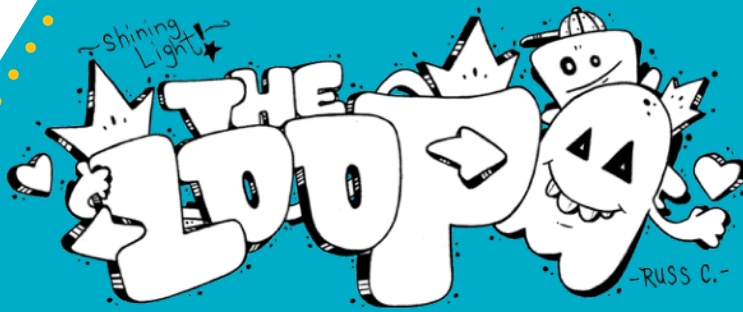


# THE LOOP

BRAVERY





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/theloop](http://shining-light.com/theloop))*

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:** Bravery, like courage, is interesting because our view of it can change so much from person to person. For example, I need to really amp myself up when it comes to voicing an idea or opinion that I don't think will be received well, but I know others who can speak their mind very freely, unfazed by how it might go over. Likewise, I am pretty comfortable presenting to an audience, but know of others who would be paralyzed by fear in the same setting. And yet, I think it's safe to say that as humans we all share the experience of facing daunting situations that cause a "fight, flight, or freeze" reaction, where drawing on our character strength of Bravery is critical to helping us toward a healthy, constructive response.

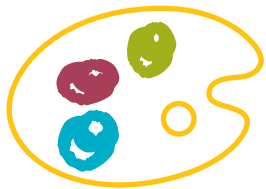


*Kelly*  
PROGRAM  
DIRECTOR

We have been so encouraged and inspired by the stories and expressions of bravery that have poured in since the last issue. Many are related to the previous theme of Social Intelligence, where you're showing bravery and vulnerability in admitting places of weakness, and committing to working on this area in specific ways. For some, you've taken the brave step of sending something in for the first time; others have shared in a more personal way than before. To all of you, way to go!

You'll see a lot of these expressions throughout this issue, as well as input from terrific new staff like Joyce (p. 11) and Dormen (p. 17) who recently joined our team as Academy facilitators. Our Community Spotlight (p. 12) features a letter from Doug G, whose commitment to the Academy start-up at a North Dakota prison is having lasting effects, months after his release back in August. And a special shout out to the Loop Group at Grafton CI (Ohio) - specifically R. Hamilton, who won their facility-wide "Cover Art Contest" with the amazing piece you see on the front page of this issue, and D. Murrell, the lead peer facilitator, who is a guest contributor for our Community Code section (p. 10).

Many thanks to the many readers who submitted artwork, writings and other responses to this issue! We regret that we cannot respond to all of them, or publish them all in The Loop. Our growing list of subscribers (now over 2,300!) means we are getting lots more submissions, but unfortunately also means there are many more we are unable to include in the limited pages of The Loop. But know that we read and appreciate them all! 😊



*\*If you're a visual artist and have an idea for cover art, please send it in!!! Themes for upcoming issues include: Forgiveness, Teamwork, Prudence, and Zest.*

*I found the magazine to be insightful, edifying, life-building, full of knowledge and wisdom that may help me in my walk and journey of life. As I learn of the purpose, focus and main goal of the Loop to inspire us to grow and to unlock the potential of growth in us, I am all for it. -Noel (PA)*


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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 the Shining Light community!** We want to help you kick off 2023 with this issue, full of words of encouragement and ideas to make this year a meaningful one for you. For many of us, Bravery (the theme of this issue), is going to be an essential strength to rely on this year. Life provides daily challenges, but together we can help each other make the most of whatever we are given.

Steps forward for Shining Light over the years have required tapping into this character strength often. We started out using the performing arts to bring hope to people in homeless shelters and churches, so a new level of bravery was required when we first entered a tough youth correctional facility near Chicago in 1999. That was the first time anyone on our team, including myself and Kelly (now the editor of The Loop), had gone inside. Hearing the gate shut behind us, not knowing what to expect, or how we would be received - there were many moments when it would have been more comfortable to just leave and never go back. A few years later, crossing the bridge onto Rikers Island required facing similar fears. And bravery was particularly needed in 2010 when we stood along the wall outside San Quentin's "three gates to hell," waiting to enter when the alarm sounded and officers ran past us, in and out of the armory.

Without bravery, we would not have had our eyes opened, and we would not be where we are today. By pushing past the fears and insecurities of going inside, we saw the humanity in the people we met, far different from the stereotypes projected in the media. We learned that with some encouragement, opportunities, and tools, people who society had cast aside could do more than they thought. And that is what set us on this journey of helping people inside discover their own potential.

I encourage you to ponder and consider applying some of the ideas in this issue. Many are written by people with years of prison experience who share some of their own journeys and discoveries. Like Doug, who spent decades in and out of prison. On page 12 he says, "The biggest challenge was in my head; I didn't think I could do it..." Now thriving in a reentry center with a new mindset and supportive community, he adds, "If I can do it, so can you!"



Jeff

**FOUNDER &  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Where might you need to use the character strength of Bravery that is already in you? Some of you are already showing Bravery by sending in submissions for the first time, or sharing inspiring stories of how you've overcome tremendous difficulties or persevered when the obstacles seemed insurmountable. What is your next step? Challenge yourself to face whatever is in your way, and let us know what happens!

Shining Light  
I came across "The Loop Magazine",  
and the "Creations of a caged bird",  
volumes, on the tablets, we have here  
at this facility, and I must say  
that, reading your magazine, and  
watching the videos, have had a  
profound effect on me. I have  
liked me with a level of inspiration  
and hope, that I cannot begin to  
put into words. I have about 5  
years remaining on my sentence,  
but because of your positive and  
encouraging words and videos, I  
already feel "free"! I can't begin  
to explain how much you have lifted  
my spirits, and re-directed my thoughts  
and emotions. Thank you for all your  
positive healing energy, and compassion.  
There's nothing more that I want  
than to stay connected to the  
"Shining Light Family". Please add  
me to your mailing list, for "The  
Loop", and Bless you for all the  
wonderful work that you do.  
-Michael

## PROGRAM UPDATES



### SL ACADEMY

**NORTH DAKOTA:** For the first time ever, the Academy is being extended to residents of NDSP who are in segregation. We're so grateful to the administration for making this a priority, and to the 4 brave participants who are persevering through the many obstacles they're facing. With the success of this trial run, we hope this opens doors to providing more meaningful programming to those who need it most!

When asked how they used "Bravery" in this experience, they each had a different answer: "being open-minded," "following through on my commitment to my peers," "learning more about myself," and "constructively challenging mainstream thinking." They added this collective encouragement to you:

*"THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU WANT TO BE IS WHAT YOU DO. SO DON'T BE AFRAID TO TAKE THAT FIRST STEP."*

**OHIO:** The third Academy cohort at Belmont CI is finishing up, with 8 ready to graduate the first week in February. Shout out to the new facility-wide "Loop Group" that is starting up in February, co-facilitated by Academy graduates.

**PENNSYLVANIA:** New Academies are set to start in SCI Waymart, SCI Coal Township, and the Veterans Service Unit at SCI Dallas!



### WINTER ARTS COLAB

The 25 participants of the current 2022-23 Winter Arts CoLab are knee-deep in their creative processes, working with professional artists towards a successful completion in March.

Meanwhile, a collection of finished pieces from the previous CoLab has now been published! The "2021-22 CoLab Anthology" includes 2 original one-act plays, 6 original poems, and 4 original short stories. A digital version of these powerful expressions of art and truth is published on our website at [shining-light.com](http://shining-light.com) where the public can be inspired and enlightened as much as the men and women who wrote them!

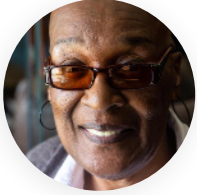


### TABLETS

If you have access to Edovo (free educational content), you can now view the "CoLab Anthology" series for yourself!!! It's under Arts & Entertainment, where you'll find other collections like "Creations of a Caged Bird" and "When Light Appears" - original work by incarcerated writers, performed and produced by outside arts professionals.

*\*If you're inspired by what you see and want to learn some basics to help you write something of your own, go on and take the Playwriting or Spoken Word Labs. And remember, if you take these courses and write to us with your complete responses, we'll send you feedback and a certificate of completion!*

## RealTalk



*Naomi*

PROGRAM CONSULTANT  
COMMUTED LIFER  
COMMUTATION SPECIALIST

First of all, going to prison takes bravery because you don't know what to expect on the inside. You hear all of these horror stories... But when people feel your spirit and know that you are kind, and also a person who will not take a lot of nonsense, you are brave. For me, I had to make up my mind that I was going to do the time and not let the time do me. So many times I had to face my fears, like when I had to go to the hospital for five days. It was so new and unexpected and there were so many issues. I had to be strong with that situation and be brave to speak up, but also to not show my fear.

Since getting out I have had to be brave because I'm still shellshocked from being inside for so many years and things keep changing; I see bravery in my everyday life. I have to be brave just to walk outside my door or get in my car and drive somewhere. You never know what to expect - what's going to come. I have been home for three years and recently found out I have cancer. I was so down. In my head I felt sicker than I actually was, I wanted to claim the illness, but a voice said "get up!" It took bravery for me to be positive, get up and say "God, I give this to you."

\*Ms. Naomi was diagnosed in October. Thankfully the doctors caught it early and she is on a treatment plan to eradicate the cancer over the next few months. Your thoughts and prayers - and her strengths of Bravery, Humor, Perspective and Hope - will no doubt carry her through!

### **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

**Q: "How do I stay on the right track without family help, being they're so far away?"**

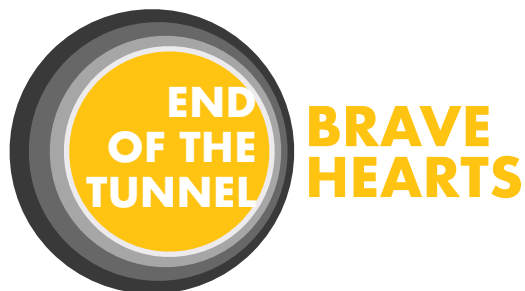
**MS. NAOMI:** When people see that you are trying to help yourself you'll be surprised at who is watching you and will help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help. It doesn't take family all of the time. Find a good crowd of people in various organizations and reach out. You'll get the support you need.

**Q: "I have five years left. How do I use the time to prepare for parole?"**

**MS. NAOMI:** Do the things that you know you're supposed to do. Do something for yourself as well as the parole board - have a good attitude, do groups, and volunteer on the block. And when you do something good on the inside, ask the officer to put that on your block card (or record), and that can be something that can go to parole.

**Q: "I am planning on staying at a halfway house once I am released. How was that like for whoever you know that had to stay at one of these places?"**

**MS. NAOMI:** It really depends on where you are sent and what city you are from. The ones that I know of can be hard because you still have some people that are still getting high and doing the things that took them to jail in the first place. No matter where you go, you have to prepare your frame of mind that you are not going to associate with those people.



Lee



Freedom

PROGRAM FACILITATORS / COMMUTED LIFERS & ACTIVISTS

In popular culture - movies, books, and songs - bravery is equated with risking life and limb, or being a hero. We grew up in Philadelphia, PA, where the language of bravery was connected to how good you could fight or the level of courage you showed in a dangerous situation. For some of us as youngsters, bravery may have meant jumping off the roof of an abandoned building onto a mattress or accepting a dare to see how long you could stand on the train tracks in the face of an oncoming train. As we grew older the dares became more volatile and dangerous, and almost always involved using fists, knives or guns to prove a point. Today we have prisons filled with men like us who lived that experience.

In 1994, we were both convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Like so many others we entered prison believing that bravery is showing no fear, never backing down, and being willing to escalate to violence when necessary. We thought we had to establish ourselves as people not to be messed with - the first person who gets out of line needs to be made an example of by doing as much damage to them as possible. But the reality was far different from our expectations. Many of the individuals we met didn't fit that stereotype. They were a different representation of bravery. *Their bravery came from the heart.* It involved having the courage to recognize their bad decisions or shortcomings and to transform them into strengths. Instead of being violent and seeking to take advantage of others, they were compassionate, thoughtful, intelligent, and caring men - mentors, teachers, philosophers, and respected leaders. Most of all, they did not make decisions based on what others thought of them.

These men changed our POV about bravery. They had already learned that true bravery was not a willingness to fight physically, but a willingness to evolve into the best version of yourself even as you stand up for what's right. They had mastered the art of turning confrontation into productive conversation. Their examples helped us to break free from the herd mentality of our lived experience growing up; they helped us see that aggression was a mask we wore to be brave and not who we really are. That in turn allowed us to focus on transforming ourselves into better people, taking violence off the table as a solution and stepping into being our authentic peace-keeping selves.

Like the examples of the men we followed, we wanted to have brave hearts. And like them, we wanted to transform the attitude and culture around us to illustrate that real bravery is about positive growth and development, doing what's right, leading by example, and even sometimes going against the norm. It's having the strength to say, "Fighting is off the table. What else can we do to resolve this issue?" It sounds strange and takes getting used to, but in practice it produced better outcomes and more respect from peers. Even more, being true to ourselves gave others an opportunity to do the same.



**What is your philosophy on physical violence as a means of conflict resolution?**

**Which do you consider more brave - a willingness to fight, or a willingness to talk?**

**"We adopt the means of nonviolence because our end is a community at peace with itself. We will try to persuade with our words, but if our words fail, we will try to persuade with our acts."**

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



# CREATIVE CONNECTION

Thank you  
so much

What you do is  
Inspire  
and  
Change  
Lives  
Thank you



## GRATITUDE CARDS:

The submissions were incredible and we can't thank everyone enough! I did my best to put some into this collage so I hope it's encouraging to see!

This is my drawing about COURAGE. When I was small I had no voice, so I suffered in silence, weak and alone. Now I'm big. I'm strong. And loud. I speak for the voiceless, for those who suffer in silence. I hold them in my heart, and they give me the courage to be big and strong. And loud.

All my love to all who need to be loved just j ♥

Gratitude turns WHAT WE HAVE into enough

MUCHAS GRACIAS

Por Favor Note Olvidas de todo NOSOTROS

Thank you ♥

THANK YOU

We Can do Better with YOUR HELP

Thank You so Much

SUCCESS IS GETTING what YOU WANT HAPPINESS IS WANTING what YOU HAVE

THANK YOU ALL

Thank you so much for your time, concern and contributions. Your support as well is amazing!  
Anthony



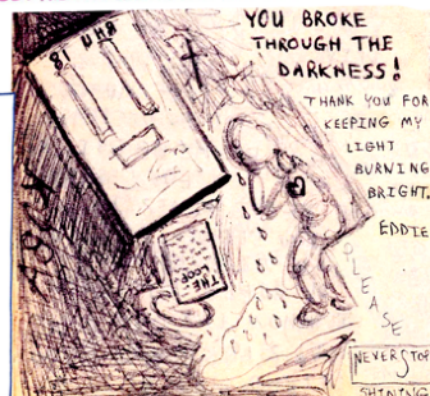
SO MUCH!

Thank you so much. I appreciate everything you do!!!

-Danielle

GRATITUDE can make a day - EVEN CHANGE A LIFE  
A WILLINGNESS TO PUT IT INTO WORDS is all that is NECESSARY

TO BE WITHOUT Some of the things you WANT IS INDISPENSABLE part of HAPPINESS



designed handmade by just i © 2022



NEW

# MERIT BADGE



When my brother was in the military, he seemed to get a badge or pin every time he accomplished something. Some were small things and others were more significant, but it was really interesting to see his uniform become a record of his military journey.

Sometimes I wish we all got badges for the things we've accomplished, especially because what one person feels is an accomplishment is different from another person, and I love hearing about different things my friends and family are proud of - things they're achieving by trying something new or facing a fear.

So I want to see your badges. What are you proud of? What achievement in your own life have you unlocked? And nothing is too small. Like I said, the differences among us are what we love celebrating, so design a badge that shares part of your journey.



**JENNY**  
CREATIVE SERVICES

Example: my friend bought me a book about bread making, and it's been a lot more challenging than I thought, but I'm really proud of my progress.

← So get ready folks. I'm adding my "baker" badge to the mix :)



it's not happiness  
THAT BRINGS US  
gratitude  
it's gratitude  
THAT BRINGS US  
happiness

DEAR Supporter,  
I Hope one day I CAN  
Be Free & support  
Something bigger than  
myself ... LIKE YOU!

THANK YOU

IF the only  
PRAYER  
you say  
IN YOUR WHOLE LIFE  
IS  
Thank YOU  
THAT WOULD SUFFICE

Thank You



ThankS I mean  
much  
thanks

THIS MAY BE SMALL BUT  
MY GRATITUDE IS  
HUGE!

Sometimes saying  
Thank you seems small,  
when the impact you've  
made is anything, but  
that... you've made  
a big difference in more  
lives than you'll ever know...  
With appreciation, and  
prayers... May the Creator  
Grant increased & abundant  
blessings upon you, all.

Thank you  
For being a pillar of light  
guiding us through  
the Darkest of our days  
For that we are  
always grateful



WHATEVER  
YOU ARE  
BE GOOD  
TO ME

Thank You  
Do Much...



This is from the bottom  
of my heart. Thank you  
do much for keeping this light  
from going out. It will forever  
be grateful. from: cheo

2022



All of the content below was provided by one of our readers, D. Murrell, who is the lead peer facilitator of the Loop Group at Grafton CI in Ohio. This group meets regularly to discuss content in *The Loop* as well as explore artistic ways to express their individual thoughts about the upcoming issue, which provides both potential content for the magazine and a creative platform to share about *The Loop* with others in the prison. The number of subscribers is growing every month!

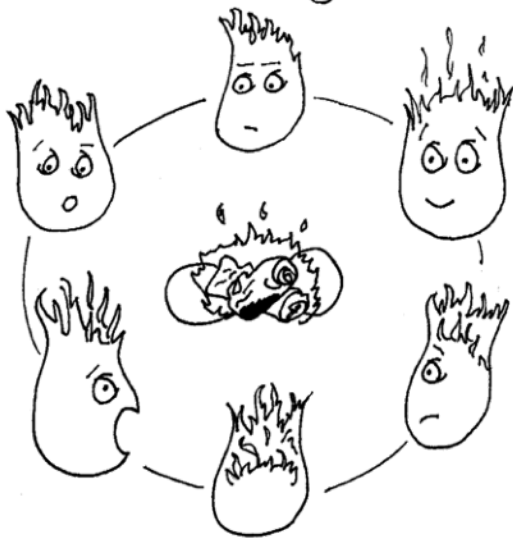
At the start of every group gathering, the participants recite the Community Codes and recommit to striving to live them out with one another. Thank you to D. and the "Loopers" at GCI for your encouragement, creativity and insight!

(From D. Murrell)

## PREVIOUS: **STEP FORWARD/STEP BACK**

In our last issue, we were encouraged to put this CC into practice as a way to show equal value and respect to everyone engaged in our discussions. Coupled with the character strength of Social Intelligence, we discover that there are many different communication styles exercised through many different types of individuals. As we are illuminated by our knowledge of self in these communication styles (MOUSE, LION, FOX, or OWL), we can then practice caring for others who may exercise different styles than we do to ensure that the collective light shines the brightest.

Confidentiality: Bravery



Oxygen: Fire

*D. Murrell*



## CONFIDENTIALITY

*What's said in the group, stays with the group. If something is shared that you need to process with someone else for your own mental health, "share the idea, not the ID"*

In our Loop Group, we recognize how essential this CC is to the integrity of our group and the peace of mind it provides for each participant who comes to participate in discussion.

Providing our Loopers with such a safe, trustworthy space encourages the character strength of Bravery as each of us acknowledges the importance of nurturing the courage it takes to share intimate stories, perspectives, ideas and creations.

*in a healthy group setting (through much experience, trial and error), I have come to understand that; Confidentiality is to Bravery as oxygen is to Fire.*

Consider a time when you may have needed to confide in a family member, friend, group or professional. **Did you experience any fear/anxiety about what you needed to share?**

If so, describe the feeling(s) you were experiencing prior to sharing, and then consider how Bravery played a part in the process for you. **How important was the assurance of Confidentiality to your decision to sharing, and what was the outcome?**



## WELCOME, JOYCE!

Joyce is an award-winning author of various short stories, novels and essays. She retired as a college professor in 2022, where she taught writing classes featuring story exchanges with incarcerated people. Through this, she became familiar with the work of Shining Light, as well as the lives and work of Ms. Naomi and the Horton brothers. Now a member of our staff as a facilitator with the Academy, Joyce says, “I am deeply moved, and grateful, to have been brought into the Shining Light family, and I'm thrilled to be able to contribute to the Creative Writing and Resources section of The Loop!”



*Joyce*

PROGRAM FACILITATOR

Read the Room  
by Shawn

Read the room,  
don't just skim through the preface.  
See the characters beneath the lines,  
learn their motivations and beliefs  
even if for a brief time.  
Read the room.

You are the Inciting Event.  
Invite your senses to find delight  
in more than just the print!  
Loose yourself in the dialogue  
as idioms and slang are fired-off  
in winding streams of thought.  
It all seems pointless. But wait, there's a plot!  
Read the room.

Who's the antagonist to the protagonist? What's his arc?  
Who's the foil? The walk-ons and Walk-offs?  
The hero and the Villain? Where's the spark?  
The tension and the Conflict?  
Pat attention to the Theme!

Read the room,  
to know when the tides shift,  
to know where the truth lies,  
to know when the plot twists.

Cause rooms have their own genres; question marks,  
exclamations, and commas.  
And you are by nature a character in this drama.  
So read the room!

*A lot of people wrote about the power of a smile when you enter a room and hope to read the mood there, and also when you hope to contribute to making it a positive space.*

*Jeffrey S (OH) wrote about finding a calm space as a public speaker, when “More importantly, a glittering smile spreads onto my face.”*

*Larry S (PA) wrote a poem with the lines “I know who I am. I know where I've come from. I know my purpose now. I ease back and smile.”*

*Jacob L (CA) wrote a poem that concluded with the joyous image of being “home pretty soon, surrounded by people I love filling the room.”*

*Johnny B (NC) wrote a poem with the closing line, “Read the room and be who God created you to be.”*

*Shawn's poem explores the idea of "reading the room" through the use of an extended metaphor--presenting a room as a story that all of us in it need to "read." It's also a story in which we are "by nature a character in this drama"; that's an important reminder that besides "reading the room," we need to strive to be a brave, honest, and loving participant in that room.*



## NEW PROMPT

*(Based on Horton brothers' article p.7)*

Personal bravery is so much more than the “tough-guy” courage we often see depicted in TV and movies. Physical bravery is part of it, of course, but so is emotional and moral bravery.

For this 200 (or less)-word poem or essay, recall a time when you witnessed someone with a “brave heart” in action.

***When have you observed someone displaying not just physical, but also emotional or moral bravery—or some combination of the three?***



**DOUG GERARD**  
SL ALUM - NDSP

My name is Douglas Gerard, Sr. I am a graduate of the first class of the SL Academy in North Dakota. I was released from my incarceration on 9-Aug-2022. Before Shining light, I continually made poor choices in my life outside of the walls of the prison. I lived the lifestyle of using drugs and committing numerous thefts, first from strangers and then from those who I claimed I loved, even

becoming violent with them. The women and the money steered me into dealing drugs. These choices resulted in several stays in county jails and four trips to prison, leaving those I love with the fallout.

When I arrived for my last bid, there was a flyer hanging in the orientation unit posted by a teacher who had previously helped me grow from my mistakes. "Shining Light Academy - come check out the meet and greet." I thought, "Well, most DOCR programs had not helped much, but if Miss Rebecca is endorsing this I'll check it out." I met the crew and had some heart-warming feelings just talking with them, so I locked myself into the class. The first class over zoom, when they spoke of character strengths and about "what went right" I flashed back to my girl telling me that I'd lose her and her daughter if I didn't "stop the drugs & start to grow - character counts!" **This was my "Aha!" moment and I knew I was where I needed to be!**

Here I am, 10-December-2022, in a sober living house provided by The F5 Project who picked up where Shining Light left off in supporting my growth. I work full time as a chef in a fine dining restaurant, and I'm rebuilding my relationship with my children and with that special lady.

I could not believe the amount of resources provided for felons. The F5 Project was able to hook me up with several resources within their program and turn me on to everything that the community had to offer. I was so afraid of getting out with only the clothes on my back, but now I own a car, TV, laptop and an amazing wardrobe that was nearly all donated. The biggest challenge was within my own head; I didn't think I could do it. Don't pollute your mind! If I can do it, so can you!

**Bravery to me is honesty.** I had to be honest first with myself, then those I love and those who were here to help me. I had to tell the truth about my past, my addiction, my mental health issues, and the abuse that I had done to those I love. I also had to take the honest conversations where they told me how much my actions hurt them. Come clean and be real with those you love, because if they love you as much as you claim to love them, they will come back. Time takes time though - no instant gratification here.

I thought I would have been dead by now. A lot of my friends have died from suicide or from drug-related deaths, but I have a clean bill of health and am able to fight another day for myself. I am also willing to take the time to help others who are still suffering. Thank you to Shining Light and to The F5 Project for taking my hand and showing me that if I did the work, I would get the results.

*The name F5 Project comes from the "refresh" key (F5) on the computer, representing the idea of giving every individual a fresh start, regardless of their background. Founded through shared experiences of incarceration and reentry, the mission of F5 Project is to provide personalized support to incarcerated individuals to deter repeat offenses. They provide full-spectrum services to people in the state of North Dakota who are struggling with incarceration, mental health, and addiction.*

*For more information, write F5 Project at 1122 1st Ave N, Fargo, ND 58102, or call 701-310-2491 | [www.f5project.org](http://www.f5project.org)*

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'm proud of getting through 16 years of incarceration. I have never been locked up before, with the exception of now, to be transparent, this has been one of the hardest things I had to do in my life. I was 24 years old when I first got arrested. I knew nothing about the criminal system. This was challenging. However, I survived, I'm wiser through it to share my story and because of this experience. I'm stronger, wiser, and better than ever before.

Lakeshia (IL)

## 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?

"I recently got a job working as a Teacher's Assistant (TA) in the prison's GED program. I am super excited because it gives me the opportunity for me to use my God-given talents to give back."

Donovan/SC

Just got accepted to Winter Arts Colab - Night (PA)

Having a visit from staff at Shining Light even if it was a few minutes but coming to Ohio's highest Security Prison to meet me and taking time out your day! -Gilly (OH)

I have been invited by PEN America Writing Center to facilitate a Poetry Writing workshop here at MacDougall.

Gary F (SC)

"I recently reunited with my father after 30 years!"

Thomas/NC

I finally have enough money in my account to live some what comfortable.

"An accomplishment I may attribute a semblance of pride to would be a spoken word poetry piece I wrote after watching a Shining Light course. Looking forward to the future and how I will succeed."

Gabriel/CA

"I am an enrolled tribal member from the Coeur d'Alene Indian reservation in northern Idaho and I just recently found out that we are, as a tribe, now over 2,000 tribal members. It wasn't that long ago that we were only a few hundred. I am proud to be Native American and of being a part of our strength and growth."

Dustin/MT

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE SHINING LIGHT ACADEMY AS AN ASSISTANT, REALIZING I AM THE ONLY LIMIT TO MY LEARNING.

-JAKE (ND)

I got Accepted Into Onesimus School of Theology to earn a college certificate.

DOUG - PA

I am proud that I will be starting the first ever Cancer Support Group at my prison. And I am excited about getting this Pell Grant so that I can attend Ohio State and pursue my goal of achieving an Associates Degree. Thank you.

P.s. I am also excited about performing a play that I wrote, at my prison.

"My husband and I are sober - he's 90 days, I'm 30."

Nichol/IN

Shawn (PA)

"I've recently found out my sentence. I'm ready and excited to get the next phase of my life started, meaning sobriety... I'm looking forward to moving forward in a positive mindset."

Anonymous/CO

"My best friend since Kindergarten found out I was in prison by a bad dream! She got in touch with my sister and has been keeping in touch with me. It is amazing how when we feel truly alone. God sends an angel!"

Anonymous/IL



## STRENGTH SPOTTING

As a reminder, “strength spotting” is the intentional act of noticing when someone uses one of the character strengths. It can be a helpful way to become more aware of strengths in both oneself and others, and when it is shared with the person using the strength, that can be incredibly encouraging. Below is a great example of using social intelligence during the holidays.

Here in prison around the holidays. Thanksgiving and Christmas. I spent 16 years straight incarcerated. Being away from family and friends is extremely hard on anyone's emotional state of being, especially during the holidays. People form bonds, relationships, and sometimes consider one another family to say. Also have seen and experience myself in the giving and receiving and of social intelligence during those times just being there in a time of need, supporting each other rather good, bad, happy or sad. That including the staff and administration team as well. Even though they're placed as authority, they aren't just here for us, but vice versa. They are still human. We all are human beings with emotional needs.

Lakeshia (IL)



**For the next issue, tell us where you spot people around you using Bravery.**

In the last issue, we challenged you to experiment with different tips for developing your strength of social intelligence. We heard from a lot of you who are planning to take on these challenges in various ways! Here is a quick recap of the five tips and an example of each:



**ACTIVE LISTENING:** “Often we try to talk more and we are not listening enough. I will be practicing this with my brothers in therapy and others in the dorm.” - Edwin / NC



**EMPATHY:** “I would like this in myself so I can feel the pain that other people are going through when they tell their story and how I can relate to them and help them out.” Kenneth / Washington D.C.



**TEAMWORK:** “I want to be a better team player. Our weaknesses and strengths and other differences should be discussed, communication and respect is always good to have for one another when trying to get work done.” Juan / ME



**COMMUNICATION PRACTICE:** “I’ve never been good at small talk, but I have been working on it and I am getting better at finding new things to talk about or using small talk to learn more about who I am talking to. I struggle but when I focus I do better and it helps my anxiety because there is less awkwardness.” Daniel / MI



**SHOW APPROPRIATE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:** “Sometimes I don't always know that I'm being over critical and it shows on my face before I even say a word.” - Marra / AZ

Thank you to all of you who dove into this exercise and sent us your responses. To everyone who is considering how to use these five tips, my encouragement is to try to use your strength of Bravery to help you follow through!

## VIA DEFINITION: BRAVERY

“To be brave is to face your challenges, threats, or difficulties. It involves valuing a goal or conviction and acting upon it, whether popular or not. A central element involves facing – rather than avoiding – fears.

There are three types of bravery. An individual may possess one of these or a combination:

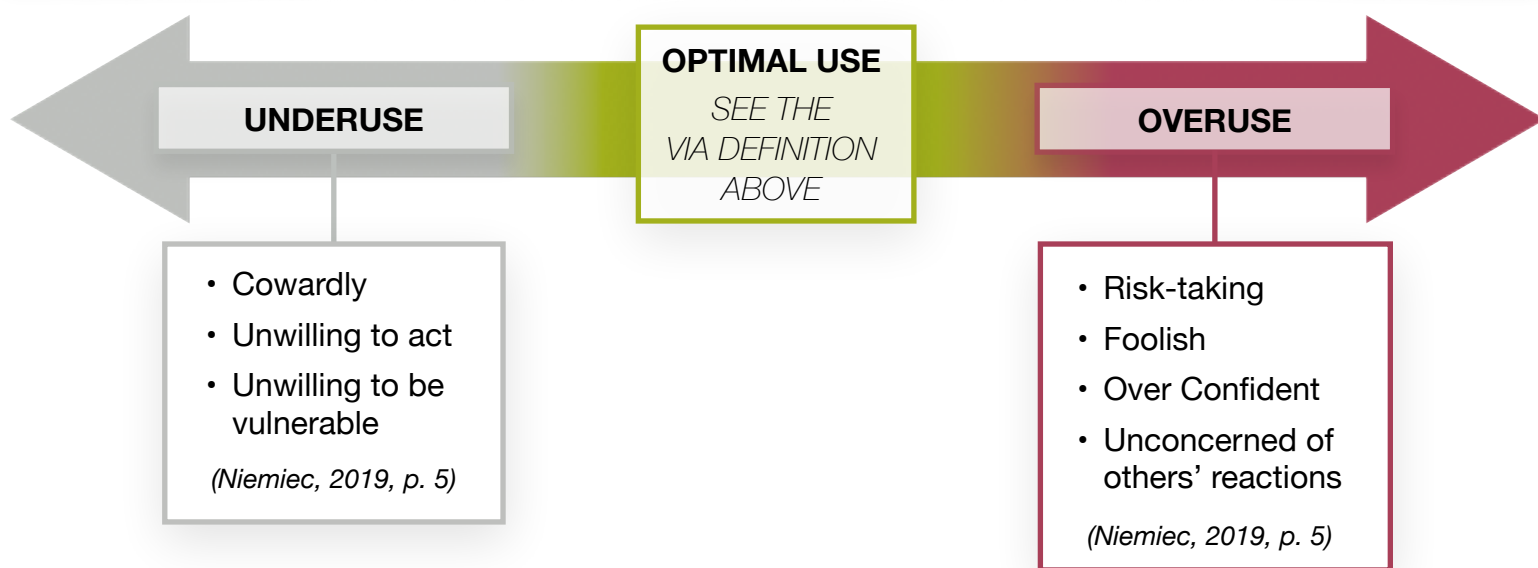
**PHYSICAL** (e.g., firefighters, police officers, soldiers)

**PSYCHOLOGICAL** (e.g., facing painful aspects of oneself)

**MORAL** (e.g., speaking up for what's right, even if it's an unfavorable opinion to a group”

(VIA Institute on Character, 2022, para. 1)

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



One unique aspect of Bravery is that it directly involves more negative emotions or experiences as compared to many of the other Character Strengths. The use of this strength is actually the overcoming of fear, challenges, and difficulties within a given situation. As a result, noticing the strength in oneself may not be easy in the moment. It may be easier to recognize in hindsight, once the situation has stabilized (Pearce, 2020). This is also why spotting someone using their strength in the moment can be so encouraging, because they may not see it in themselves. I think this is interesting and can be helpful to be aware of in regard to the nature of Bravery. What do you think?



Travis

PROGRAM DEVELOPER



**What was a difficult situation you were in recently where you used Bravery to overcome, but didn't realize it at the time?**

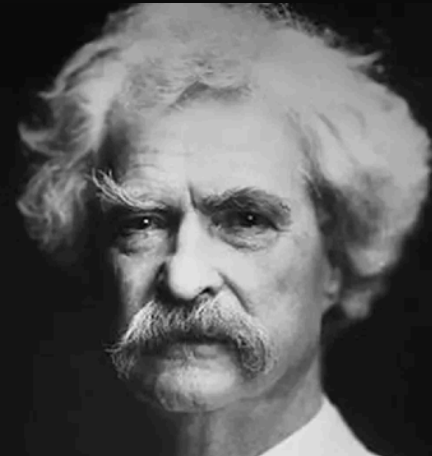
[☆] Niemiec, R. M. (2018). *Character strengths interventions: A field guide for practitioners*. Hogrefe Publishing.

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.

Pearce, R. (2020, November 11). *Bravery, the Uncomfortable Strength*. VIA Institute on Character. <https://www.viacharacter.org/topics/articles/bravery-the-uncomfortable-strength>.

"Courage is resistance to fear,  
mastery of fear - not absence of fear."

- Mark Twain



Credit: PBS Learning Media

## BRAVERY: IN PRACTICE

As you consider spotting bravery or another strength in others (p.14), try to describe the example as a little or big strength use. Why might this be valuable?

It can be easy to overlook times in a day when strengths are being used in little ways, like brushing your teeth (self-regulation) or asking a neighbor a couple of questions (curiosity). I think this can be especially true when considering the strength of Bravery. Oftentimes we notice or think of the big moments or gestures, like when someone speaks in front of an audience or steps in to save another's life. But it can be incredibly impactful to notice the little moments when strengths are expressed, too. This differentiation can be described as "little" and "big" strength use (Niemic, 2018). As we dive deeper into Bravery, this may be a helpful piece to keep in mind.

A research highlight of the strength of bravery is that it has shown to build resilience as it is used, resulting in the development of coping skills (Niemic, 2018).

As a way to put this all together, **build your own Bravery Inventory**.

Think of at least three moments in your life when you were brave. Write them down to remind yourself of them when you need to be brave again in the future. If you are having issues thinking of examples, ask someone who knows you and might be able to help you build your inventory (Hannah et al., 2007).

1.

2.

3.

# BRAVERY INVENTORY

Hannah, S. T., Sweeney, P. J., & Lester, P. B. (2007). Toward a courageous mindset: The subjective act and experience of courage. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 2(2), 129-135.

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



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

Peace, brothers & sisters. My name is Dormen Lisby. I served 25 years and 8 months (or 1,339 weeks and one day) in the Department of Corrections in Pennsylvania. I was released from prison April 7th, 2022 and have been home a little over 9 months now. My peers and Brothers in the struggle called me Bro Mu.



*Dormen*

PROGRAM  
FACILITATOR

I came to know Shining Light in 2018 when we put on the full-out workshop at the prison. Afterwards, I continued to stay in contact with Shining Light, participating in a pilot virtual workshop in 2020 and having one of my drawings displayed **on the cover of the magazine**, before it was formally called The Loop. After my reentry, I signed up for Shining Light's email list where I continued to follow The Loop, then I got "the call" to be a facilitator for the SL Academy, which allows me to be in print with you today.

While incarcerated, I served as a deacon in the church and was a teacher's assistant in the Education Department, as well as a certified peer support specialist (CPS). As an avid weightlifter, balancing mind, body and spirit was -

and still is - very important to me. I was often asked, "how is life treating you?" And in response I would say "I don't worry about how life treats me...I am more concerned about how I treat myself!" Caring for myself enables me to help others. That's why I'm excited to do this page with you.

*"how you treat your insides will reflect on your outside, ... inside"*

### self-care

/self-kare/ noun

the active process of making your body and mind a pleasant place to inhabit, by filling your own cup first. This ensures you have enough to give others.

How can self-care be an act of Bravery? How do they go together? I believe when a person takes a stand for themselves, whether it be for mental health issues or physical health issues, you are being brave - despite what your peers may think or say. For me, bravery in self care often meant swallowing my pride to ask for assistance when needed - whether from my peers or staff - knowing that there's truly no self-made anything... We all need someone sometimes. So I ask you...**how do you do self care? How do you see bravery in self care?**

How can self-care be an act of Bravery? How do they go together? I believe when a person takes a stand for themselves, whether it be for mental health issues or physical health issues, you are being brave - despite what your peers may think or say. For me, bravery in



*Dormen (Brother Mu) performing at SCI Frackville in 2018*



*What's working for you?*

**Send me your suggestions for keeping up with your Health and Wellness on the inside.**

## FEATURED WRITING

In her brief, clear, and powerful piece, Alicia reminds us of the bravery required to reach a place of deep honesty and peace, facing down the challenges of addiction. Acknowledging that she will need to “trust the process” and “confidently step out of my comfort zone,” she ends with this perfect picture of the year to come: “2023, clean and serene!”

*Joyce*



### A NEW PROMPT:

For this piece of creative writing, try using figurative language (similes and metaphors) to construct a poem about forgiveness. Is forgiveness vast like the sky, or small and treasured, like a diamond? Would you call forgiveness an ocean, or a teardrop?

Open up your imagination to write an 8- or 12-line poem with lines that begin, “**Forgiveness is...**,” and then build to whatever conclusion you’d like.

Dear 2023,  
 on January 5th  
 I will be  
 15 months clean.  
 with a clear mind  
 & a willing heart,  
 I will embrace the challenges  
 that this year may bring.  
 I look forward to  
 the blessings & growth  
 that 2023 seems to be  
 holding for me!  
 I'll “trust the process,”  
 & confidently step out  
 of my comfort zone.  
 2023, clean & serene!

Alicia V. (ND)



**JUSTICE ARTS COALITION**  
<https://thejusticeartscoalition.org/writing>



The goal of the Justice Arts Coalition is “to uplift and share the voices of those impacted by the carceral system.” They regularly accept and publish work from incarcerated artists **in a range of categories:** Poetry, Prose, Life Inside, Identity/Self-Reflection, Family/Friendship/Community, Strength/Resilience, Justice/Injustice, Love, Spirituality, Hardship/Struggle, Hopes/Dreams/Motivation, Nature/Animals, and Power of Art.

***If you would like learn more about submitting your work to the galleries or portfolios, write to them at***

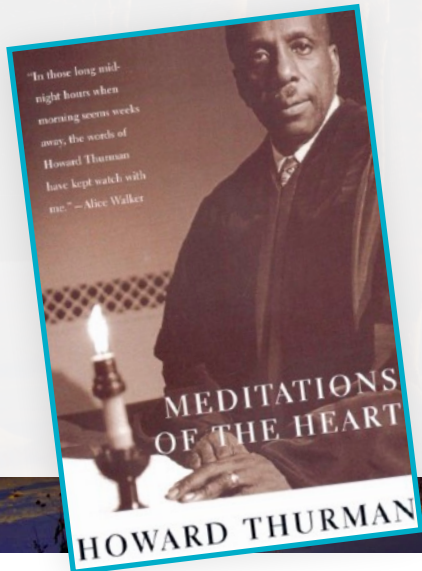
**Justice Arts Coalition  
 PO Box 8261  
 Silver Spring, MD 20907**

*K. Daniel O. (AR) shared about an essay contest based on the book by Tom Pace, called “Mentor: The Kid and the CEO.” Three times a year the publishers award a \$5,000 cash prize to the best essay describing the difference this book made on the reader.*

*For more information, visit [www.worldbookbank.org/essay-contest](http://www.worldbookbank.org/essay-contest) | Submissions begin April 5th.*

*Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me*

*By Howard Thurman,  
"Meditations of the Heart"*



*Open unto me, light for my darkness  
Open unto me, courage for my fear  
Open unto me, hope for my despair  
Open unto me, peace for my turmoil  
Open unto me, joy for my sorrow  
Open unto me, strength for my weakness  
Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion  
Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins  
Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness  
Open unto me, love for my hates  
Open unto me, Thy Self for myself  
Lord, Lord, open unto me!*

With February being Black History Month, we wanted to highlight the influential work and words of **Howard Thurman**, one of the great spiritual leaders of the 20th century in America.

Born in 1899 and raised in the segregated South, he became a prolific author, theologian and civil rights leader, where his radical faith-centered approach to nonviolence led him to influence and mentor a generation of civil rights activists in the 1960s. "Meditations of the Heart" is a collection of his most well-known reflections and prayers, which is said to feature his thoughts on prayer, community, and the joys and rituals of life... offering "words that sustain, elevate, and inspire," with a message of hope and endurance for people of all faiths.

Consider reading the above prayer several times, focusing on something different each time:

- **What does a physical posture of "openness" look like for you? Perhaps open your palms face-up, as a gesture of receiving from God what each line is requesting.**
- **Be aware of any phrases that stick out to you as you read them. Pause to reflect on why that may be - what specific requests you may have in that area - and try to release them to God.**
- **Think of someone you know who is struggling and pray this on their behalf - either the whole prayer, or different lines for different people based on the hardships they're facing.**

**"I have read Howard Thurman and been informed, influenced, and girded by his courage, intelligence & abiding love."**

**- Maya Angelou**





# 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.

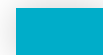
Last edition we proposed the statement, **“We should try to experience everything life has to offer,”** and asked if you agreed or disagreed with it. Here is a range of responses:



AGREE



DEPENDS



DISAGREE

I don't believe so. We should only experience what our crystal clear heart moves us to do. Some things that are for others may not be for you or me. Follow wisdom and your good dreams. Not what others push on you. Nothing should be forced. Truth and goodness brings joy to an experience. That's what I experienced from people who truly loved me.

Larry (PA)

“I agree!! We only have one life so in my opinion I think we should live life to the fullest, I don't wanna be 80-90 years old and look back on my life an catch myself wondering why I didn't do something or why I didn't take the chance...”

- Dan/NY

“I agree. Our mother earth is extraordinary and she has intended for us to experience every corner, and nook and cranny. Please don't miss out.”

- Dustin/MT

## “WE SHOULD TRY TO EXPERIENCE EVERYTHING LIFE HAS TO OFFER.”

*Life is a super journey, if we take the time to embrace it. We develop through our life's experiences ... so I would say Yes, we should try to Experience Everything life has to offer “If” there is purpose, gain + pleasure [emphasis added]; life also offers plenty of suffering and pain which if not naturally experienced + should be avoided, because its a result of bad choices/decisions ... but equally even they have teaching moments. - Daniel (MI)*

“Once being inside your perspective of life changes a great deal. The little things you once took for granted seem to be the things you missed the most. How can you say you've lived if you never stepped out of your comfort zone. I feel like you should experience all life has to offer unless it is a risk to you or others around you. We all heard the term yolo but at what cost are you willing to go?”

- Marra/AZ

Life is not a video game. There is no "reset" button. You get just one "go-around" in this crazy thing called life. We should all practice *carpe diem* daily and "seize the day." Adam Lindsay Gordon once wrote, "Life is mostly froth and bubble, two things stand like stone, kindness in another's trouble, courage in your own."

Gary (SC)

I feel as though that can only be assessed on a case by case basis. Because depending on the situation, it could be positive or negative. If it's life enriching and beneficial to you or you feel it may be something you would enjoy positively then go for it. On the other hand every day is not for every body. Sometimes life offers you things that are detrimental if you get involved.

Willie (PA)

"Disagree, because sometimes a person don't have to experience everything, sometimes a person can learn through someone else's mistakes."

- Demetrius/AZ

In response, I say yes we should, but first we need to expand our understanding of life, because by being in a city and street culture I only was able to experience my perspective of life and what I wanted. Not until I broadened my horizons did I start experiencing more, like fishing, swimming, going on a cruise, to go hiking, as well as different foods. By having a glass ceiling, all I was able to do was stay with what was going on around me, but not until it broke was I able not just to experience more, but enjoy life.

George (PA)

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



**"EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADVOCATING FOR THEIR OWN NEEDS"**

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

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

### HOLIDAYS/SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP:

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY**  
JAN 16

**LUNAR (CHINESE) NEW YEAR**  
JAN 22

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**  
FEBRUARY

**ASH WEDNESDAY (LENT BEGINS)**  
FEB 22

*This date is decided by the Chinese Lunar calendar, which is based on the cycles of the moon & sun. It changes every year, but always falls between January 21st & February 20th. Celebrations culminate in the Lantern Festival, Feb 5.*

# GAMES & ACTIVITIES

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

G N T I B R A D N E L A C L O C K K A  
 U O R O D E X U T O U I G O F H C T X  
 A I A T B S X B V P A R T Y I M I O W  
 T T D V Q O A W A R Y F F T R M S T G  
 Z A I A U L D L A N G S Y N E T U L F  
 I T T F L U R E M A E R T S C F M M N  
 O I I O C T Y E C F T X S S R G N C W  
 N V O F E I B P K D I Q U I A N W O G  
 C N N B E O A A P A U R K K C I V U C  
 S I F N D N B L G A M E S C K C T N W  
 I H Q J O B B F R F H E H T E N B T S  
 N O I T A R B E L E C A S M R A V D E  
 Z U D L F N L V Q G M A T I G D Q O W  
 V R L K K K U E M P O D C D O Q V W C  
 P G G R R V R A A T T E I N J N P N F  
 R L Y A F L U G R U E T V I S Q R L S  
 L A P A K E N Q N Y E W M G V H Q C H  
 E S E D D E C E M B E R G H F T S E C  
 A S R L W X E M I T R E H T A F M F M

AULD LANG SYNE  
 BABY  
 BALL  
 BALLOONS  
 CALENDAR  
 CELEBRATION  
 CHAMPAGNE  
 CLOCK  
 CONFETTI  
 COUNTDOWN  
 DANCING  
 DECEMBER  
 EVE  
 FATHER TIME  
 FIRECRACKER  
 FIRST  
 FLUTE  
 GAMES  
 GOWN

HAPPY  
 HAT  
 HOURGLASS  
 INVITATION  
 JANUARY  
 KISS  
 MIDNIGHT  
 MUSIC  
 NOISE MAKER  
 PARTY  
 RESOLUTION  
 SPARKLER  
 STREAMER  
 TIMES SQUARE  
 TOAST  
 TRADITION  
 TUXEDO  
 VOW  
 YEAR



## WE WANT YOUR PUZZLES!

We're looking for submissions of **originally designed puzzles** with a spring theme. Think spring sports, spring flowers, spring holidays - whatever inspires you!

### VALENTINE'S DAY QUIZ

1. What Valentine's Day candy was first created on equipment made for lozenges? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The oldest known Valentine's message was sent in 1415 from Charles, the French Duke of Orleans. Where was he sending it from? \_\_\_\_\_
3. About how many roses are sent for Valentine's Day each year? a) 98,000 // b) 110,000 // c) 275,000
4. On average, how many proposals are there on Valentine's Day? a) 220,000 // b) 400,500 // c) 320,000
5. Which popular website debuted on Valentine's Day in 2005? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How much money on average do American's spend on chocolate for Valentine's Day?  
a) 2.2 billion // b) 824 million // c) 1 billion
7. What is the Guinness World Record for the longest marriage ever recorded?  
a) 82 years / b) 79 years / c) 86 years
8. What major invention was patented on Valentine's Day? \_\_\_\_\_





BIOGRAPHY

**12 YEARS A SLAVE** // BY: SOLOMON NORTHRUP

"Solomon Northup went through so many trials and tribulations. It's a must read." - Dustin / MT

FICTION

**OUTSIDER** // BY: STEPHEN KING

"It keeps you guessing the whole book." - Timothy / NC

NONFICTION

**SIMPLE HAPPINESS - 52 EASY WAYS TO LIGHTEN UP**

BY: JIM RYAN

"It is a quick read that lists simple, practical techniques you can use to live a happier life. I dog-eared my favorite techniques and try to read them every morning." - Donovan / NC

**JUST  
FOR  
FUN**



Francisco's (OH) origami trees from the Nov/Dec Loop

Chili chips N Cheese - it's so delicious

Ingredients:

- 1 or 2 Packs of Kraft Cheese Squeeze spreads (Regular or Spicy)
- 1/2 bag of Chili with Beans (Regular or Spicy)
- Chunky Chili from the Kitchen Tray
- 1 Summer Sausage "Cut in small pieces" (Regular or Spicy)
- 1 Serving of French Fries from the Kitchen Tray or 1 or 2 bags of Chili Flavored Frito Chips
- 1/2 Portion of Texas Beef Seasoning Package

Directions:

In a large Zip lock bag we put the Cheese packs, the bag of chili with beans & the summer sausage & we add hot water & heat them up. Then in a large bowl we open all ingredients & we mix them well until nicely combined. Then we spread them over the fries or the chili flavored Frito chips & Wata!. Enjoy!

\* Note: to make a spread just cook some Ramen noodles & once they're puffy, drain excess water & mix it in with all ingredients, except the fries & chips. Then in a flour tortilla we add the Ramen mixture, add the fries or chips & roll up and enjoy! Simply delish!

- 0 -

Isaac "The Ramen Scientist"

## FEATURED RECIPES

Anyone for some Super Bowl snacks?  
Isaac and TJ have us off to a great start  
- thanks for submitting recipes!

Bonus Fun Facts: Super Bowl LVII (57) will be played on Feb 12th in Arizona at State Farm Stadium & the lowest listed ticket price is \$5,850. Yikes.



### CHOCOLATE BANANA PUDDING

- 1 Box of SWISS ROLLS
- 1 BANANA
- 2 Brownies or CAKE
- 1 MILK

MIX ALL SWISS ROLLS and BROWNIES or CAKE or CHOCOLATE BAR (IF YOU HAVE) all into a BOWL. Then SHR IN A little MILK until the thickness you desire is right. Then Add Ripe Fresh BANANA sliced on Top.

TJR.

## MS. NAOMI'S CORNY CORNER

WE KNOW YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELVES

Jesus walks into a bar & the bartender says, "What'll it be, Jesus?"

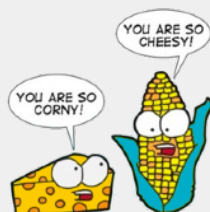
Jesus says, "I'll have a glass of water & make it a round for everyone."

The bartender replies, "Not this crap again, Jesus." - Janell (PA)

What did the fish say when it hit the brick wall? **Dam** - Nichol (IN)

What did you call a fish with two knees?

**A two-knee fish.**  
Juan (ME)



**SPECIAL THANKS TO THESE  
48 CONTRIBUTORS:**

**COVER ART:**

**R. Hamilton (OH)**

**FEATURED WRITING:**

**Shawn H. (PA) & Alicia V. (ND)**

**COMMUNITY CODE:**

**D. Murrell & Loop Group (ND)**

**COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:**

**Doug Gerard, Sr.**

**OTHER REFLECTIONS & RESPONSES:**

[AR] K. Daniel O.

[ND] Jake L.

[AZ] Demetrius B., Marra

[NY] Dan R.

[CA] Gabriel S., Isaac S., Jacob L.,  
Kayonie M.

[OH] D. Murrell & Loop Group, Francisco V.,  
Gilly, Jeffrey S., Norman A., T.J. R.

[Wash D.C.] Kenneth W.

[PA] Anthony F., Cheo, Crystal K., Doug B.,  
Earl Ray G., George B., Janell N., Jillian R.,  
Larry S., Night, Noel G., Russ C., Willie S.

[IL] Anna S., Daniel A., LaKeshia M.

[SC] Donovan L, Gary F.

[IN] Nichol H.

[ME] Juan C.

[MI] Daniel M.

[MT] Dustin S.

[NC] Edwin, Furman, R., Johnny B.,  
Michael H., Thomas F.

2 Anonymous Tablet  
Submissions from CO & IL

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

**VALENTINE'S DAY QUIZ ANSWERS**

1. Sweethearts // 2. Prison // 3. b // 4. a // 5. YouTube // 6. c // 7. c // 8. Telephone

**NEXT ISSUE'S THEME  
FORGIVENESS**

**SEND US YOUR BEST COVER ART!**

*Upcoming themes - Teamwork, Prudence & Zest*



What might it mean to see Forgiveness as a character strength? Is it merely an act we sometimes choose, or could it be developed as a mindset or way of living? According to the VIA Institute, it involves extending understanding towards those who have wronged us, and letting go of the painful feelings associated with the offense. It also involves accepting others' shortcomings and "humanizing those who have led us to feel dehumanized." **How do Bravery and Forgiveness intersect for you?**



**SUBMISSIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE DUE BY MARCH 1**



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](http://shining-light.com/theloop)**

*I know there are some who will not take it as serious as others, however those who do, the light is being shared. Its my prayer and hope that in time it will be a light in N.C. prison system, and the darkness will no longer be, for there is love, Hope, Creativity, Kindness.*

*- Furman (NC)*