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NOV/DEC 2022

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Bryan Ashlee Dymond Shawn Mark Tessa Paul Jimmie
Kyran Kashyon JEFF Chester Brandi Bianca SAHU David
Paul David Christopher Chad Anthony Mike Lathan
Gilly Jan Edwin Greg Dorian Larry Shawn Robert
JAKE Leon Jennifer Luke Scott CHRISTINA Gary TJR. Ramon
Angela Marie L.J. Victoria Jeremiah Marcus Jonathan Jenie Mick
Jacob Tammy Karin Bug Kaycee RYAN Chanel Julie
Keith Nights Erica Samantha Gregory Daniel Shawna Levi
Lamarz Shane Anthony George Wendys Bryan - Cleo -
Tricia Brandon Elena Raren Beau Samantha Rabbit
Lashanda Jim Brian Sherbert Daniel Janell Nicholas
Brandon Mariah Sean FELIX Jonathan LEX Adam
VERNON Reggie CHURCH Michael Desmond James



We believe each one of us has the potential to shine light wherever we are, regardless of our circumstances. Through human connection, creativity, and mutual learning, we can unlock this potential in ourselves and maintain - even brighten - that light in ourselves and in our community. The more lights in the room, the brighter the collective light can shine, until the whole environment of prison is changed from the inside out.

The Loop is more than a magazine; it's how our community of light bearers communicates with each other. It's a source of belonging to something positive, creative inspiration, a reminder that we're not alone, a push to keep going, and a compass to guide the way. It can even be a touchpoint for meaningful connection with loved ones! *(Every issue can be viewed online at shining-light.com/the-loop)*

If you are new to The Loop, we'd love to consider you part of the Shining Light community. One way is to "subscribe" by sending in the card on the back, so you can start receiving your own (free!) copy with your name on it. And when you're ready to join in our ongoing conversation, know that we're always glad to hear from you!

It is you - the readers and contributors - who make The Loop so special. Your stories of engagement with exercises and the impact it is having, your creativity and insight, and your willingness to invite your peers to subscribe, is what keeps momentum going.

We are selective in what we publish, however. As a community focused on unlocking the potential for good in each other, and even in the environments and systems we find ourselves in, all content is filtered through the "Community Codes" we seek to live by. These codes are sent to everyone who requests a copy of The Loop, and we encourage readers to refer to them often.

In addition, please review these guidelines so you know what we're looking for:



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- We will credit contributions with first name, last initial, and state, unless you clearly indicate otherwise.
- If you write anything in a letter that you do NOT want to be shared in The Loop or other Shining Light communications, please note that clearly.
- We reserve the right to edit your contribution as needed to fit space and/or theme.

CONTENT

- Submissions should have a positive intention, which may include creative expression, encouraging words, or a constructive release of negative emotion.
- Remember to be inclusive of people of all faiths and backgrounds.
- Avoid details of your case and keep criticism of the institution/DOC constructive, focused on ways to create something better.

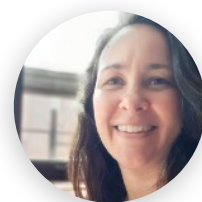
FORMATTING

- Write as legibly as possible (or type) so we can all read what you wrote!
- If possible, submit artwork and writings on blank paper.
- Be concise. Featured writings must fit legibly on 1 page. Responses to activities, questions, prompts, etc should be limited to a short paragraph or two so we can include more people!

PLEASE NOTE: We are limited in the practical services we can provide at this time, and therefore cannot fulfill requests for legal or reentry support, penpal relationships, or assistance with publishing creative work.

WELCOME, READERS!

IN THIS ISSUE: As human beings, we are wired for connection with one another. And one thing that makes those connections safe, positive, and meaningful is **SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE**. Some call it “reading people” or “street smarts,” or my favorite “Spidey sense,” but basically it means being aware of the feelings and motives of others, and responding accordingly. It is essential for maintaining personal safety in threatening situations, but it is also necessary for improving the quality of relationships and navigating everyday interactions at work, school, social groups, etc.



Kelly
PROGRAM
DIRECTOR

The cover of this edition is simply a list of 126 actual signatures of incarcerated readers who have submitted writings or artwork to the Loop in the last six months. It represents the human connection we share together. “The Loop” is all of us - a super diverse mix of thousands of individuals across 36 states, learning what it means to be our best selves in community with others. Whether we know it or not, social intelligence plays a big part into how we interact.

For many, the holiday season brings more opportunities for using social intelligence than normal, which Ms. Naomi addresses on page 6. (More words of encouragement from fellow readers are also spread throughout.) On page 7, the Horton Brothers share the use of this strength as it relates to reentry preparation. And page 16 breaks down five things you can do to develop this strength right here and now.

Many thanks to the 43 readers who submitted artwork, writings and other responses to this issue! Please keep it coming - we love hearing from you! 😊



If you have an idea for cover art, please send it in! Next edition's theme is on the back page!

I read every months newsletters from beginning to end. I was overwhelmed with a feeling of hope & I found out something about myself I never knew. I can be better than I ever was before & I can do what I never thought possible. I can change, Im not worthless. Im not a lost cause. Im somebody & I finally have the courage & the determination & the vision to actually go be it. The peoples stories & their triumphs were inspiring.

Leon (OH)

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Look for the  that notes the various prompts and activities.

Then write to us about your experience so we can keep the conversation going!

TO: YOU
FROM: JEFF

Greetings to everyone in The Loop community! Welcome to new subscribers from Maryland, Oklahoma, and a variety of other new prisons. We are excited to share that people in prisons in 37 states are now receiving The Loop on tablet or in print.

We are hearing stories about how The Loop is encouraging people to discover and build on their strengths, becoming positive contributors to communities, even in prison. To keep expanding this grassroots movement, we too have had to exercise our strengths in new ways to find more financial resources. As we do that, we are seeing people inside and outside of prison are stepping up to help:

The Protestant church in the Pennsylvania state prison SCI Dallas recently contributed over \$400 to support our work. This is especially significant considering the average wage in PA prisons is only \$.24/hour. That equates to men's pay for over 1,600 hours of work being dedicated to the Shining Light community. Thank you to all who took part!

At a fund-raising event in Brooklyn, NY, our whole staff - including the formerly-incarcerated Horton brothers and Ms. Naomi - shared about the need for funds to help bring positive change to prisons. Someone in the audience was greatly inspired to take action and gave us our first \$1,000,000 donation! This gift is spread over four years, giving us a larger financial foundation upon which to build long-term.

Even contributions of this size are small compared to the impact all of you can have in your prison community or on release. We are receiving many reports of good things happening when people put the suggestions in The Loop into action. What is especially effective is when several people gather to talk about these topics and try some new practices together. Informal and formal "Loop Groups" are gathering to regularly discuss The Loop's content and discover what might be most applicable to them.

The topic of this edition is especially pertinent because Social Intelligence is vital in bringing positive change to your community in prison or anywhere. Because Social Intelligence is a strength that is often well-developed through the demands of prison life, it can be a tremendous asset to you. We have been amazed by what people can do in prison or on release when they use their strengths to overcome challenging obstacles. *(Read Kurt's story on page 12 to hear how he is building on his experience with Shining Light and many other opportunities he embraced during his 24 years in prison. He told us in 2018 that he was going to take the light we -and God-brought into his life and start a forest fire with it. Two years after his release, he is doing it!)*



Jeff

**FOUNDER &
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Our team at the fundraising event in Brooklyn

There are a lot of people out here cheering for you and valuing the importance of those everyday ways you can support one another. What can you do? A kind word or deed for someone, a listening ear, a step back from a situation? Maybe share The Loop with others, or even start a group to discuss it together! Use your Social Intelligence, and together, we can make a positive difference in this world.

PROGRAM UPDATES



SL ACADEMY

NORTH DAKOTA: Five men at JRCC showed their creativity, bravery, honesty, and love as they performed their spoken word pieces for peers, administrators, SL staff, and even some family last month. The performance was recorded, with DVDs sent to loved ones.

BELMONT CI (OH): As the third Academy cohort begins their Foundations Course, graduates of the previous two cohorts will be meeting weekly as a “Loop Group” as a way to continue supporting each other in unlocking their potential.



TABLETS

If you have Edovo, keep an eye out for the next video series “Character Development” coming soon! This is another conversational-style series (featuring Freedom Horton and SL alum Marcus Suarez), building on the “Learn Your Strengths” Lab released in September. It is designed specifically for those in prison settings to learn new tools and strengthen old ones, for the sake of personal and relational growth.

*Remember, if you take these courses and write to us with your responses, we’ll send you feedback and a certificate of completion!

THE HOLIDAYS OFTEN ARE NOT EASY TO NAVIGATE. HOLIDAYS LOCKED UP, THAT MUCH WORSE. THE TOOLS OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE ARE USED EVERY DAY, EVERY TIME WE INTERACT WITH SOMEONE. THE WAY SOMEONE “READS” OFTEN TELLS US HOW WE SHOULD BE WITH THEM OR AROUND THEM. THIS HOLIDAY THAT SAME SKILL COULD BE USED TO REACH OUT A HAND OR A SMILE, THAT LITTLE COULD BE THE BEST GIFT SOME ONE GETS THIS YEAR, THE GIFT OF FRIENDLINESS, OF KNOWING SOMEONE SEES YOU.

JAKE (ND)



WINTER ARTS COLAB

The 2022-23 Winter Arts CoLab is officially underway, with 25 readers of “The Loop” connected with outside mentors to develop original poems, short stories, songs and more. Participants are eager to improve their writing skills while being challenged to explore new creative ways to communicate messages of love, hope, honesty and perspective to others.

Real Talk



Naomi

PROGRAM CONSULTANT
COMMUTED LIFER
COMMUTATION SPECIALIST

I feel like social intelligence is really common sense. Use your common sense and see what is happening around you. A lot of people on the inside already use social intelligence and just don't know the name for it. You know when people are happy or sad. You can tell from their body language.

This is so true around the holidays. People who have been on the inside for a long time are often forgotten and may have family that don't contact them. Be aware of your surroundings, watch and observe people's expressions and you will see when people are just not happy. You will see who isn't getting visits or cards and who is having a hard time. Recognize those things and talk to those people with good spirits. Sometimes it's a time to back away but you know when it's a good time to approach. Even if someone doesn't celebrate a holiday like Thanksgiving or Christmas, it is always nice to get a card or have someone talk to you.

ASK ANYTHING *And if I can't offer any advice, I'll ask someone who can!*

**Please note that while we will maintain a professional level of confidentiality, we are legally required to report any information that involves a serious threat or existence of harm to yourself or others.*

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

“What motivated you to become a pro-social individual and at what point in your sentence did you decide to seek the self development skills needed to make your commutation?”

First of all, I never thought I was going to make commutation. I wrote my obituary many times. When I left my 10-year-old son for prison, he knew me as a drug addict and alcoholic. But I wanted him to see that his mother was better than what he knew, so I started taking classes, getting certifications and participating in programs so I would have some credentials for my son to see when he picked up my body from the morgue. Had I not done that and had good behavior, when my opportunity for commutation did come, I would not have been eligible.

“Did your mental state change after you got back into society?”

One hundred percent because now things that used to be important to me aren't important anymore. I've always been kind to people but when I see the homeless I'm always giving a couple of dollars or something to eat because I remember how I was and I am so grateful that's not me. Everything has changed. I'm so appreciative to just go down to the refrigerator and have a slice of watermelon because I feel like it. It's just a blessing because I didn't have those privileges for decades.

“I would like to start a gospel singing group. How did you go about getting your group started while you were incarcerated?”

I was part of the church choir and I have a good ear for music and harmony so when I would hear someone in the choir or out in the yard that could sing, I would have them sing for me and got the group together that way. Having a good ear for music and harmony was very helpful to know who could fit in which role in the group.

*Bonus Fact: Ms. Naomi got back in the recording studio in 2021.
Her original song is available for download - search “Mello-D” by Simply Naomi!*



A TRAINING GROUND



Lee



Freedom

PROGRAM FACILITATORS / COMMUTED LIFERS & ACTIVISTS

Social Intelligence. What is it? Can it be developed? How can it be used? Academics have defined it as “the ability to monitor one's own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.” (☆). Even without this definition, though, most of us as children learn quickly how to read faces and body language, identifying anger or sadness, joy or pain. Some get really good at this and grow into what we might refer to as a “people person,” but anyone can learn social intelligence skills.

Depending on the demands and challenges of a given environment or community we live in, some of us may naturally become more adept at social intelligence than others. For example, some develop a keen awareness of the streets, referred to sometimes as “street knowledge.” Prison, however, forces us to develop social intelligence skills to a heightened level as a method of survival. When we first got to prison, we paid attention, monitored our surroundings, and learned how to assess situations quickly. Without even knowing it, by the time we got through the county jail, then classification, and made it to what some call our “home jail,” we had developed a great bit of social intelligence skills.

As if some sort of artificial intelligence had been implanted in our brains, we were able to temperature check any situation in a few seconds – scanning the layout for signs of danger, familiar faces, leering eyes, body language, speech patterns and the tone in a CO’s voice, all the while monitoring our own emotions, managing our fight or flight response in a given situation.

As time passed we used our ability to read people and situations to our advantage. It was a compass giving us directions on how to move, when to move, with whom to move to navigate the terrain of incarceration and to thrive. That was the low-hanging fruit of using social intelligence. But the greatest benefit was using it to build relationships on every level, and to open up pathways to help others as well as ourselves find success in their lives.

One thing we realized after our release is that developing our social intelligence skills in prison trained us to execute a very effective reentry. We also noticed that others like us who had developed their social intelligence skills inside were doing great outside in areas of work, family, community, and purpose.



What are you most focused on right now - your day-to-day survival, supporting others, or preparing for re-entry?

And how can you use your strength of social intelligence to help you with that?

Social intelligence can be a useful strength during the holiday season by being able to realize, sympathize and empathize that the others around you are most likely going through or feeling the exact same as you. It would be best to be encouraging and kind to each other at a time that can feel very lonely.

-Jennifer (IL)



CREATIVE CONNECTION

← SOCIAL

INTELLIGENCE →

-TJR.

FEELING SEEN & HEARD:

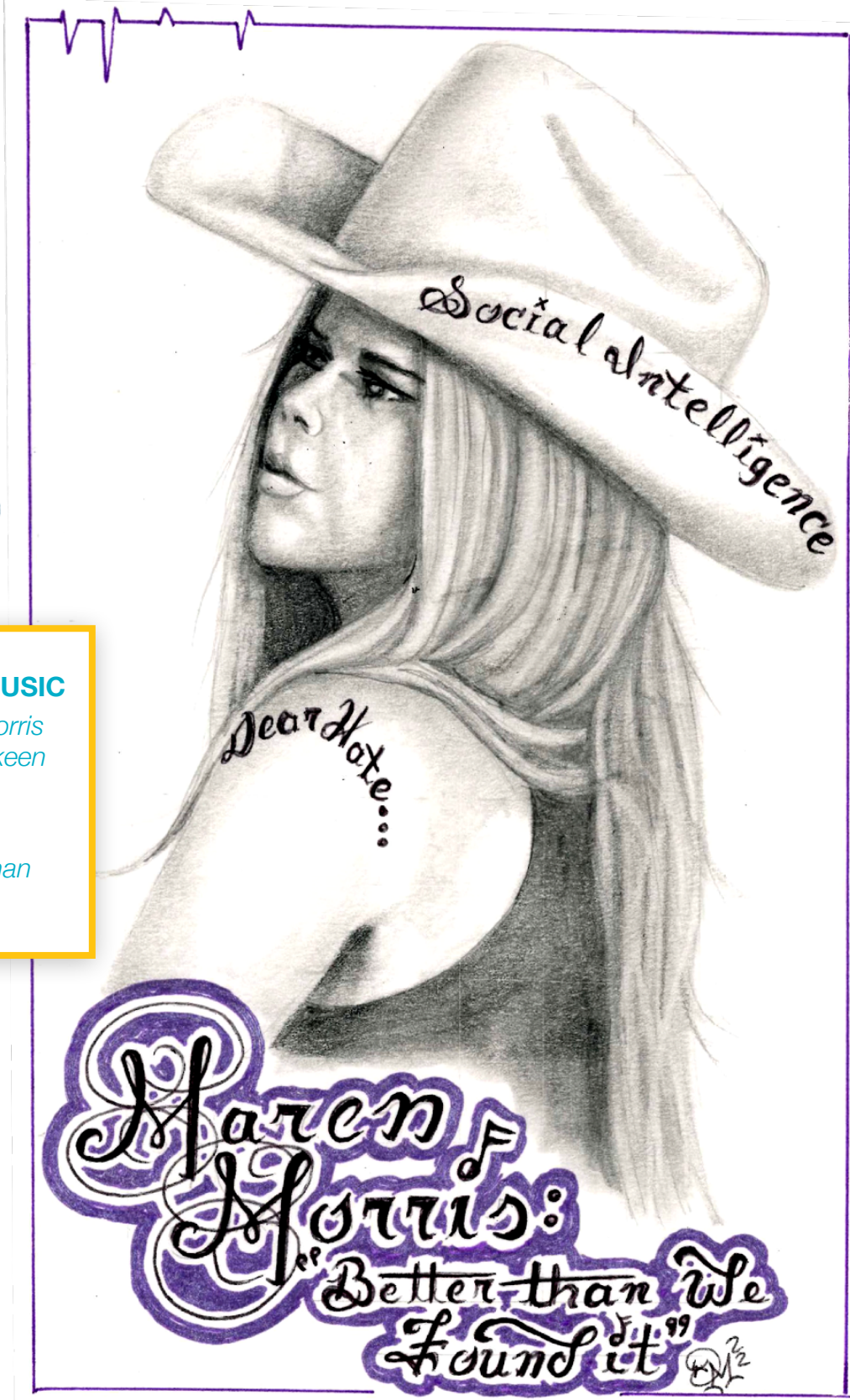
We're all actors IN this thing called Life!
 Act Well, my friends
 Harry, Sr (PA)



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MUSIC

"I was gifted songs by Maren Morris for my birthday & 2 were super keen on what I perceive to be social intelligence!" - Daniel (M)

Songs: "Dear Hate" & "Better Than We Found It"



BLACK IS BEAUTY
 -Night

NEW

GRATITUDE CARDS



As this year comes to a close, we're amazed at how far we've all come. The Loop is now available across the country and this community is becoming a stronger force for good every day.

Shining Light isn't just made up of those of us who receive & contribute to The Loop. It involves the support of people who've helped to keep us...well...shining!

For this holiday season, we want to invite you to create a "Thank You" card we can send out to our supporters to show our gratitude. It can be just a front cover, but it can also include an inside note. Send in as many as you want! The only thing we ask is that it says "Thank You" somewhere on the card & you use plain paper if possible!

All the submissions we receive will become next edition's mural. We'll also pick some to send to supporters. Give Hallmark a run for their money and please, please, PLEASE send something in!



JENNY

CREATIVE SERVICES



FRONT COVER

Thank
you so
much

INSIDE

Your message here

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

*"It means a lot to me to shed light on the topic of narcissistic abuse & domestic violence...we often hide behind the smiles." - Janell (PA)
(Font by: Maria McKenzie)*



PREVIOUS: **SPEAK LIFE.**

Last time, we were encouraged to not only notice beauty and excellence around us, but to go the extra step of telling others what we noticed. How we use our words with others makes a difference. *Luke H (MT) ties this community code to social intelligence...*



STEP FORWARD/STEP BACK

If you tend to listen to everyone else and never say a word - *speak up!*
If you tend to dominate conversation or share at length - *let someone else talk!*

In discussion-based programs like Shining Light, this is an essential principle to keep in mind as a way to show equal value and respect to everyone in the conversation. Maybe you know you fall into one of the two camps listed above, or maybe you're somewhere in the middle. Perhaps it depends on the situation. The point is, social intelligence can help us engage in group discussions in a meaningful way - whether it be in a formal setting, or simply a conversation with two or more people.

While it is certainly important to get a feel for the other(s) involved in the discussion - for instance, their mood, their motives, and their mental state - it is equally important to "read" yourself. Are you entering the conversation emotionally or mentally distracted by something else? When in the conversation, what thoughts, feelings or ideas are coming up for you? What might benefit other(s) to share?

Researchers have been studying communication styles for years. The info below (based on an article from the McGovern Medical School in Texas) can be really helpful for understanding yourself and how you tend to engage in conversation. It's also a reminder of what healthy communication looks like, as we all strive to be our best selves.



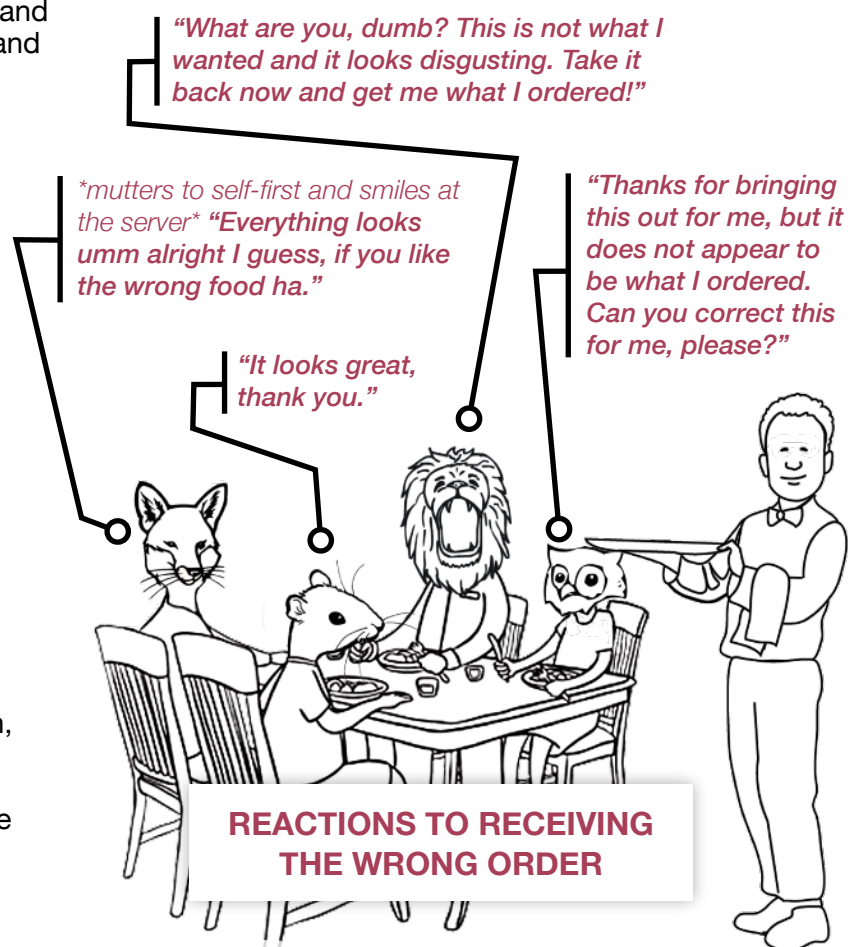
Which animal below best describes you? Do you have different tendencies in different relationships or situations? How can you use this information to improve your engagement in group settings or other conversations?

THE MOUSE: A **Passive Communicator** is often quiet and may even go unnoticed sometimes. They often don't stand up for themselves, even if something is happening that they don't agree with, often fearful of making others angry or being rejected. This can lead to being taken advantage of or people not understanding their needs.

THE LION: An **Aggressive Communicator** often wants to be heard first and loudest. They often communicate to ensure their needs are being met, but not to consider others. They are often unwilling to work toward a compromise when there is a conflict of needs, often using domination, humiliation, and criticism instead of listening to others.

THE FOX: The **Passive Aggressive Communicator** can be quiet, sly and sneaky. They often have feelings of resentment or hurt behind the message they are sending, but may feel incapable of directly dealing with their emotions. Therefore a subtle indirect expression of anger is often present.

THE OWL: The **Assertive Communicator** is wise and confident. They are often very aware of what is going on, remain calm and collected, and are typically more observant than reactive. They acknowledge both theirs and others' needs, able to stand up for themselves while also respecting the opinions of others. An owl listens to listen, not to respond.



TODAY

TODAY I WAKE WITH POSSIBILITIES
 STRETCHED ENDLESS BEFORE ME
 EVEN THOUGH I WEAR GREEN
 I DECIDE WHO I CHOOSE TO BE
 PRISON WALLS AREN'T THAT DEFINING
 REFINING
 CLARIFYING
 ONLY I CAN REALIZE
 WHAT'S INSIDE
 THIS PRIZE
 NO LONGER
 RUN AND HIDE
 BROKEN INSIDE
 MEDICATE PAIN
 FEAR AND SHAME
 I'LL STAND IN LINE
 I'LL DO MY TIME
 LEARN FROM MY CRIME
 FEEL THE SUNSHINE
 THANK GOD EACH TIME
 TEARS FILL MY EYES
 FREE PAIN INSIDE
 RIGHT WAY, RIGHT MIND
 BREATHE IN NEW LIFE.



NEW PROMPT

As a creative way to reflect on social intelligence, write a short poem, monologue or essay (no more than 150 words) that is inspired by the phrase ***“Read the Room”***

The holiday season is often charged with emotions—both positive and negative. Having social intelligence can greatly assist in speaking life. The question is never who to love, love them all. The question is how to love them wisely, effectively, healthily. Knowledge is a dusty book on the shelf; wisdom is the application of it to our day to day lives.

Luxe (MT)

CHRISTINA (SC)



Ms. Naomi & Kurt at a Second Chances rally at the Pennsylvania State Capitol

KURT DANYSH

FOUNDER / TOMORROW'S NEIGHBORS

Kurt participated in SL programs in 2018 & 2019 and was released from prison in July 2020, after 24 years. When we first caught up with him (see the July/August 2021 article), he shared about a re-entry organization called "Tomorrow's Neighbors" that he dreamed up inside. Sixteen months later, he shares some exciting updates...

While I was still incarcerated, serving a 22.5 to 60-year term, I became very concerned about going home after so long in prison. So I began talking to parole violators to learn from their experiences. Most attributed their reincarceration to one of two factors: They felt overwhelmed and/or alone. As a trained Peer Support Specialist, I knew the positive impact of peer support. But when I searched for peer mentorship reentry programs, I couldn't find any. So I put my business degree (earned while incarcerated) to work and drafted a business plan that would ultimately become "Tomorrow's Neighbors." The way I saw it, if the program I needed didn't exist, I would create it for those who would follow me home. **When I was paroled in 2020, I walked out of prison backwards because I refused to turn my back on the brothers I was leaving behind.**

Jumping into the nonprofit world was a scary thing to do after so long in prison. But I believed in the model and felt the need first-hand. One thing I was not afraid of was being told "no." I would show up at lawmakers' offices and speak about reentry needs to anyone who would listen. To my surprise, many agreed. They knew a problem existed, but weren't sure how to help. Rather than merely complain about the problem, I came armed with a solution in the form of Tomorrow's Neighbors. I started to receive support from politicians, local organizations, churches, community members, and even law enforcement. As the concept proved successful, we garnered more attention and support.

Just last week (early October), I received the amazing news that **Tomorrow's Neighbors was awarded a one million dollar grant** to open a reentry house in Cumberland County. Our vision is to provide a safe, affordable, and supportive living environment for those coming home after incarceration. We want to provide an opportunity for individuals to swim, not tread water. To succeed, not just survive.

To be honest, my biggest obstacle was myself. From my prison cell, I believed that society had given up on me - that it resented me and would never accept me back into its fold. But when I applied for the grant, I was able to include support letters from bipartisan lawmakers, law enforcement, probation and parole, and even the DOC. Sometimes it is our own thoughts that limit us, not just systematic barriers and obstacles.

If you have an idea you believe in and are willing to put in the work to make it a reality, you should do it. There's a song by Murray & Polo G called Trenches, that goes, **"You can beat the system if you street and book smart, checkmate."** I believe that. Being street smart is an advantage in the business world, but only if you are also book smart. You need to be able to speak the language of business, and education is key. If you can't get into formal education classes due to waiting lists, go to the library, read books, and ask questions to people who know what you don't. Education comes in many forms besides earning a degree, but that degree is also very important. Pell grants are coming back next year. Take advantage of the opportunity if you can.

Final Note: I am not rich. I lived off prison pay inside, and I lived off my savings (from prison pay) upon release. But I had a dream and the self-discipline to sacrifice for it, and I surrounded myself with positive influences inside and out. I am proof that success is possible. So are the men I work with every day.

KURT

We are not yet accepting applications, but anyone wanting to reach out to Tomorrow's Neighbors may do so at

**Tomorrow's Neighbors
64 East North Street
Carlisle, PA 17013**

At Shining Light, we want to be a community that helps each other focus on the positive in the midst of the challenges and painful situations we can't avoid. (We're not ignoring the bad; we're just finding a way to rise above it!) This page is all about celebrating accomplishments and good news, so tell us...

I was recently transferred to a prison closer to my family. The prison has a lot more to offer me, and more programs to better myself! I also am about to receive my first visit in years. I'm super excited!
- Gilly (OH)

- WHAT WENT RIGHT?**
- What accomplishments are you proud of?
 - What good news are you excited about?
 - Are you or someone you know coming up on your release date?

We just got a new warden at our unit who has openly expressed his support for godly programs and a push to bring men to excellence. Also, I received my Associates Degree in Theology after 2 1/2 years of study by correspondence with a Bible Institute in Texas. This is my first college level degree, and I am looking forward to going to the next level.
- Jan (AR)

I recently got the highest paying job in the prison! It is in the Pennsylvania Correctional Industries making state brown T-shirts, I was also moved to the workers block, air-conditioned, ice-machines, It is a good block, I got 4 1/2 years to go, but at least I can save money for my release.

Edwin (PA)

I've started writing again, something I'm very passionate about, and have submitted for possible publication a short story to Cornell University's Prisoner Express program and an article for the Coalition for Prisoner's Rights. But most importantly, after 8 years I've finally started to rebuild my relationship with my little sister. Love you sis!
- Greg (CA)

After being on supervision from the age of about 11 to Now age 40. I just found out, upon my release, I will not be on any P.R.C/Parole. I will not have any supervision I'll be true free I'm so excited about that!!! No Post control Release!

Dorian (OH)

I'm proud of my play, "Terminal" that Rachel helped me with in the Winter Arts CoLAB to become a masterpiece. Thank you so much, Rachel!
Larry (PA)

"I was accepted into the "MAC" or Men Achieving Character housing unit and program here at MacDougall CI in SC."

Gary/SC

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE BARBER SCHOOL (2022)
SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF BLACKSTONES CAREER INSTITUTE PARALEGAL COURSE (2022)
AMAZING EXPERIENCE WITH SHINING LIGHT INAUGURAL WRITING MENTORSHIP (2022)
SEEING AN UNFORGOTTEN GOOD FRIEND RE-SURFACE AFTER ABOUT 7 YRS.
("WHAT UP BUNNY") I SEE YOU!(SMILE)
PETITION FOR MY RELEASE IS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW WITH THE COURT...

"My son graduated from UCSC as a med student. I'm so proud!"

Anonymous/CA

Shawn (PA)

The Michigan Supreme Court ruled in *People v. Stovall*, that juveniles sentenced to life w/ Parole sentences, violated the Michigan Constitution and the Cruel and Unusual clause of the 8th Amendment. The State Appellate Defenders Office has sent letters & notices for upcoming resentencing hearings. After 32 years [as a 16 yr old juvenile waiver] I will actually get a real chance for parole. Proof God is REAL.
- Daniel (MI)

"I am going to rehab this month!"

Anonymous AL

- ① Broke the Segregation Cycle for 15 Months
- ② Avoid Conflict, remain Non-Violent 15 Months
- ③ Completed a Core Program in July!
- ④ Best for Last: Just Got MY PAROLE TODAY 9/15/22 I'll be Home in 30 Days to Meet My 1st Child @ 9 Months old & Spend all his 1st Holidays with him! Self-Control @work Thank YOU GOD!

Robert (MI)

"The birth of my first grandchild"

Anonymous/AZ

I just joined FAMM's Visit A Prison Campaign. I'm writing letters to District Attorneys, to come and talk to us, and see us as individuals. So far I have 67 letters to be mailed out...I'm so excited to be apart of something bigger and most important for our freedom to one day make a difference in the community. 😊
- "Sherbert" (PA)

TALKED TO A FRIEND THAT GOT OUT. IT WAS GREAT TO HEAR HIS DIFFERENT CHOICES, THIS TIME, HAVE HIM DOING WELL. "DOING WELL" IS DIFFERENT FOR HIM TOO.

- Jake (ND)



STRENGTH SPOTTING

Below are a few examples of where readers saw or used their strength of Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence. Between the three types of goodness identified in the definition, which did these three individuals identify: physical beauty, skill or talent, or moral beauty?

IN OUR FACILITY WE HAVE A NUMBER OF VERY TALENTED ARTISTS, LEATHER WORKERS AND BEADING ENTHUSIASTS. THEY DAILY IMPROVE THEIR CRAFT TO CATCH THE EYE OF OTHERS AND PROVIDE PROJECTS AS WELL AS RECEIVE WELL EARNED PRAISE FOR WHAT THEY MAKE.

JAKE (ND)

"As I lay here and reflect on the past 24 hours I'm taken back to yesterday when we were allowed to go outside. It was absolutely beautiful out. The sky was bright blue, the air was slightly warm, and there was just enough breeze you could feel it. If it was not restricted to 1 hour of fresh air a week I would have taken the experience for granted."

Bryan/OK

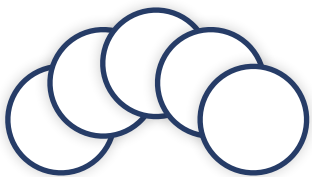
A friend of mine is always sharing his experiences of watching wildlife out his window. We have several deer that come & bed down behind our unit every night & my friend watches them with appreciation & fascination & tells me about the next day. It always makes me smile.

Luke (MT)



For the next issue, tell us where you spot people around you using Social Intelligence.

Throughout 2022, this section of The Loop has reviewed the following:



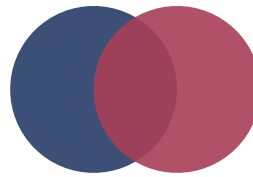
Signature Strengths

Five top strengths that seem to come most naturally and give you the most joy when you use them



Strength Spotting

The intentional identification of when you or someone else uses a strength



How Character Strengths are used in combination

Example: social intelligence and kindness

10

One of the ten criteria used to first identify the list of 24 Character Strengths

Their use contributes to the fulfillment of a good life for both oneself and others

To finish the year I want to emphasize that **Character Strengths can be developed**. For a long time, it was thought that a person's character doesn't really change, and if it does, the journey is long and slow. However, there is a growing body of research showing the opposite can be true - that our character can change, and there are a variety of factors that can influence these changes (Niemiec, 2018). Maybe it's having a child, starting a new job, or going through another type of impactful experience throughout your life. What are some things in your life from the past year that have changed you for the better?



Take some time to identify one strength you'd like to develop as you finish out the year. How do you plan to work on it? How might The Loop be a resource to help you?

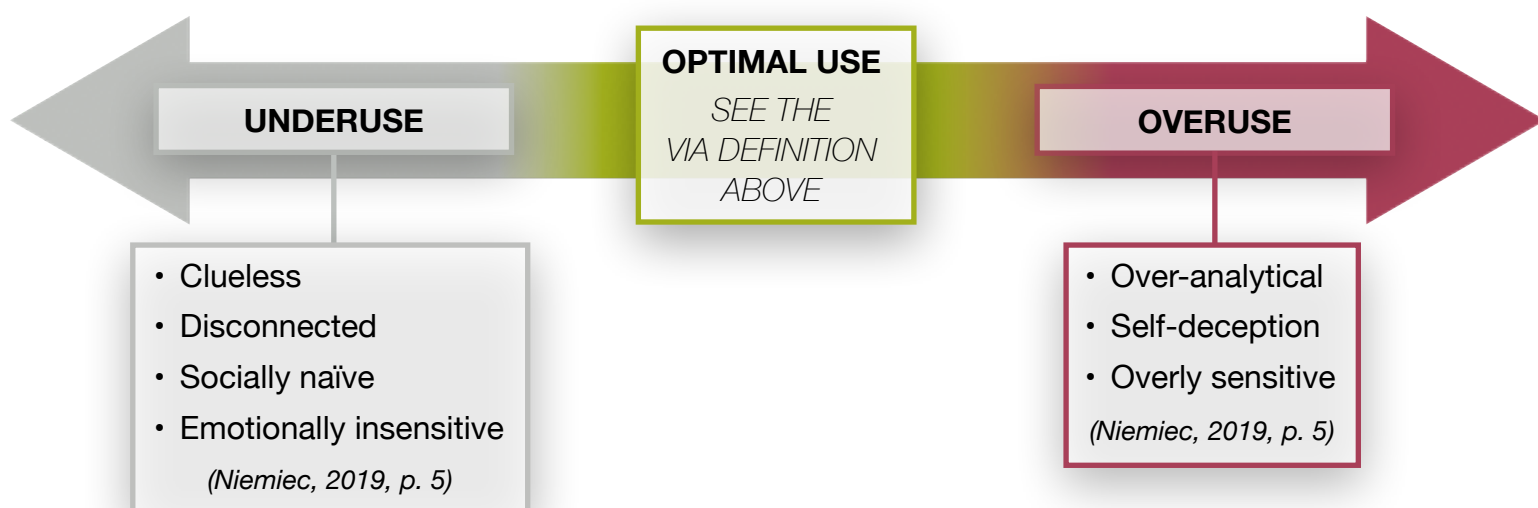
VIA DEFINITION: SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

“When a person knows what makes other people tick, he or she is displaying social intelligence. They’re aware of the motives and feelings of themselves and others, and how to fit into different social situations. They can feel comfortable and say the right thing whether they’re in the boardroom or the janitorial room, in a school setting or at a construction site. Social intelligence involves two general components:

SOCIAL AWARENESS: What we sense about others

SOCIAL FACILITY: What we do with our awareness (VIA Institute on Character, 2022, para. 1)”

<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths/social-intelligence>



Similar to Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence from the last issue, using Social Intelligence involves two steps: 1) to be aware of the feelings and motivation of both yourself and others and 2) to respond to this awareness in the ‘right’ way, not just with a group of friends or certain people, but with any interaction had throughout the day [☆]. It is interesting that the definition says to respond in the ‘right’ way. Why do you think that is included? What do you think it means? One way to know the ‘right’ way to respond may be to consider what is building up both oneself and others.



Travis
PROGRAM DEVELOPER

Reflect on the following scenarios below:

- You’re on the phone with someone and suddenly they get very quiet.
- Your celly walks in and shares that they just got into a new program they applied to.
- You walk into the chow hall and everyone has their head down just eating their food.

Step 1: *What might be a clue to others’ feelings or motivations?*

Step 2: *What might you ask or do to help you decide how to respond in the ‘right’ way?*



[☆] Niemiec, R. M. (2018). Character strengths interventions: A field guide for practitioners. Hogrefe Publishing.

Niemiec, R. M. (2019). Finding the golden mean: the overuse, underuse, and optimal use of character strengths. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 32(3-4), 453-471.

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE: IN PRACTICE

Diving deeper into understanding social intelligence, there were **two research findings** that caught my attention:

1

Higher levels of mindfulness, or the non-judgmental awareness and focus of the present moment, were linked to higher levels of emotional intelligence (☆2), a dimension of social intelligence (☆1). Some researchers have thought this may be due to mindfulness helping with the ability to identify and articulate emotions and a greater awareness of the nonverbal details of a situation (☆1).

What do you think?

2

Social intelligence has shown to buffer against the negative impact of stress and trauma (☆1).

Why do you think this might be?

(☆1) Niemiec, R. M. (2018). *Character strengths interventions: A field guide for practitioners*. Hogrefe Publishing.

(☆2) Schutte, N. S., & Malouff, J. M. (2011). Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being. *Personality and individual differences*, 50(7), 1116-1119.

Five ways to develop your strength of social intelligence:



ACTIVE LISTENING

Try being intentional about really listening to someone else, responding warmly to their opinions as a way to show respect.



EMPATHY

Try putting yourself in others shoes and understanding their emotions and thinking behind a situation.



TEAMWORK

Try taking a collaborative approach and having a willingness to compromise for the sake of everyone's goal.



COMMUNICATION PRACTICE

Try adding some new questions or new topics to include in small talk.



SHOW APPROPRIATE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Try being mindful of your facial expressions and if they are aligned with what someone is sharing.

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/social-intelligence>



**Of these five, which one would you like to focus on the most?
Who is one person you can practice this with?
Let us know how it goes!**

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Although this is my first time submitting to The Loop, I just wanted to send love and good vibes to all of you who are "in the Loop" 🤝. I'd like to share some great resources that have helped me process out all the negativity that slides by daily just because of the environment we are in, and release it through healthy and creative channels. Best part of all, these resources are free. Yes, free! 😊 The Prison Yoga Project has sent more than 26,000 copies to incarcerated men and women in the last 12 years!

Greg (CA)

"A Path for Healing and Recovery" is now available in English and Spanish.

This book exclusively for women is also now available!

Request your own copy of one of these books by writing to:

Prison Yoga Project
PO Box 415
Bolinas, CA 94924

* Please print neatly and legibly in your letter, and include your full name, ID, and address required for shipping to your facility.



FROM PRISON YOGA PROJECT | HOW YOGA CAN REDUCE ANXIETY

At the roots of anxiety are emotional overwhelm and feeling out of control. Yoga and mindfulness practices can help to calm ourselves when we feel overwhelmed and unable to handle situations. We can discharge stress and anxiety by practicing certain physical poses and by breathing consciously. When we sense a threat, our bodies react to protect us. This is our "Fight or Flight" response. Often times we're not really in immediate danger, but instead it is our habitual response to accumulated stress. These practices strengthen the calming part of our nervous system the same way you can strengthen a muscle - with practice. So the more you do them the stronger you can become at handling stress, anxiety and adversity.

[WHAT'S WORKING FOR YOU?]

I enjoy The Salute to the Sun Yoga routine. It is a morning yoga practice that is a great way to stretch, wake up, and reset all at the same time. My goal is to do a single cycle of it each morning for the next week then do it again.

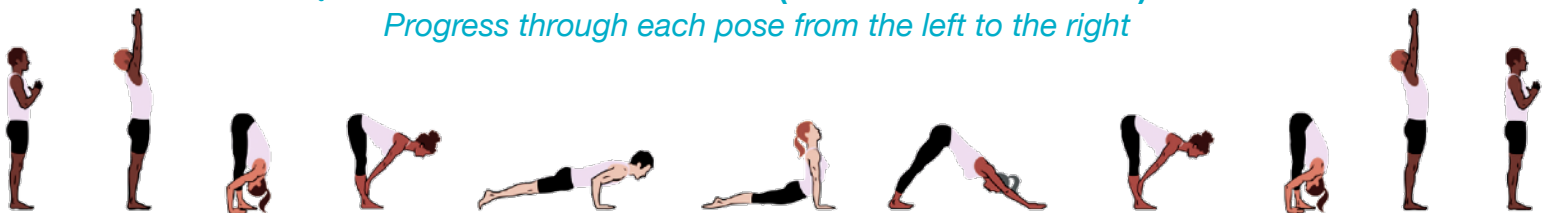
Luxe (MT)

Everyday before I turn on any electronics or distractions in my cell, I drink a cup of coffee, thinking of even the littlest thing I can do better than the day before. Even if it's a phone call to someone to ask how their day was. There's nothing too small or big on bettering the person I was yesterday!

- Gilly - (OH)

THE SALUTE TO THE SUN (AKA SUN SALUTATION)

Progress through each pose from the left to the right



🕒 What's working for you?

SEND US ANY PRACTICES YOU USE TO HELP YOU CARE FOR YOURSELF OR PEOPLE AROUND YOU.



Rachel

PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

FEATURED WRITING

Considering the theme of Social Intelligence, Scott's poem stood out to me for it shows an awareness of the impact of personal choice on loved ones. The growing awareness in the poem of a need for a new start is powerful and helpful as we look toward another year.



A NEW PROMPT:

The next issue of the Loop will focus on Bravery. We encourage you to write a short piece formatted as a letter, titled "**Dear 2023.**" What do you want to tell the year 2023 about how you will step bravely into the new year?

2023

The leaves are turning, skies overcast
Seasons keep changing, life moves so fast
Burned my bridges left nothing but ash
I'm growing old can't change the past

I stole, I lied, I didn't live fair
So much damage so hard to repair
I have remorse I write to share
Must change my ways and prove I care

I've let people down, those I hold dear
Dwelling on that leads me to tear
Winter is coming, can I find good cheer
Work on self and face the new year

With the new year, comes a new start
Examine myself with all my heart
I'm not too old to leave a good mark
Live to change, till death I part

Arise each day with a new me
By walking with honor and integrity
A change of life, all will see
He forged a new path in twenty twentythree

-Scott- (PA)



This month we feature **phoebe**, a journal that has started the "Incarcerated Writers Project." They accept submissions in the following categories:

- **Fiction (up to 5,000 words)**
- **Nonfiction (up to 5,000 words)**
- **Poetry (up to 5 pages)**

Only one submission per category on 8.5x11 paper. Submissions will be considered for both online and print publication. If included in print, you will receive a print copy of the journal and a possible \$50 honorarium. You can send copies of your work to

**Incarcerated Writers Project
Phoebe Journal
George Mason University
The Hub Suite 1201, MSC5
4400 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030**

November is Native American Heritage Month (*also referred to as American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month*). It is a time to acknowledge and celebrate the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, histories, and contributions of our nation's first people.

American Indians remain the most culturally diverse of ethnic groups in the United States, yet they share common values we all as humans could benefit from. As you read the prayer below (*commonly attributed to Lakota Sioux Chief Yellow Lark in 1887, pictured below*) note the deep appreciation for humanity and creation, and the humble sense of personal responsibility to care for both.

Great Spirit Prayer

Oh, Great Spirit,
Whose voice I hear in the winds
and whose breath gives life to all the world.
Hear me! I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes
ever hold the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect the things you have made
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.
Make me wise so that I may understand
the things you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden
in every leaf and rock.

Help me remain calm and strong in the
face of all that comes towards me.
Help me find compassion without
empathy overwhelming me.
I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy: myself.
Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my spirit may come to you without shame.



Even if you do not come from a Native American tradition, how might this prayer coincide with or enhance your religious beliefs? Consider reciting this prayer on a regular basis - or use it as a guide to write your own prayer - as a way to remind yourself of your place in the created world.



CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE




Angelina

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

One sign of a healthy community or relationship is the ability to disagree respectfully. We want to provide a chance for you to share your differing ideas in a safe, constructive way and practice critical thinking, hearing different perspectives, and carefully crafting a respectful argument. Life throws us situations where we need these skills all the time, so think of this as your practice ground.

Last edition we proposed the statement, ***“It’s ok to walk away from a relationship, even if the other person is struggling,”*** and asked if you agreed or disagreed with it.

So many of your thoughtful responses, while they each took a different focus, didn’t actually conflict with one another! This is a great example of how our personal experiences lead us to prioritize different facets of a problem and hone in on varying perspectives, which are equally important to consider.

 AGREE

 DEPENDS

 DISAGREE

“I personally have had people walk away from me when I was struggling and needed them most so with that in mind I personally wouldn't leave someone who needed help, I might not want a romantic relationship or even a personal one but if someone I had a meaningful relationship with needed me in any type of way I couldn't leave them hanging because of my experience with needing someone and having no one!”

- Anonymous/NY

“No, it's not OK to walk away from a relationship even if the other person is struggling. You sit down with them and talk about the problem unless it's a toxic relationship.”

- Crystal/PA

It is Positive reinforcement when you can walk away and come back to the situation. A disagreement may be the bottom line, or the last straw is gonna be a fight, but you have to have that structure and focus on the problem. If the other person is struggling, help them. walk away but then come back, it works!

-TJR (OH)

“IT’S OK TO WALK AWAY FROM A RELATIONSHIP, EVEN IF THE OTHER PERSON IS STRUGGLING.”

“If the relationship is toxic, it's very important to notice the danger: that this could escalate to verbal abuse or even physical abuse. It's OK under this type circumstance to walk away.”

- F.W.O./NC

“Yes. That person may require such realities and refuses to adhere to one's boundaries thus requiring one to leave that relationship.

There are other reasons that could justify such a break up.”

- Michael/CA

“No you should at least be honest with them and yourself if you're in a relationship you do owe each other that I've been in many relationships where they walk out and never return. I believe in some type of closure in order to go on with life without thinking it's all your fault.”

- Anonymous/SD

It depends on what the struggle is. Boundaries are important that should not be crossed. I know, love has no bounds. But, we should never let anybody or anything abuse, hurt or it take advantage of us.

Larry (PA)

IF SOMEONE IS DROWNING AND EVERY TIME YOU GO TO HELP, THEY PULL YOU UNDER YOU ARE FACED WITH A CHOICE. CONTINUE, AND YOU BOTH DROWN OR GET YOURSELF SAFE AND CALL FOR MORE HELP FOR THE OTHER PERSON. NOT SAYING IT'S EASY, BUT TWO DROWNED ISN'T EITHER.

JAKE (ND)

"...At what stage is the relationship in? If you have been in a long term relationship there may be children, property, or pets involved. It may not be in the best interests of everyone involved to walk away. What type of relationship? In a domestic relationship or friendship that has turned toxic it may be the best idea to walk away. Maybe you have just grown out of the relationship and need to walk away to start over new. I believe it's never good to just walk away from a business relationship. Also are you walking away, turning your back on the relationship permanently? In any scenario it's only right to discuss, with all parties involved, any reasons as to why you would feel you would want to walk away. The opposing parties deserve communication and not to be left not knowing."

- Brian/OK

"If the relationship is unhealthy or toxic for the one walking away, then it is OK. If walking away is done constructively and not meant to punish the other person, then it is OK. If walking away is done to create leverage in the relationship, then it is not OK."

- Christopher/AZ

On the issue of Walking Away from a Relationship, I have to be honest. I have never walked out on a relationship. I know how it feels to be "dumped" and I've never done that to a person. I guess I'm a bit old fashioned. I "stand by my man" to quote an old song. Yep, my poor ol' heart gets broken over and over but Jesus said "the greatest of these is love." Love is all that really matters in this world. It's like health, without it, what does anything else matter?

Gary (SC)

For next month - do you agree or disagree with the following statement:



"WE SHOULD TRY TO EXPERIENCE EVERYTHING LIFE HAS TO OFFER."

Send us a few sentences & keep our Community Codes in mind, especially:

- Speak life
- Share ideas, not ID's
- Speak from the "I"

WE CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



HOLIDAYS/SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP:

THANKSGIVING
NOV 24

ADVENT
NOV 27 - DEC 24

CHRISTMAS
DEC 25

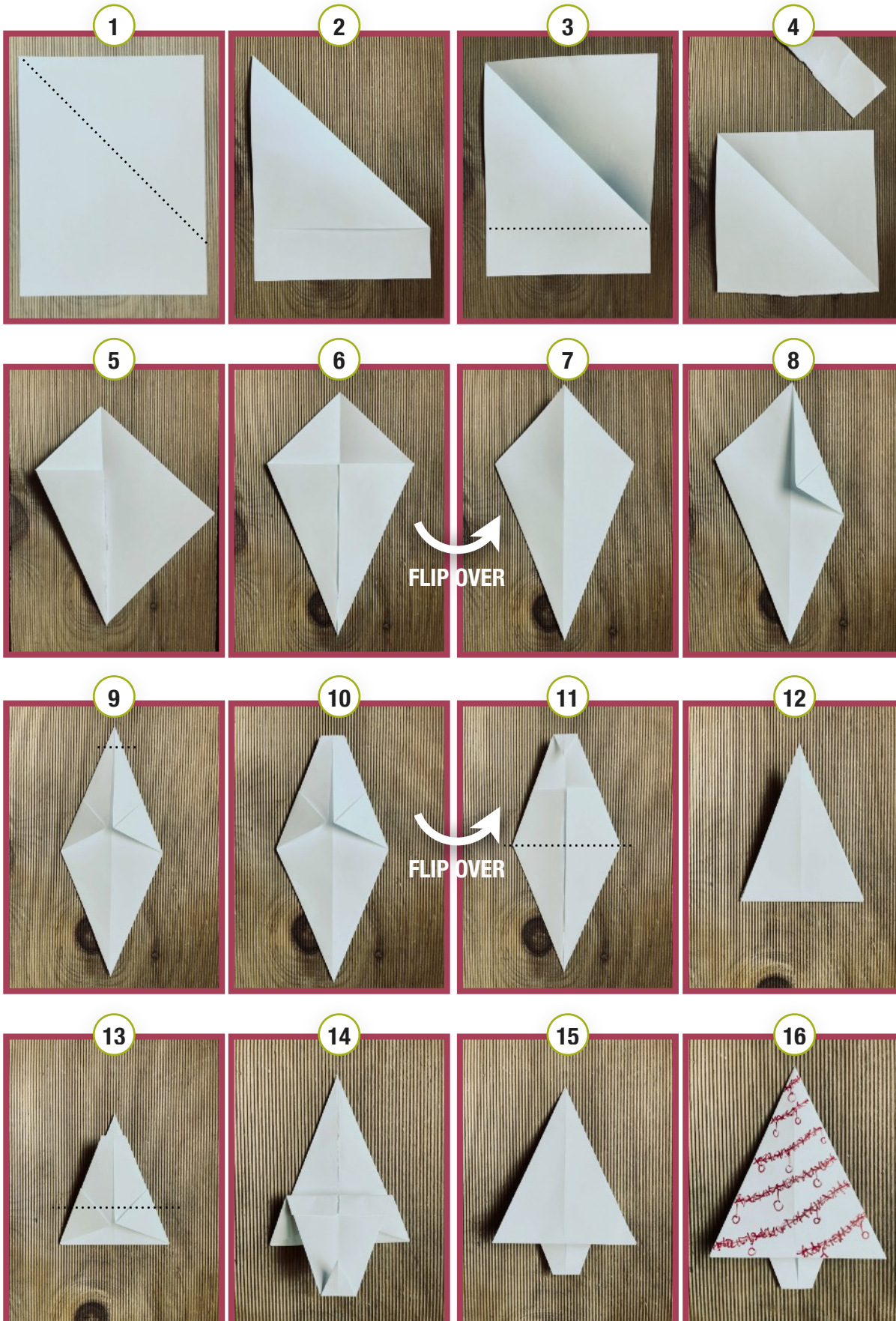
HANUKKAH
DEC 18 - 26

KWANZAA
DEC 26 - JAN 1



ORIGAMI TREE

If you're feeling crafty, this is a quick & simple way to get some holiday spirit jump started! Keep it. Gift it. It's a win - win.



Using a regular sheet of paper (1), fold one corner down to line up with the opposite edge (2).

Then crease (3) and tear off the remaining bit of paper on the bottom so that the result is a square with a diagonal crease (4).

Turn your square so the crease is vertical, then fold the left and right corners in, so they line up along the middle crease (5 & 6).

Flip it over (7). Then fold the left and right corners in, so they line up along the spine of the paper (8 & 9).

Fold the very tip of the piece backwards (9 & 10), so that when you flip it over, it looks like picture 11.

Then fold the bottom of the piece up and crease well (11 & 12).

Flip it over (12 & 13).

Fold the back flap down along the dotted line shown (13 & 14).

And YOU HAVE A TREE! (15)

Decorate to your heart's content :) (16)


WHAT WE'RE READING


DIFFICULT PERSONALITIES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MANAGING
THE HURTFUL BEHAVIOR OF OTHERS (AND MAYBE YOUR OWN)
BY: HELEN MCGRATH, PHD, AND HAZEL EDWARDS, M.ED.

DANIEL "D" M.

FROM SUPERMAN TO MAN
BY: J.A. ROGERS

ANONYMOUS / NC

THE GREAT DIVORCE
BY: C.S. LEWIS

LUKE / MT

**JUST
FOR
FUN**

MEDIUM

	9			3		7		
5	4				9	8		
		1		8	6		4	
9		2					4	3
3	8					1		9
7			6	9		8		
1		5					9	7
	6		7					1

HARD

						1	4	
				5		2	7	3
			1			9		
	5			6	9			1
9		6	4	1	3	7		2
1			5	7			4	
		9			7			
6	7	5		4				
2	4							

FEATURED RECIPE

Cannoli Dip

Gary (SC)

6 to 8 cream cheese packets
1 Hershey Bar (plain) chopped into small pieces
1 cup powdered sugar
1 tsp cinnamon
1 packet honey roasted peanuts, crushed
1 box chocolate-covered cherries, diced (a bit messy)

Empty cream cheese into large bowl. Add in the powdered sugar and cinnamon. Stir in the Hershey bar and chocolate-covered cherries. Top with the crushed peanuts. Serve with Ginger Snaps for dipping. So good!

What comfort recipes have you created for the winter months?

Send us your favorite in 10 lines or less!

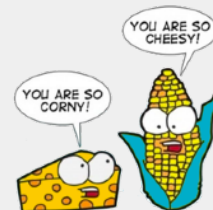


MS. NAOMI'S CORNY CORNER

WE KNOW YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELVES

*I was right in the middle of February this year.
I was at the end 5 years back and at the beginning 500 years ago. What am I?
The number 15*

*What lives in winter, dies in summer,
and grows with its roots upward?
An icicle*



NEXT EDITION'S THEME
BRAVERY

SEND COVER ART FOR THIS THEME!



For many, the start of a new year is a perfect time to set new intentions or goals - things we want to accomplish, improve on, do differently, etc. Following through on these things often takes effort, commitment, and courage, which in character strength language is called Bravery. We'll see in the next issue that Bravery has three types: Physical (e.g. *risking bodily harm*), Psychological (e.g. *facing the truth*), Moral (e.g. *speaking up for what's right*)

Consider one new goal or intention for 2023.

Which type of Bravery might you need most to help you follow through?



SUBMISSIONS FOR NEXT EDITION DUE BY DEC 15



**SPECIAL THANKS
TO THESE 28
CONTRIBUTORS:**

COVER ART:

Everyone

FEATURED WRITING:

Christina B. (SC) & Scott F. (PA)

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:

Kurt Danysh - Tomorrow's Neighbors

OTHER REFLECTIONS & RESPONSES:

[AR] Dan O.

[AZ] Christopher N.

[CA] Greg M., Michael P.

[IL] Jennifer V.

[MI] Daniel M., Robert B.

[MT] Luke H.

[ND] Jake

[OH] Dorian J., Gilly, Jim W., Leon O., T.J. R.

[PA] Crystal C., Edwin R., Janell N., Keith P.,
Larry S., Night, Shawn S., Sherbert

[SC] Gary F.

3 Anonymous Tablet Submissions from
NC, NY & SD

Thank you to everyone else who submitted work we weren't able to include. Please keep writing in!

**DO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW WANT
TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE LOOP?**

If this was your first time reading The Loop, or if you're in the habit of just picking up one of the extra copies at your facility, we hope you'll consider joining hundreds of others inside who have subscribed to receive their own copy.

It's totally free - just mail in this card!

If you're already a subscriber, be sure to invite others to join the community. Through word-of-mouth, we doubled our number of subscribers in 2022, and now have nearly 2,000 individuals engaging in this community of "positive change makers" in prisons around the country. Let's keep the momentum going!

THE LOOP

SUBSCRIPTION CARD

NAME / #: _____

FACILITY: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Send us this card to subscribe today!

shininglight

P.O. Box 267 | Annville, PA 17003

Thank you for sending me The Loop. It allows me to surround myself with people who are growing and changing. Such an encouragement.

-Keith (PA)



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Through **edovo** more and more people are accessing *The Loop* and engaging in other video content, too. If you have Edovo on your tablets, be sure to check out our channel and tell your friends!



**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS ISSUE OF THE LOOP,
HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO NEXT...**

Tell your friends to look it up!

Write to us with your feedback, responses, writing, or artwork

Check out Shining Light's video-based courses

Share your experience with loved ones on the outside and invite them to read *The Loop* online at shining-light.com/theloop

"I recently stumbled across an app with your guys name on it & I gotta be honest, I read every month's newsletter from beginning to end. I was overwhelmed with a feeling of hope & I found out something about myself I never knew. I can be better than I ever was before & I can do what I never thought possible. I can change. I'm not worthless. I'm not a lost cause. I'm somebody & I finally have the courage & determination & the vision to actually go be it. The people's stories and their triumphs were inspiring." - Leon O (Ohio)