do we get there? We began by establishing the friendship. Good friends - they can make a boring day fun, a cold day warm, or a gut wrenching worry disappear. They can make us feel that we matter and that we have the strength to get through just about anything. They can also make us angry, disappoint us, or seriously jolt our ideas about right and wrong. They may even get us to see ourselves for who we truly are and be truthful to our delusional thoughts of charm and wisdom.

What is a friendship? Friendships are relationships. They exist between two or more people that involve mutual respect, trust, support, and intimacy that may or may not include sexual intimacy. This Pillar of a healthy intimate relationship is
based on the simple idea that we like people who like us. In a friendship, we want to feel comfortable in being able to share confidences, contribute fairly and equally to maintaining the friendship all the while consistently trying to give back as much we can from the interaction.

Next, is passion. How do we define passion within the friendship of a relationship? Passion exists in the friendship when two people are so smitten with one another that they are consumed by the very thought of that person's existence. The friendship becomes characterized by the euphoric natural high that occurs when the attraction is transformed chemically through an intimate chemistry of romantic perception and feelings. This is the connecting Pillar to a healthy intimate relationship.

Last, we have this thing called love. Most everyone living can identify with this Pillar. For each of us, love, will mean something different and represent an individual component of what we feel from the euphoric effects of being filled with a sense of passion for our desired relationship partner. Many novels, movies, plays, and songs, have been written about love. Love however, cannot be narrowed to single definition. There are a number of theories about love. Some may seem academic while others may be represented by ideologies of ancient theorists and philosophers. Whatever the meaning, theory, position, or idea, it all boils down to the individual experience of each person.

For me, I knew I was in love with my wife when she made me smile from halfway around the world. Love for me is the precious moments experienced and expressed by you and your partner even in the darkest moments of life, or when you are waking up at 2:30 a.m. just to glimpse the shimmering glow of the moon peeking through the crack of your film covered window. Knowing that she is the moon in your life, you are her sun. The experience of thought, writing your thoughts down in your journal, and always closing your journal entry with "One love, Only love." Or finding yourself anxiously awaiting a visit from the one you love, standing on the stool of your cell desk, waiting to catch a glimpse of the woman who drives six hours every third week to visit you. Realizing that the greatest sacrifice she's made was to leave her life behind oceans away simply to make a life with you. Yes, love is greatest of all Pillars of a healthy intimate relationship. You can't find it by looking for it. True love will find you.

**Techniques for a Long Lasting Relationship**

- Good, clear communications are basic, as are the willingness to work through arguments, fights, or other emotions.
- Continue to treat your partner like your best friend.
- Hold your marriage (relationship) primary even if it means saying "No" to worthy persons and causes occasionally.
- Have fun and laugh together often.
- Remember that a loving relationship grows, develops, changes, and evolves.
• Make time for each other; and just each other, for emotional and spiritual renewal.
• Always be mindful that a loving relationship ultimately transcends everything we know about it.

Lesson #8– Developing Positive Relationships in Friendships, Partnerships, & Marriages

Group Questionnaire Exercise

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. Examine one of your current friendships. What characteristics can you identify in that relationship that keeps your friendship intact?
Lesson #8 – Developing Positive Relationships in Friendships, Partnerships, & Marriages

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Why are the four characteristics of an intimate relationship important in relationship development? Who is your strongest relationship with?

2. List five actions or behaviors that result in a positive relationship.

3. Do you think communication is important in a positive relationship? Justify your answer.

4. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Finding Sense of Purpose in Your Life

Balance Through Meaning & Harmony

Life with meaning is to live with a need to survive, to love, and be loved, to feel important, and to have variety. When these are not met, we often resort to addictive and violent behaviors to fill the void. But even when all these needs have been satisfied, what then? Purpose is not enough. Human beings need meaning too.

In the schools of Viennese psychotherapy, Dr. Sigmund Freud believed that human behavior is driven by the desire for pleasure. Dr. Alfred Adler believed that we are driven by the desire for power and prosperity. We do act to find pleasure and to achieve power, but pleasure is a by-product of having done something meaningful, and using it in a meaningful way attains power. Meaning, noted by Dr. Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*, is the ultimate goal. He said that when we lack meaning, we feel emptiness. Our temptation is to vicariously fill that void with pleasure, power, or prosperity. Meaning cannot be taught. It cannot be given. Frankl noted that it must be lived by doing and discovering.

Logotherapy, or health through meaning, is a life philosophy with emphasis on the reality of the spiritual. The spirit is assumed to supply those resources that maintain health and can help restore health to the ill. The spiritual dimension is assumed to include our will to meaning, creativity, and orientation towards goals, imagination, a conscience, and a capacity for commitment, ideals, responsibility, self-transcendent potentials, and the ability to choose freely. When we lack meaning in our life, we experience an emptiness that often leads to self-despair depression, and lack of self-worth. Three central points to logotherapy are:

- Life has meaning under all circumstances
- Everyone has a will toward meaning
- Human beings have freedom of choice, over attitudes, even if over nothing else.

This is logotherapy in action.
Man’s Search for Meaning & the Pursuit of Meaning

“Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible.” (Man’s Search for Meaning)

In the Pursuit of Meaning Frankl believed suffering can lead to growth. He did not encourage it, noting that needless suffering is merely masochistic, but he suggested finding meaning in suffering. Our attitude remains under our own control, even when our life circumstances are not. Suffering has meaning, in Frankl’s view, “if it changes the sufferer for the better.” Frankl saw life’s purpose as self-transcendence (becoming more) rather than self-actualization (which he sees as allowing what one is). “...happiness, contentment, peace of mind and self-actualization are mere side products in the search for meaning.” (Pursuit of Meaning). In this process, we may confront conflicts between values.

In achieving meaning and harmony in your life, Frankl composed four steps to taking a therapeutic approach that anyone can practice on their individual path to human understanding.

Step 1: You are not your inferiority complexes, depressions, or whatever. You are a survivor, not a helpless victim. You always have choices, even if only choices of attitude. Therefore, make choices, take steps – no matter how small, accept responsibilities and commitments, and make changes.

Step 2: Once you have gained some distance from your symptoms, it becomes easier. Now is the time to discover your purpose. What gives meaning to your life – labor, physical work, music, writing, speaking, or creating?

Step 3: With the disappearance or reduction of your symptom(s) and empowered with new attitudes, what had appeared unbearable now seems manageable. Obtain feedback from others about your attitude shift that helps solidify the changes.

Step 4: To enhance future health, write or discuss potential meaning in your life and particular situations. Learn to accept responsibility. Look for meanings in your world and circumstances in order to cope more effectively with the world.

Finding sense of purpose in your life will lead you down many unchartered paths of human understanding. Preparing for your journey will lead you through many choices to be present in the moment, choices that will give your life meaning. On your journey, it is important to remember the tragic triad that remains
unavoidable suffering or fate: death, guilt, and unavoidable pain. It is not so much what happens to us that counts however, but the attitudes we take toward what happens to us. It is useless to ask why things happened to us; the useful approach is to ask what we can do in the situation in which we find ourselves.

Lesson #9—Balance through Meaning & Harmony

Group Questionnaire Exercise

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. What gives meaning to your life?

2. How do the choices you make reflect what you hold as your purpose in life?
Lesson #9 – Balance through Meaning & Harmony

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Why is it important to cultivate meaning and harmony in your life?

2. Describe how becoming a more loving person can bring you greater self-confidence and serenity.

3. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
A Healthy You

Personality: The Unique Characteristics that Distinguish You from Others

What is your personality? Personality is defined by the unique characteristics of heredity, environment, culture, and experience which influences the way each person develops. Personality determines how we react to the challenges of life, interpret our feelings, and resolve conflicts.

Most of the recent schools of psychological theory promote the idea that we have the power not only to understand our behavior, but also change it and mold our own personalities. Although much has been written about the importance of healthy personality, there is little consensus on what that concept really means. In general, people who possess traits of healthy personalities tend to be psychosocially healthy overall. According to M. Seligman in Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life (1998), six traits are present in a psychosocially healthy person:

1. **Extroversion**, the ability to adapt to a social situation and demonstrate assertiveness as power or interpersonal involvement.

2. **Agreeableness**, the ability to conform, be likable, and demonstrate friendly compliance as well as love.

3. **Openness to experience**, the willingness to demonstrate curiosity and independence (also referred to as inquiring intellect).

4. **Emotional stability**, the ability to maintain social control.

5. **Conscientiousness**, the qualities of being dependable and demonstrating self-control, discipline, and a need to achieve.

6. **Resiliency**, the ability to adapt to change and stressful events in healthy and flexible ways
Learned Helplessness versus Learned Optimism

At first glance, this may appear to be a riddle or tongue twisters to the many that have no idea what learned helplessness or learned optimism are. To those who are familiar with the two, it serves to be reminded that when we give up taking any action to help ourselves, we have developed a pattern of learned helplessness. Psychologist Martin Seligman has proposed that people who continually experience failure may develop a pattern of responding known as learned helplessness, in which they give up and fail to take any action to help themselves. Dr. Seligman ascribes this response in part to society’s tendency toward victimology, blaming one’s problems on other people and circumstances (M. Seligman and C. Peterson, “Learned Helplessness” (2002)). Although viewing ourselves as victims may make us feel better temporarily, it does not address the underlying causes of the problem. Ultimately, it can erode self-efficacy and foster learned helplessness by making us feel that we cannot do anything to improve the situation.

The opposite of learned helplessness is learned optimism. Learned optimism is teaching oneself to think positively. An example of learned optimism at work can be seen in the workings of self-help programs that utilize elements of Seligman’s principle of learned optimism. Foundational to these self-help programs is the thought that just as we learn to be helpless, so can we teach ourselves to be optimistic. By changing our self-talk, examining our reactions and the way we assess what happens to us in life, and blocking negative thoughts, we can “unlearn” negative thought processes that have become habitual. In developing a healthy being, we need to recognize that often we are our own worst critics. There is nothing wrong with accepting praise from others and learning to be kinder to ourselves. Even if the road we take to get there is difficult.

Psychosocial Health & You

Psychosocial health encompasses the emotional, psychological, mental, and spiritual dimensions of what it means to be healthy. Possessing strength and resiliency in these dimensions can maintain your overall well-being and help you weather the storms of your life. Characteristics shared by psychosocially healthy people are:

- **They feel good about themselves.** They typically are not overwhelmed by fear, love, anger, jealousy, guilt, or worry. They know who they are, have a realistic sense of their capabilities, and respect themselves even though they realize they are not perfect.

- **They feel comfortable with other people.** They enjoy satisfying and lasting personal relationships and do not take advantage of others or allow others to take advantage of them. They recognize that there are others
whose needs are greater than their own. The can give love, consider others’ interests, take time to help others, respect personal differences, and feel responsible for their fellow human beings.

- **They control tension and anxiety.** They recognize the underlying causes and symptoms of stress in their lives and consciously avoid irrational thoughts of hostility, excessive excuse making, and blaming others for their problems. They use the resources and learn skills to control reactions to stressful situations.

- **They meet the demands of life.** They try to solve problems as they arise, accept responsibility, and plan ahead. They set realistic goals, think for themselves, and make independent decisions. Acknowledging that change is inevitable, they welcome new experiences.

- **They curb hate and guilt.** They acknowledge and combat tendencies to respond with anger, thoughtlessness, selfishness, vengeful acts, or feelings of inadequacy. They do not try to knock others aside to get ahead but rather reach out to help others - even people they don't particularly like.

- **They value diversity.** They do not feel threatened by people of a different race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or political party. They are non-judgmental and do not force their beliefs and values on others.

- **They enrich the lives of others.** They “tune in,” and rather than being narcissistic and self-serving, they often think of others needs and try to help whenever possible.

**Maslow’s Theory: Hierarchy of Needs**

In 1960 human theorist Abraham Maslow developed a **hierarchy of needs** to describe this idea. Maslow theorized that a persons’ needs must be met at designated levels before that person can truly be healthy. Maslow’s theory included the following:

1. First level is the bottom level. This level identifies basic **survival needs**, such as food, water, sleep, exercise, and sexual expression.
2. Second level identifies **security needs**, such as shelter, safety, and protection.
3. Third level identifies **social needs**, such as a sense of belonging, affection, and acceptance.
4. Fourth level identifies **esteem needs**, such as self-respect, respect for others, and acceptance.
5. Fifth level and top level. This level identifies *self-actualization* needs, such as creativity, spirituality, and fulfillment of potential.

Maslow's theory centered on the basis that when a person fails to meet one of the lower levels of needs, failing to meet those lower level needs will interfere with a person addressing the upper level of needs. Maslow believed that people are more likely to behave badly if they are frustrated by a lack of need fulfillment.

In the end, whether you agree with Maslow's theory or not, regardless of life's challenges, how we feel and think about ourselves, those around us, and our environment, can tell us a lot about our psychosocial health and whether we are healthy emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. Being emotionally and mentally healthy and developing spiritual capacity doesn't just add years to your life. It promotes balance in life and puts life into years.

Lesson #10– A Healthy You

Group Questionnaire Exercise

**DISCUSSION EXERCISE:** Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.

1. What factors affect your psychosocial health?

2. Discuss the positive steps you can take to enhance your psychosocial health.
Lesson #10- A Healthy You

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Assess Maslow's theory. Do you agree with Maslow's assessment that people behave badly socially when their needs are not being met? Justify your answer.

2. Describe why a mentally healthy person is likely to respond to life's challenges constructively.

3. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Right Thought - Right Action

Altruism: Selfless Service to Others

Altruism is the giving of oneself out of genuine concern for others. Altruism is a key aspect of a spiritually healthy lifestyle. Volunteering to help others, choosing to work for a non-profit organization, donating money or other resources to a food bank or other program - even spending an afternoon picking up litter in your neighborhood, volunteering to paint a elderly person's home, or working in a community soup kitchen; all of these are ways to serve others and simultaneously enhance your own spiritual health.

If you are in prison, maybe some of the ways you can provide service to others might be teaching someone to read, helping someone to pass their GED exam, or by simply extending yourself as a person that your friends or peers can turn to in time of need. Maybe the person could use a shoulder to lean on, or someone to express their feelings of despair, loneliness, or hardship with kicking a drug/alcohol habit. Whatever the reason, being available to others can be a rewarding experience and fulfilling way to broaden your experiences, connect with your environment or community, and focus on your spiritual health.

Recognizing that we are all part of a greater system and that we have responsibilities to and for others is a key part of spiritual growth and development. Volunteering your time and energy is a great way to connect with others and helps make the world a better place while improving your own health and sense of life balance.

Qualities of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice of focused, non-judgmental, observation, in which we are fully present in the moment. Have you ever been in the moment when you have “forgotten yourself” while watching the sun set over a mountain or ocean, or while you were listening to one of your favorite songs, or even when performing a challenging task. Then you have experienced a moment of mindfulness. In other words, mindfulness is an awareness of present-moment reality - a holistic
sensation of being totally involved in the moment rather than focused on some past worry or future event.

So how do you practice mindfulness? The range of opportunities is as infinite as the moments of our everyday lives. Essentially, living mindfully means that you make more of your ordinary moments notable and noteworthy by taking note of them. An example of practicing mindfulness might be seen in the way a person would eat an orange. Before you eat the orange you train your mind to become one in the moment in the process of eating the orange. You feel the orange. You smell the orange scent as you think of eating the orange. What does the orange feel like to be pierced by your thumbnail? Do you smell the fragrance of the orange as you peel it? What does the rind really look like? How do the drops of juice splatter as you separate the orange from the skin in segments? And finally, what does it taste like, and how does the taste change from the very first bite to the last?

Pursuing almost any endeavor that requires close concentration can help you develop mindfulness. Things such as thinking of a physical and mental challenge can foster mindfulness. Or even the simple action of walking across the grass. Taking each step with a purpose and being mindful of how the grass and dirt come into being with each step of your foot touching the blades as you walk. The idea behind being mindful is paying attention while in the moment. Being in a mindful state is being in balance with life.

**Meditation: The Practice of Empty Mind**

Meditation is the practice of emptying the mind, cultivating stillness. The fundamental task of meditation is to quiet the chatter of the “monkey mind.” This represents the static or chattering which in our mind is always in movement. Why would you want to cultivate the stillness of meditation? For thousands of years, human beings of different cultures and traditions have found that achieving periods of meditative stillness each day enhances their spiritual health. Meditation is also another way to cultivate empathy, the ability to understand and share another person’s experience. Meditation also increases the capacity for forgiveness. Meditation can be achieved through different schools of empty thought-empty mind. For example:

- **Mantra meditation.** This method is a focus on *mantra*, a single word such as *OM, Amen, Love,* or *God.* Keep repeating this word silently to yourself. When a distracting thought arises, simply set it aside. It may help to imagine the thought as a leaf, and mentally place it on a gently flowing stream that carries it away. Do not fault yourself for becoming distracted. Simply notice the thought, release it, and return to your mantra.

- **Breathe meditation.** Count each breath: pay attention to each inhalation, the brief pause that follows, and the exhalation. Together, these equal one
breath. When you have counted to ten breaths, return to one. As with mantra meditation, as distractions arise, release them and return to your breath.

- **Color Meditation.** When your eyes are closed, you may perceive a field of color, such as a deep blue "pearl" or "flame." Focus on this color. Treat distractions the same way you would with other forms of meditation.

- **Object meditation.** With your eyes open, focus on an object, such as a picture of a religious symbol or figure, or even just a flower or stone. Allow your eyes to soften as you meditate on this object. Treat distractions the same way you would with other forms of meditation.

- **Loving-kindness meditation.** Send yourself loving-kindness. Once you feel enveloped in this embrace, send loving-kindness to family members, friends, and loved ones in your life. You can follow this with sending loving-kindness to friends, and acquaintances, then to strangers, then to those you may ever perceived as your enemies, and finally to all sentient (conscious living) beings.

There are many different forms of meditation. Most involve sitting quietly for 15-20 minutes, focusing on a particular word or symbol, controlling breathing, and getting in touch with the inner-self. Practiced by Eastern religions for centuries, meditation is believed to be an important tool; it can calm the body and quiet the mind, creating a sense of peace.

As a meditative technique, it provides the person the ability to be fully present in the moment. The benefits gained from meditation can aid relaxation; reduce emotional and physical pain; and help us to connect more effectively with ourselves, with others, and our environment. Overall, meditation is the practice of giving life to life.

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**Lesson #11– Right Thought – Right Action**

**Group Questionnaire Exercise**

DISCUSSION EXERCISE: Reflect on the questions below. In group discussion, take an active role in presenting your view and thoughts to the questions below. Write your answers down as they materialize within the group discussion.
1. How have you accepted total responsibility for the choices you made in building your life?

2. Do you believe that forgiveness should be expressed to those whose missteps have affected you?

3. Describe a situation where you readily expressed forgiveness to someone whose missteps have affected you.
Lesson #11 Right Thought – Right Action

Cell Study: What do you think?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: Answer the below questions. Write down your responses in the space provided. Use extra paper if needed and number your responses.

1. Think of a person in your life that has experienced suffering as a result of your actions. Spend a few minutes contemplating forgiveness toward this person, and then write him/her a letter apologizing for any offenses you may have given and offering your forgiveness in return. Wait a day or two before deciding whether or not you are truly ready to send your message. Record this experience in your journal.

2. What are some things you can do to help others through the acts of selfless service?

3. Journal entry: What did I learn today?
Freedom of Choice

Rehabilitation through Regeneration

CONGRATULATIONS! You have reached the end of the Positive Interventions program. The journey you have taken has been long, at times challenging, and very insightful. By now, you have learned that the definition of the quality of life is not how long we live, but how well we live by applying a positive, productive, attitude toward life; living it to the fullest. This means that you have learned basic steps to function at the optimal level in all the dimensions of wellness.

Finding balance in your life requires each person to simply let go of their past negative identities and began fresh. So, what does this mean? YOU have to want to live a healthy and balanced life. This may take you to levels of your personal growth that might surprise you. You have to find something or someone you truly believe in and use that as a key to building your healthy living. Have you reached that point in your life that allows you to cultivate forgiveness for the negative things you did in your past? Are you at that point in your life where you can acknowledge the significant suffering brought onto others because of your poor choices and examples?

With acknowledging your growth, you further accept that it is okay to let go, and forgive past abusers. You accept that your actions are yours alone. Taking responsibility without diminishing or minimizing your culpability allows for the building of a positive self. In building your life, you accept that self-assessment has opened your mind and heart to recognize that building your life positively, requires you to put your life into perspective and begin building on a process of personal atonement to yourself. Having put your life into perspective, you are then able to reflect on the person you were prior to making a decision to change your behavior and attitudes.

You accept that it is difficult to let go and readily express forgiveness toward those whose missteps have affected you. You began to see the value of your positive change and stop blaming others for your perceived injustices. Your self-assessment has further allowed you to put into perspective a recognition that you
need to work on feeling gratitude for the many blessings in your life; rather than blame others who may lack acknowledgement of you in their lives. You have come to understand you are owed nothing.

Your path to goodness allows you to find a self-balance through peace and serenity. The choice to be free in the moment is yours alone. You choose to be free with having a deeper introspection into the sacrifices your loved ones have made for you, you commit to being better than you were.

To live a happy and productive pro-social life, you have recognized the importance of letting go of your mask of so many years and discover your true positive potential. In this recognition of your growth, you began to appreciate the acts of someone believing in you, and loving you unconditionally. You have questioned yourself on what you can do to be a better husband/wife, father/mother, brother/sister, etc.,

Your body is warmed with a feeling of humbled joy knowing that there are people in your life who BELIEVE in you. Making poor choices is no longer a part of your life. You have chosen to become a good moral person of character; giving up the pains of past unresolved anger and frustration.

You have reached a point in your life where you understand the value of what it means to have remorse and empathy for all those people who have suffered and been affected by your past negative actions. You have welcomed the freedom of being able to be flexible in your thinking, actions, and behavior.

You have learned to value a behavior plan that includes valuing diversity, and respecting others’ rights irrespective of culture, race, sexual orientation, religion, or other differences. You have welcomed the challenge of building your life skills in the efforts to take steps to manage the important aspects of your life.

You will know when you have changed, when others begin to trust you and have confidence in your willingness to change. Your rehabilitation through regeneration will be complete when you have been able to effectively reconnect with yourself, your family, and society.

More to the point, you will know how successful your change has become when you can wake up to a new day, look into your reflection and find peace, love, and appreciation in the image reflecting back on you; your true self, the real you...

**Freedom Comes About One Day at a Time**

You have learned that there is no such thing as freedom all by itself. Freedom is always preceded by responsibility; they are connected to one another. It is a mistake to pursue freedom without consideration of responsibility. As for the pursuit of happiness, the more we make it a target, the more widely we miss it.
Happiness is, and will always remain, the unintended effect of meaningful activity.

Healthy human motivation is more than the pleasure principle, more than the striving of superiority. These are only degenerated, neurotic forms of existence. However, in the healthy human in us, there is a will to meaning and it is this that sets man apart from animals. To be human is to strive for something outside of ourselves. Self-transcendence describes this quality behind the will to meaning, the grasping for something or someone outside oneself.

We are made to turn outward, toward another human being to whom we can love and give ourselves. Only in such a way do we demonstrate ourselves to be truly human. Only when in service of another does a person truly know his or her humanity. We have humbly come to accept without reservation in our personal journey, that the path to human understanding comes about one day at a time... only through being free.