



Project Metamorphosis

Volume 4 Number 1A/1B

Decision-Making is a Successful Thinking Skill

In Volume 2 of the Project Metamorphosis newsletters, we learned that success was a thinking skill. We learned that how we think is as important as what we think. Volume 4 is also about successful thinking skills. It is about making choices. It is about making decisions.

What will be your biggest challenge when you go home? Getting a job? Staying out of trouble? Renewing relationships? Regaining self-esteem? Earning a living? No matter which one you choose, each challenge is a question of choices.

Prison takes away many freedoms. You don't get to choose where to live. You are told when to get up and when to go to sleep. You have to follow rules other people make. Many decisions are made for you. In a way, that can be a relief. You don't have to think about getting a job. You don't have to think about money. You don't have to think very much about relationships.

But beginning now, start thinking about your thinking. Think about the choices you can make each day. You choose your attitudes. You choose how to think about yourself. You choose how to think about your future. No one can take these freedoms from you.

TWO CHOICES

One story about decision making and choices concerns a guy named Jerry. He was the kind of person you love to hate. He was always in a good mood. When asked how he stayed positive, he said, "Each day I wake up and I have two choices. I can be in a bad mood. Or I can be in a good mood. I choose to be in a good mood." "Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim. Or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn."

**"Life is about choices...
Everything is a choice."**

"But it's not that easy," you may think. When told that, Jerry said, "Sure, it is. Life is about choices. When you get down to it, everything is a choice. I choose how to react to things. I choose how others affect my mood. I choose to be in a good or bad mood. It's my choice how I live my life." You too can make good or bad choices.

You may be thinking that some people like Jerry have all the luck. Everything goes their way. But it doesn't. One night Jerry was robbed. He was shot and left for dead. And Jerry was lucky. Someone found him. They took him to the hospital. He was in bad shape. He needed 18 hours of surgery. It took him 6 months to get better. When asked about the experience, Jerry said, "I had two choices. I could choose to live. Or, I could choose to die. I chose to live." Jerry said that when he got to the hospital he could tell that the hospital staff thought he was going to die. A nurse asked him if was allergic to anything. Jerry said, "Yes." The staff stopped and waited to see what he was allergic to. Jerry said, "I'm allergic to bullets!" Over their laughter, Jerry said, "I choose to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead."

You, too, have two choices. You can either choose to learn from your prison experience. . . or not. You can choose to be positive or negative. You can choose to live life fully . . . or not. Attitude is everything in making choices. Although you don't have all your freedoms, you're making choices each day. This volume will show you how to make better choices. It will help you create new resources. The choice is yours.

MAKING CHOICES: MAKING DECISIONS

In this session you will assess how you make decisions. You make decisions in relation to other things. You may make different choices depending on who you're with. For instance, you might choose to say one thing when you're around your family and another thing around your friends. You make different choices depending on where you are. You do different things in prison than you do on the outside. People, places, and situations can affect your choices. . . if you choose to let them. Let's look at what drives your choices. Think about decisions made in the past. Think about what choices to make in the future.

The Greatest Secret: Part 4

The preceding article described Jerry. Jerry lived his life the way he wanted it to be. He made choices about how he approached life. The fourth secret will help you do that, too. What if today were the last day of your life? What would you do? What kind of day would you want to have? We never know if today is our last day or not. Anything can happen. This secret shows you how to really live. Don't forget to read this secret three times a day. Read it to yourself in the morning. Read it again at lunch. Read it aloud before you go to sleep. As you repeat the words they will become part of your active mind. They will also become part of your other mind—the mind that never sleeps and that often makes you act in ways you do not understand.

I will live this day as if it is my last. What shall I do with my last day on earth? I will not feel sad about yesterday's disappointments. I will not regret yesterday's heartaches. Why should I throw good after bad? Yesterday is gone. I will not dwell on it. I will live this day as if it is my last. I will appreciate this day for the opportunity that it is. I will live my life well, just for today. I will appreciate others, just for today. This day is priceless because it is my last one. I won't waste a minute. I won't

get high because I don't want to miss a minute of my last day. I will give my last day my best efforts. Today is priceless. Today is my last day to prove my worth. I will live this day as if it is my last. I will tell my children that I love them. Tomorrow they will be gone and so will I. Today I will help others. Tomorrow they won't need me and I will not be here to hear their cries. Today I will work. Tomorrow I will have nothing to give. I will live this day as if it is my last. If it is my last day, it will be my greatest day. It will be the best day of my life. I will enjoy every minute. I will savor my food. I will make each hour count. My last day must be my best. I will live this day as if it is my last. And if it is not, I will give thanks and continue on.

Source: The Greatest Secret in the World by Og Mandino

LIFELONG LEARNING: Problem-Solving -Problem-solving is a kind of decision-making. Most people think that the most important part of solving a problem is finding an answer. For example, perhaps a worker always does a sloppy job. The obvious answer is that the worker needs to "do a better job." But what's really happening? The real problem may be that the worker doesn't have enough time to do a good job. Maybe the worker doesn't know how to do the job. Perhaps the worker lacks some skills for the job. So, the real answer may be quite different. The real answer may be more time. It could be more training. It could be new skills. Sometimes finding an answer doesn't mean that you have THE answer. Problem solving is a lifelong thinking skill that you need to learn, to work, and to make decisions.

Reflections

Consider the choices to be made when you go home.

Consider the following questions:

1. What did I learn today?
2. Why is this important to know?
3. How can I use what I learned?
4. What difference will this make in my life?

How can living each day as your last help you make good choices?

List three things that you do on your job. Identify two choices that you have in each one.

Summarize the story about Jerry. What did the story mean to you?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 1A/1B
Understanding What you Read

Read “Decision-Making is a Thinking Skill” on pages 1-2.
Then answer the questions.

1. List several freedoms you have in prison. What choices can you make about each freedom?
2. What two choices did Jerry have each morning when he woke up?
3. What choices do we have when “bad” things happen to us?
4. How does your attitude affect the decisions you make?
5. How do other people affect the choices you make?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 1A/1B

Understanding What You Read

Read "Decision-Making is a Thinking Skill". Then complete the following summary.
Use words from the article if you wish.

It is time to start thinking about your thinking. Everyday you make _____.

You choose your _____. You choose how you _____ about

yourself. Every day, when you wake up, you choose to be in a _____

_____ or a _____. When bad things happen, we choose to

be a _____ or to _____. Life is about choices.

You choose how other people affect your _____. The choice is **yours**.



Project Metamorphosis

Volume 4 Number 2A/2B

Why Are You Here? (The Answer May Surprise You)

Why are you here? Were you in the wrong place at the wrong time? Did you hang out with the wrong people? Did you need money? Were you on drugs or alcohol? Was crime something other members of your family did? Did you plan a crime or did it just happen? The Lifelong Learning section of the last newsletter discussed problem-solving. It said that the answer does not always solve the problem. What you need is the problem's cause. Unless we know why a problem occurs, we may never solve it. Let's look at what's going on when problems occur. The choices we make about situations often depends on our resources.

RESOURCES FOR MAKING CHOICES

Ruby K. Payne writes about poverty in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (1988). She says people live in different ways depending on the resources that they have. What does that mean? It means that people make choices based on their view of the world. Although some things in their world could change, they may make the same choices. Their ability to change—or not change—affects their style. What you wear might no longer be “cool”. In terms of style, you'll be making the wrong choice. At one time, the style is right. In another, the style is wrong. What are some of your resources? How do they affect the choices you make?

“Unless you know why a problem occurs, you may never solve the problem...Choices you make often depend on your resources.”

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Having financial resources means having enough money to buy things (like groceries) and services (like medical care). What you have determines if you are rich, poor, or middle class. Financial resources are relative. You might be poor, but if everyone you know is in the same situation, you might think of your world as “average”. For instance, if no one you know has a car, then not having a car is okay. If no one you know has a certain kind of shoe, then not having those shoes is no big deal. If you have those items, you might be thought of as “rich.” In the same way, if everyone you know has a new car, you will feel “poor” unless you have one, too.

EMOTIONAL RESOURCES

Your reactions to people and situations are your emotions. If you have few resources, you may just react when things occur. If you have choices about how you respond, you have more resources. Emotional resources are our most important resource. They help us form new habits. New or hard situations pose problems for everyone. Emotional resources help us handle them successfully. They give us the power to learn new ways of doing things.

MENTAL RESOURCES

Mental resources determine how we process ideas and manage life. We need to be able to figure things out. This may require basic skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and math. The ability to get and use information helps people be independent.

SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

Some people think of spiritual resources as faith. It is a belief in a higher power other than yourself. Spiritual resources give us a purpose for living. They give help in times of trouble.

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Physical resources give us good health, freedom from illness' and being able to move without pain or difficulty.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The old saying, "There is strength in numbers" describes support systems. Support systems are those people who help us. They keep us from feeling that we are all alone in the world. While your

support systems may not physically fight others for you, they help you by finding other resources for you. If you lack physical resources, your support system might take you to the doctor or care for you. If you lack financial resources, they might lend you money or share expenses with you. If you lack spiritual resources, they might pray for you or have faith in you. If you lack emotional resources, they might listen to you and encourage you. If you don't know where to go for help, they provide the mental resources you need.

ROLE MODELS/APPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS

Who do you admire? Who do you want to be like? These people are your role models. What kind of people are your role models? Appropriate relationships are respectful. They are nurturing for children. They are never abusive. They do not encourage self-destructive behavior. Role models help people learn how to live successful lives.

KNOWLEDGE OF HIDDEN RULES

Every group has rules. Some are clearly defined. Others are hidden and just "understood" by members of the group. The hidden rules of one group may break defined rules of another group. For instance, in some groups how you act is more important than what you say. Lying, then, may not be very important if you do the right things. Yet, lying on a witness stand is an offense even if it doesn't seem like a big deal. To succeed in a group, you have to know the hidden rules as well as the defined rules.

USING AND DEVELOPING RESOURCES

Knowing what resources you have helps you use them better. If you lack resources in an area, you can take steps to create new ones. This session helps you look at what's happening when you make decisions. It will help you think about who or what you could use to make better choices.

LIFELONG LEARNING: Assessing Your Resources-What resources do you have? Assessing your resources helps you figure out what you have to work with. It helps you figure out which resources you need to grow.

Check the resources you have. Give an example of each one you have.

_____ Financial Resources _____

_____ Emotional Resources _____

_____ Mental Resources _____

_____ Spiritual Resources _____

_____ Physical Resources _____

_____ Support Systems _____

_____ RoleModels/AppropriateRelationships _____

_____ Knowledge of Hidden Rules _____

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 2A/2B

Understanding What you Read

Read “Why Are You in Prison? (The Answer May Surprise You)”. Then answer the questions.

1. What is meant by “your ability to change”?
2. What are the eight resources that affect the choices you make?
3. Why are emotional resources the most important?
4. How could a good support system help you?
5. Have you ever been in a situation where you didn’t know the “hidden rules”? Explain what happened?
6. What could you do to make sure you know the “hidden rules” before you apply for a job?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 2A/2B

Understanding What you Read

Read "Why Are You in Prison? (The Answer May Surprise You)". Then complete the following summary. Use words from the article if you wish.

All of us have resources that affect choices we make. The most important resource is _____
_____. This is the way we respond to people and situations. Having
enough money to buy things is our _____ resource. The way we learn and
use information is our _____ resource. Faith in a higher power is a
_____ resource. _____ are
our health and wellness. Those people who help us are our _____
_____. We also have to know the _____
_____. Knowing our resources helps us make
better choices.



Project Metamorphosis

Volume 4 Number 3A/3B

Whose Success Is It, Anyway? People Who Affect Your Thinking

Have you ever heard someone say, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know”? That often means that in some situations, friends and family make the difference. They can help us get favors, jobs, or other things that we might not have gotten on our own. In these cases, who we know helps us succeed. Sometimes “who you know” affects our success in bad as well as good ways.

“Sometimes ‘who you know’ affects your success in bad as well as good ways”

SHORT-TERM EXPOSURE

Sometimes people that we only see once in a while affect our behavior. An example of this might be friends. Maybe some friends urged you to cut school when you were growing up. Maybe they encouraged criminal behavior when you grew up. Or maybe you had other friends that asked you to church. If you found yourself acting differently depending on which friends you were with, you were swayed— either for good or bad—by them. The amount of time that you were affected depended on how long you were around them. Sometimes we act in certain ways and don’t know why. In looking back, you may want to think about what YOU wanted. What caused you to act as you did? Did you want to be part of the crowd? Did you want them to like you? Did you want to impress them? Without them, how would you have behaved? Would have done the same thing. . . or something different? By the way, where are these people now? Did your short-term exposure to them have lifetime effects for you? Are you acting the same even though they are no longer around?

LONG-TERM EXPOSURE

The effects of short-term exposure are easy to see. This is because you can compare before and after, now and then. The effects of long-term exposure are more difficult to see because you’re never apart from the effects. It’s always there. It’s the way you’ve always lived. For instance, something that makes a family suddenly poor (illness, lost job) is called situational poverty. This differs from families who stay poor over generations (generational poverty). For families that stay poor, their life-styles becomes a way of life passed from parents to children. What isn’t seen is how that life-style forms a pattern of thinking, attitudes, and behavior that continues. Even if you rebelled against your family you were affected by them without knowing it. One step in changing your attitudes, thinking, and behavior is to recognize their effect on you.

EFFECTS OF GENERATIONAL POVERTY

According to Ruby K. Payne, generational poverty has many effects. Which of the following applies to you?

NOISE LEVEL

You may have grown up where there was constant sound. The TV was almost always on; everybody talked at once. The effect is that you are most comfortable when the noise level is high. Although some groups may see it as rude, you may see nothing wrong with interrupting, talking while others are talking, or talking back. This may have caused conflicts at school or on the job.

COMMUNICATION

You may have grown up using only informal speech. Informal speech uses few words. You may have poor grammar. The effect is an under-developed vocabulary. This results in poor communication. You may not have words to really explain what you want to say. You may be judged on how you use language. This may cause you to lose jobs, relationships, or other things.

ALL-OR-NOTHING, HERE -AND- NOW THINKING

All-or-nothing thinking means that you always think in opposites. Things are either good or bad. They're right or wrong. You own something or you don't. You like a person or job or you don't. There's never an in-between. Thus, if you don't like a job, person, or situation, you might quit rather than try to work things out. Or, if you like someone or something, you'll ignore their faults. You may even feel like you completely "own" a person or that others "own" you. You feel left out or angry if that person pays attention to someone or something else. Others may say you're "getting above yourself" if you try to improve your life. There is a sense of *us* versus *them*. *Them* could be the police, your employer, or anyone outside of your social group. Your friends or family may think that if you change, you'll become one of *them*. Here-and-now thinking means that you only think of the present. You don't care about the future. The past doesn't matter. Thus, if you quit a job or end a relationship, you don't think about how you will pay bills or feel tomorrow. Planning ahead or setting goals may be hard for you. You may not have done well in school because you didn't see the "future" in it. Jobs are only to get money, not to further a career. Here-and-now thinking also creates a belief in fate or luck. The focus is on why things don't go your way. You take no responsibility for failures—or successes. You may not realize which choices you have.

ORGANIZATION

When you grew up, your home may have been messy and cluttered. Organization wasn't valued. Important things were lost. Chaos was accepted. This life-style doesn't work at school or on the job. It may affect your ability to get started on a task and follow it through. It may affect how carefully you work. Lack of organization may make you late to work. As a result, you may have to create excuses for poor or missing work.

PERSONALITY

The focus may have been on how much fun a person is. Humor and ability to entertain may be at the expense of others or self. You may feel the need to clown around or laugh. This may have caused you problems at school or work.

ROLES

Females are often the caretakers. They rescue others and put up with anything from males. This can create a passive-aggressive form of power. The females may act powerless, but are often most powerful. In order to be "men," males must work hard physically, be able to fight, and be good lovers. In conflicts, the male may fight or run away from a problem rather than resolve it. If problems occur, a man might fight and then run away from the law and his home. If he returns home, the cycle repeats. Men socialize with men. Women socialize with women.

WHOSE SUCCESS IS IT?

Changing the effects of a lifetime are easier said than done. If you saw yourself in any of preceding sections, perhaps you are now thinking about why you are the way you are. Change is not easy. Your participation in Project Metamorphosis says that you want to change. Your attention to these sessions will help you develop new ways of thinking and acting. Then, what you do will be on your terms. Your successes — at work, in learning, or in life — will be yours.

CHARACTER FIRST: PUNCTUALITY. . . on and off the job

What difference does it make if you're on time? Why do bosses—and other people—get upset when you're late? You may think of punctuality as just being on time. It's much more than that. Being punctual is showing high esteem for other people and their time. Being on time honors your commitments to others. Punctuality is a form of personal discipline. It is both a job skill and a life skill. You can build punctuality by doing the following: Take time to prepare. Getting ready for an event or task shows your interest and attention. Look ahead to what needs to be done next. Remember important days. Keep deadlines at work in mind. Honor friends and family by remembering

birthdays, anniversaries, or other important dates. If you have a bad memory, keep a written record of important dates. Set priorities. Some things are important. Some things are urgent. These are not the same things. Some things that seem urgent are not very important. Some things just need to be done "sometime." If you have trouble deciding which are which, ask a supervisor or other person to help you set priorities. Don't make promises you can't keep. Don't tell others you can do something if you don't have time to get it done. Be realistic about your time.

LIFELONG LEARNING: Punctuation-Punctual and punctuation share the same root basic meaning. Both have to do with points. Punctuality concerns points in time. Punctuation concerns points in sentences. There are three basic kinds of punctuation that appear at the ends of sentences. They "point" to changes in thought.

PERIODS (.) You place periods at the ends of sentences to simply tell information or give orders.
EX. Today is Friday. Finish the job tomorrow.

EXCLAMATION POINTS (!) Exclamation points are used at the ends of sentences to show excitement or urgency.
EX. Help! There's a fire!

QUESTION MARKS (?) Question marks are used to request answers.
EX. What is your name? When will you complete the job?

On a separate sheet of paper, write two sentences that end in periods. Write two sentences that end in exclamation points. Write two sentences that end in question marks.

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 3A/3B

Understanding What You Read

Read “Whose Success Is It, Anyway? People Who Affect Your Thinking” on pages 1-2. Then answer the questions.

1. How can short-term exposure to a person or group influence you positively or negatively?
2. Why is it difficult to recognize the way long-term exposure has affected our behavior?
3. Identify the type of communication in your home when you were growing up. Does this style of communication affect your ability to communicate on the job? With your boss? With customers?
4. Why is thinking only about the “here-and-now” limiting?
5. Why is organization an important personal and workplace skill?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 3A/3B

Understanding What you Read

Read "Whose Success Is It, Anyway? People Who Affect Your Thinking" Then complete the following summary. Use words from the article if you wish.

Many different people affect the way we behave and think. Their influence can be divided into two main

types. These are _____ - _____ and

_____ - _____

exposure. The most difficult influence to recognize and change are the effects from _____

_____ - _____ exposure. Families pass on a lifestyle that forms

a pattern of _____, _____, and

behavior. When families stay poor over generations, this is called _____

_____. There are many effects of

this kind of lifestyle. There is often a high _____ level, or constant sound.

People use informal speech and have poor _____ skills. People think

in opposites. It is either _____ or _____. There

is no future. It is all _____ and _____. Things

are often messy and cluttered. There is little _____. All of these affect the way we think

and make decisions.



Project Metamorphosis

Volume 4 Number 4A/4B

Coping with Life: Creating Support Systems

Have you ever seen the ocean? Some people like to walk on the beach. They like to watch the waves. Some people even like to wade in the water. They like to feel the waves, small and large. Some are big enough to knock a person down. Waves can be dangerous, but they are predictable. If you watch the waves, you'll see what kind of wave is coming. You have time to move away.

Life is like ocean waves. The waves are like our problems. Some problems are small, some big. Some are so big that they knock us down. Life, for anyone, is easy when our situations are okay. The trick to coping with life's biggest waves is knowing how to handle them. You may be a good thinker when it comes to handling yourself. You may be a good thinker in a group. Your problem may be thinking your way out of bad times. Perhaps you were under pressure. You might not have had enough money. Maybe things were bad at home or at work. Your family or friends might have been upset with you. These times can cause us to react rather than act.

How do other people do it? How do they make good decisions in difficult times? One thing that helps people cope are good support systems. They use their support systems when the waves of life threaten to knock them down. A support system is a group of friends, family, and backup resources that help in times of need. A time of need can be any bad time. It can be lack of money. It can be bad times at home or work. It can be pressures of any kind.

“We can use support systems to make good decisions in bad situations.”

KINDS OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

There are different support systems. Each helps us in different ways. Some are better for some problems than for others. Thus, we need to have as many of the following systems as we can.

COPING SKILLS

Coping is handling problems. Coping skills are skills we learn. Coping skills can be parenting skills, or they can be better reading, communication, or math skills. Project Metamorphosis is one of your support systems. It helps you learn new coping skills. Before your release, think of some skills you still want to learn.

CHOICES

Some of us do things because we don't think there's another choice. Decision-making involves choices. If you have no choices, there's no decision to make. Talking to others may help you find other choices you didn't know you had. You can talk to others. The more people you ask, the more choices you could have. The final choice is still yours. The people in your support system just help you find options.

KNOW-HOW

Sometimes what you need is know-how. Know-how is knowing how to do things. Life is complicated. No one knows how to do it all. You need a support system with people who know how to do different things. The people you ask should be those whose opinions you value. These people should have some “expert” knowledge. For instance, think about who you would ask if you wanted to fix a car. You wouldn’t ask someone who didn’t know how to drive. You wouldn’t ask someone who didn’t have a car. You wouldn’t ask someone who didn’t know about car repair. You would ask someone that you thought knew about cars. If the person you ask doesn’t know the answer, ask that person to refer you to someone who might. Keep after it. The first person you ask may not have the answer you need.

BREAKS

Sometimes things get so bad that you need help. Your support system can’t change the situation. It can’t solve the problem for you. It can give you a place or time to get away for a break. Sometimes you need a mental break. Your support system can give you someone who will listen to you. They will let you vent your problems. You can be angry, upset, or sad with them and they will still support you. This doesn’t mean that you can hurt or abuse them. Your support system is a place to let your feelings out. Sometimes, this lets you look at challenges differently. A physical break can help, too. If you are having family problems, it might be good to have a place to stay for a few days. If you have problems with your children, it would help for someone else to care for them for a couple of hours. You’re not running away. You’re taking a break. You’re going to regain your strength. This helps you cope.

SELF-TALK

Other Project Metamorphosis newsletters have discussed self-talk. Self-talk describes what you say to yourself. It is what you think. Your self-talk is a kind of support system you have inside. There are two kinds of self-talk. First, self-talk can cheer you on. Too many people put themselves down. They tell themselves that whatever happens, they can’t handle it. You can use your self-talk to encourage yourself. Think about what you would tell a good friend or someone you love who is experiencing difficult times. Would the you say following: “It’s never going to better.” “You’re a loser.” “You’ll never do it.” If you are a good friend, probably not. Why not treat yourself as well as you would treat a friend? Be a friend to yourself. A second kind of self-talk tells you how to do things. This kind doesn’t give you more answers. It helps you stay on track to find more answers. You use this self-talk when you think through what needs to be done. Then you think about the instructions you’ve set for yourself. The thinking skills you are learning help you develop this kind of self-talk.

LIFELONG LEARNING: Punctuation -The last newsletter reviewed punctuation that ends sentences. Punctuation also occurs within sentences. A comma (,) is an example of this type. Like other punctuation types, commas point to changes.

Commas often show small breaks or pauses. Commas have many uses. You use commas to separate things in a list.

EX. The days of the week are *Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.*

You use commas to set off items in date.

EX. *June 5, 2005.*

When writing a letter, use a comma at the beginning and end of the letter.

EX. *Dear Mom, Your Son,*

Write a short letter to someone. Use a comma after the greeting. Tell that person the date you think you will be released. Include a list of 3 things you learned in Project Metamorphosis. Close your letter. Use commas in the date, the list, and in your closing.

Reflections

Think of a situation that caused you to make a bad choice. Which of the support systems, if any, did you use? Which would have been useful? Why?

Consider the following questions:

1. What did I learn today?

2. Why is this important to know?

3. How can I use what I learned?

4. What difference will this make in my life?

The article compares life's challenges to ocean waves. Tell a small, large, and overpowering "wave" of life that you've had.

Name three people in your support system. What kind of support does each provide?

Compare the two types of self-talk you need. Which one is harder for you to do? Why? What can you do to learn this type?

How is using support systems a decision-making skill?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 4A/4B

Understanding What you Read

Read “Coping with Life: Creating Support Systems”. Then answer the questions.

1. Explain the simile, “The problems of life are like ocean waves.”
2. What are some of the functions of a support system?
3. Why is it a good idea to have as many different support systems as you can?
4. What support systems do you already have? How could you develop other support systems to help you?
5. How can you improve your self-talk so that it is a support system in your life?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 4A/4B

Understanding What you Read

Read “Coping with Life: Creating Support Systems”. Then complete the following summary. Use words from the article if you wish.

Sometimes the problems in life seem to be more than we can handle. In this

newsletter, life’s problems are compared to an _____ . There are ways we can

keep from drowning in our problems. Having a _____

helps us cope with problems. A support system is groups of _____

, _____ , and backup resources that can help us. Our support systems can

give us different kinds of help. They might help us with handling problems or _____

_____ . Some examples of these skills might

be _____ , _____ , and

_____ . Another support system might help us in finding answers

or _____ . We need help from people who know how to do different

things. Other support systems give us time away for a mental _____ or a

physical _____ . We can be a support system for ourselves. We do this

through our _____ - _____ . All of these support

systems help us cope with life.



Project Metamorphosis

Volume 4 Number 5A/5B

Success is a Thinking Skill

“I just didn’t think.” “I got confused.” “I was so mad I couldn’t think straight.” “I never know what I’ll do next.”

How are these sentences alike? They all describe someone whose lack of thinking causes difficulties. Some of us don’t need a bad situation to get into trouble. We don’t have to be swayed by others to do things. We might bring problems on ourselves, by acting emotionally. Our feelings control us, whereas we need to act logically about our choices and decisions. Why do some of us act emotionally? There are several reasons:

LACK OF ROLE MODELS

Some people grow up in homes where emotions control behavior. Few, if any, adults model or show them how to think through situations. Instead, the adults model emotional thinking.

DYSFUNCTIONAL SYSTEMS

Everyone lives in and with groups. When you were young, your family was a group. School was another group for you. Prison is your group now. Each group has rules, roles, and relationships. These groups form systems. The system meets the needs of group members and the group as a whole. When people know what to do, the system functions. Sometimes needs are not met. People may not act according to the rules, roles, or relationships. Then, the group doesn’t function or work well. The system becomes dysfunctional, making it hard to tell the good role models from the bad ones. When you learn how to act in the system, you may or may not be learning functional ways to act.

“Learning to think from the viewpoint of others helps us think ahead.”

INABILITY TO THINK FROM OTHER VIEWPOINTS

Children depend on others. This means that the thinking that they follow often comes from others. This is because they lack knowledge or experience. They need adults to tell them what foods to eat. Adults need to tell them why school is important. Adults need to tell them how to stay safe. As children grow, they learn for themselves. They start deciding—rightly or wrongly—on their own. They choose what to eat. They decide if school is important. They may or may not do safe things. They learn independence. As they grow, they should also learn interdependent thinking. This means they think about how their actions affect others. They learn that some choices don’t affect others much. Choosing what to eat mainly affects only the person who is eating. But, if that person eats all the food, other people’s choices are changed. Choices about school importance seem like an independent choice. But they’re not. Lack of schooling affects future jobs. That may affect a person’s future family income. Choices about safety are also interdependent. A person could shoot a gun in a house. That person might not aim at anyone. But, if the bullets go through walls (and they do), they could hurt or kill whoever’s on the other side. Learning to think from the viewpoints of others helps you think ahead, and helps you make better decisions.

INABILITY TO CHANGE

Change of any kind is hard. Change in thinking is hard because it doesn't "feel right." It takes time and effort to change. Others may not want you to change. The following tips help you make changes in thinking:

Think about current behaviors. Think about their causes. Set new goals for new actions.

Learn new thinking skills. Project Metamorphosis helps you learn these.

Develop support systems. Use Project Metamorphosis staff as your support system. Ask them to help you think of ways to develop systems outside of prison.

Change your surroundings. Think about ways you can change old patterns. Avoid old hangouts. New jobs, people, and activities encourage new ways of thinking.

Use procedural and encouraging self talk. This helps you stay motivated and on track.

Get new role models. Your role models don't have to necessarily know that they are your role models. Watch people who you believe are successful thinkers. If possible, ask them how they think or make choices. Ask them to help you think of other choices or from other viewpoints.

**"Thinking ahead is looking
before you leap."**

LIFELONG LEARNING: Logical thinking, Part 1-Logical thinking takes three things. First, you need a reason for thinking (why you want to do or know something). Next, you need information that helps achieve that purpose. Last, you need a way to structure thinking. You need a plan for thinking things through. You must have the ability to structure thinking in order to think logically. What happens when you don't?

If you can't organize and sequence ideas, you can't plan.

If you can't plan, you can't predict what might happen.

If you can't predict, you can't tell causes from effects.

If you can't tell causes from effects, you can't identify consequences.

If you can't identify consequences, you can't control impulses.

If you can't control impulses, you may be inclined toward criminal behavior.

Knowing what you need to learn is the first step in learning it. Where do you have problems with logic? What have been the results? How can you learn that kind of logical thinking?

Adapted from Payne, R. K. (1996). A Framework for Understanding Poverty. Highlands, TX: Aha Process, Inc., p. 121.

CHARACTER FIRST: DEFERENCE AND MEEKNESS

Thinking ahead often means thinking about how your actions affect others. Deference and meekness might help you do this.

DEFERENCE

Deference is limiting freedom so that you don't offend the tastes of those around you. Deference is a choice about your attitude. It is the opposite of rudeness; It honors the choices of others. It is a way to think about others. It doesn't mean that you give in to others on issues of character. You don't let others abuse you or run your life. For instance, if a person doesn't like smoke, avoid smoking around them. That's a choice you make. To smoke around them means you don't honor their preference. Deference gives you a way to start thinking about the viewpoints of others. When you use deference, you . . .

- use good manners.
- respect others.
- honor how others like to do things.
- let others have their say.
- are sensitive to the needs of others, even without being told.
- work as hard at proving others right as at proving yourself right.
- are a good, positive influence on others.

MEEKNESS

Some people think that meekness is acting like a wimp. Meekness is just the opposite. It is yielding personal rights and expectations in order to serve others. It is strength under control. It is deciding what's only a small problem and what's worth fighting for. When you lose your temper over small matters, you let emotions control you. The word *temper* actually means to modify or to control. Your temper should check your words and actions while they are still thoughts. It should cause you to think before acting. Anger is a real and necessary emotion. There are many things which should anger you. Your temper controls how you communicate your anger.

Meek people:

- don't applaud the defeats of others (don't "rub it in").
- are good sports who control their emotions (if they lose or fail, they don't blame others and they don't get angry).
- rights (They choose to do the right thing.)
- think before they act (they don't let pressures of the moment overwhelm the results of the future; they act rather than react).
- watch what they say, don't put others down, think about how their words affect others.
- remember that there is a difference between right and rights (they don't overpower others because of their rights; they choose to do the right things).

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 5A/5B

Understanding What you Read

Read “**Success is Thinking Ahead**”. Then answer the questions.

1. What is the difference in acting emotionally and acting logically?
2. How does a good role models affect the way a person acts?
3. What is a functional system? What is a dysfunctional system? Give examples.
4. How does thinking from the viewpoint of others help you think and plan ahead?
5. What are some of the things you can do to help yourself make changes in your thinking? Which ones have you tried? Which ones have been most useful?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 5A/5B

Understanding What you Read

Read "Success is Thinking Ahead". Then complete the following summary.
Use words from the article if you wish.

Some people are controlled by their feelings and emotions. There are several reasons why they act

emotionally. Many people grew up in homes with few _____.

There were no adults to show them how to think. Sometimes the group or system in which you live does

not work . It then becomes a _____ . It may not

be teaching you appropriate skills. We may not think from the viewpoint of _____.

This means that we think about the way our actions effect other people. We may not be able to _____

_____. Others may not want us to change. It takes _____

_____ and _____ to change.



Project Metamorphosis

Volume 4 Number 6A/6B

Deciding to Be Happy: Making Changes and Solving Problems

Some people are happy with themselves and some are not. Everybody wants to make changes in their lives. We want our problems to go away. Then, we'll be happy, right?

According to Dennis Prager, author of *Happiness is a Serious Problem*, that's not true. He says that there is little connection between people's problems and their happiness. In other words, some people have great lives. They should be happy. Some people have bad problems. They should be unhappy. But you've probably known happy people who had awful problems. And you've probably known unhappy people who seemed to have it all.

Prager says that anyone can be unhappy. It's easy to do. Choosing to be happy often takes real courage and work.

Why should you try? First, you owe it to yourself. No one deserves happiness more than you. Second, you owe it to your family, friends, and co-workers. Ask anyone who grew up in an unhappy home or who has unhappy friends what it was like. Your happiness affects those around you. How do you do it? How do you decide to be happy? Prager has several tips:

STOP COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS

Look around. It's easy to find people whose lives seem better than ours. They're not in prison. They have money. They have good jobs. Who wouldn't be happy? But, everyone has unseen parts of their life. One person might have money and a good job, but a wife dying of cancer. . . or a child that died at birth..... or a former business that failed. What you see is not always the whole story. The "life" you're using for comparison may not be as happy as it looks. Decide to be happy with the life you have.

**"Deciding to be happy often
takes real courage and work."**

DON'T FOCUS ON WHAT'S MISSING

Many people think, "I would be happy if only . . . I weren't in prison. . . I had more money. . . I had a good job. . . I had" . . . whatever they think is missing. And maybe that's true. Sometimes, though, people spend so much time thinking about what's missing that they miss what's there. Prager suggests that you think about what's missing in your life. Consider if getting it will really make you happy. Then do one of three things.

1) Work to get it. 2) Replace it with something you can get. 3) Or, forget about it. You decide what it takes.

DON'T LOOK FOR PERFECTION

Some people think they will be happy when everything is perfect. But, life is rarely perfect. People, jobs, and situations hardly ever live up to their ideals. If you wait for perfection, you'll probably never be happy. Why wait? Decide to be happy with what you have now.

DECIDE TO MAKE THE BEST OF WHAT YOU'VE GOT

First, be grateful for what you have. You're in prison now. Why should you be grateful for that? Yes, you've lost your freedom, but you have food and shelter. You have your health. You can see and hear. You can walk and talk. You have medical attention. You have something to do. You have chances to learn. You have a future.

Second, get started and keep going. What would you do if you knew that you would be successful? There's no promise if success, but if you never try, you'll never know.

Third, don't worry if things aren't easy. Life hardly ever is but don't stop. Some progress is better than none. If you can't complete your goal, take a step toward it. Or, just get ready to take that step. The time you spend takes you that much closer to your goal. Go fast when you can, go slow when have to, but decide to keep working toward happiness.

This session of Success is a Thinking Skill shows you how to choose and complete a project for achieving your goals.

CHARACTER FIRST: ENTHUSIASM

Enthusiasm is finding joy in tasks. It is looking for the best possible outcome and working toward it. It is deciding to make the best of things and life. In a study of emotion, doctors asked actors to make faces unrelated to their actual feelings. Heart rates changed according to the expressions. Thus, our expressions don't just show feelings. They help generate new feelings. How you feel about something depends on how you view it. How you feel about it affects performance and success. You can choose to be enthusiastic. The following traits describe enthusiastic people. Which describe you? *Makes good use of down time*. This increases productivity. This results in feelings of accomplishment. This provides fuel for more enthusiasm. *Focuses on the positive*. Enthusiastic people are not the same as optimistic people. Enthusiastic people are aware of problems. They

choose to focus on what can be done rather than what can't be done. They don't ask, "Will it work?" The ask, "How can we make it work?" *Plans for success*. Enthusiastic people don't expect to fail. They plan and work for success. *Learn from failures*. Each failure is an opportunity to grow and learn what to do differently in the future. Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. He had thousands of failures before he found the right combination. Few things succeed the first time. *Aim high*. Enthusiastic people set high goals. Even if they don't achieve them, they achieve more than most people thought possible. *Encourage others*. Enthusiasm is contagious. The more you transfer to others, the more you have. *Are resourceful*. Enthusiastic people are flexible. Although enthusiastic people don't quit, they know when to change directions. *Enjoy learning new things*. Enthusiastic people find opportunities to grow. *Are happy*. Enthusiastic people choose to be happy.

LIFELONG LEARNING: Thinking Loically, Part 2,-Logical thinking helps you think things through.

To do so, you must also be able to do the following:

Focus attention. This involves looking at situations with care. It is focusing on details one at a time. It is also fitting the details together to get the main idea of a situation.

Set goals. This requires the ability to think about the future. It involves planning and scheduling events to achieve goals. Delay gratification. This requires control of impulses and emotions. It is putting off immediate pleasures for future benefits.

Have word tools. Words help define and organize life. Words are the building blocks of ideas. They are the tools for learning and communication.

Which of these kinds of thinking are easy for you? Which do you need to build? How could you build these thinking skills?

Reflections

Do you think you are a happy person? What can you do to decide to be happy?

Consider the following questions:

1. What did I learn today?
2. Why is this important to know?
3. How can I use what I learned?
4. What difference will this make in my life?

What is the relationship between happiness and enthusiasm?

Are you a logical thinker? Why or why not?

Did you grow up in a happy home? Have you worked in places where people were unhappy? What were the effects on you?

Can thinking logically contribute to your happiness? How?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 6A/6B

Understanding What you Read

Read *Deciding to Be Happy: Making Changes & Solving Problems*. Then answer the questions.

1. According to Dennis Prager, what is the relationship between the circumstances in a person's life and happiness?
2. How is happiness a choice we make?
3. What happens when we compare ourselves to others?
4. Instead of focusing on what's missing, what should we do?
5. How can you make the best of what you've got right now?

PROJECT METAMORPHOSIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Number 6A/6B Understanding What you Read

Read *Deciding to Be Happy: Making Changes & Solving Problems*. Then complete the summary. Use words from the article if you wish.

Most all of us want to be happy. We believe we would be happy if our _____ would go away. Prager says this is not true. He has found little relationship between _____ and _____. Some people have great lives and should be happy. Others have terrible problems and should be unhappy. But happiness doesn't work this way. We must _____ we want to be happy. This decision takes both _____ and hard _____. There are several things we can do when we decide to be a happy person. The first is to stop _____ ourselves to _____. What we see is often not the whole picture. Next, we should not _____ on what is _____. We should stop looking for _____. Few things in life are perfect. Last, we have to decide to make the _____ of what we _____. We look for any good or treasure. We decide to be happy with what we have now.