

VOICE

Issue 13 / 2021

The Reentry Success Center is open 7 days a week!
Monday – Friday: 8:30 am – 8:30 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Sunday: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm, by phone only
Call (800) 816-4453 to get started



REENTRY Q&A

Ronald has many pastimes, among them painting and singing. When he sat down for this interview, for instance, he sang lines from the 1975 hit by Eric Carmen, “All By Myself.” Then,

when asked which word best describes him, Ronald said, “Lovable. Because that’s all I dish out. That’s all I know. That’s the best thing to have, is love for people. We’re loved no matter what. You’re loved no matter what.

“You were loved by your mother and father. You were loved by your sister and brother. You should have been. And, most of all, you’re loved by God. I feel that. That’s the best love.”

Can you give an example of how love has played out in your life?

“I know that I was loved from the minute I was born, because I only had 36 hours to live. I know that my mother prayed for me as soon as she heard. I had a life-saving surgery.

“I was loved by my mother because she taught me wrong from right, right from wrong. If she chastised me, she was disciplining me, and I knew it.

“If I do something wrong and get in trouble for it, should I blame my parents? That’s the thing people used to do. ‘My parents whooped me.

They mistreated me. So that’s why I act the way I do.’ Naw, man. You have a choice to act the way you want to act. You chose to act that way. You can’t blame your parents on your decisions. Those choices? That’s what you make. You have the ability to receive love, you have the ability to receive punishment when it’s due.”

What have you learned about getting back on your feet? What’s been most helpful to you?

“Being honest with myself. You might lie to somebody else, but you can’t lie to yourself. If you notice you need help, and you know you can’t do it by yourself, find and get help from reliable sources. The Lord gave you a mind to think with. That’s one part of the help right there. You want to need help. That’s another part.

“I gave up things to get back on my feet. I left why I didn’t want to be wanted: ‘If I’m not being loved, I shouldn’t be around.’ You learn to do things for yourself, to take care of yourself, and to feel yourself. Never put yourself down, even if you’re down. **CONTINUES ON PAGE 2**

EDITOR’S NOTES

Dear readers,
How have the past couple of months changed you? What new habits have you formed? What old habits have gone away?

We invite you to take a moment to come up with your answers to these questions. Once you have them, take some additional moments to reflect further. Are your new habits healthy and positive? Are they benefitting you and your loved ones? How do you feel about letting go of your old habits?

We live in an ever-changing world. Our habits show that. They also show that changes—both personal and societal—are possible, if we take time to notice them. As you’ll read in this issue, some changes can only be done alone, while others can only be done with the help of other people. We are here to assist you in your journey. Consider reaching out to us when you’re ready.



Pat Mims
Reentry Success Center

P.S. Not on our mailing list? Write us, and let us know where to send our newsletters to you.

Alpha: Staying Connected During a Global Pandemic

Since March 2020, the Reentry Success Center has hosted four Alpha trainings, with anywhere between four and 12 participants in each cohort. Alpha is typically an in-person program, but COVID-19 has kept everyone involved with the program—facilitators, community partners, reentry staff, and members—apart. So the cohorts have been meeting in a setting that they had never used before, and perhaps had never even been used for a justice-impacted program: They met, shared, and changed mindsets and lives entirely over video.

“Alpha is an eight-week program, where we utilize the evidence-based Thinking for a Change curriculum,” said Tiffany Anaya, the Reentry Success Center’s lead reentry coach. “Over eight weeks—Monday through Friday, 9:30 am to sometimes 1:30 pm—the group has overcome a lot, despite being apart and the network and technical complications. They’ve shown up, every day, excited.”

The following are quotes from graduation ceremonies, which took place at the end of each program.



“If you can achieve this—in this point in our community and in our world during the pandemic—you can truly accomplish anything you set your minds to.”

“I’m excited that I completed something like this. Everything that I’ve achieved through Alpha is going to take me a long way in my journey.”

“I realized in this for a Change co time ago that I emotions that v lot of problems to change the w

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RONALD, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

“I’ve been down so low, I know people talked bad about me. But it’s just something that happened. When you do something bad, people like talking about it. People try to embarrass you. Some people love you, and they help you. Those people are compassionate, who got love in their heart. Anybody who tries to put somebody down because they don’t got nothing, because they don’t know where to go, because they fell bad or look bad: that’s a sin to me. That’s being mean and separate.”

How did you get connected to the Reentry Success Center?

“I got connected with the Alpha program. Somebody told me about an outreach program, and that I call and get an appointment. I got somebody to call me back. That was Brittany. Everybody involved in the Alpha program was good to me. They were tremendous. They were straightforward. They were real. You can’t do nothing but respect those people.”

What’s your advice to a loved one who’s about to reenter society?

“I would definitely recommend them to the Alpha program.

Do you keep in touch with your Alpha peers?

“It’s hard to say. I got their numbers in my book, but they haven’t been participating in group activities. I’m the only one from my class who

does that. But they got other things to do, and I respect them for that.”

They’re on their own journey.

“Yeah. This is how you stay in touch—through the activities.”

In one of the Zoom meetings, you showed some of your art. How long have you been painting?

“Man, I can’t draw. I could draw a little bit what’s in my mind. I’m not an artist. I would read a book before I try to draw something.

“Paint by numbers is therapeutic. You got instructions on where you paint. And then, you know, you can paint within the lines. Colors run into the other colors, but that’s good. They look good when they do that. I’ve been checking that out.”

But you just said you’re not an artist, yet the way you describe certain pictures—

“That’s just imagination. And putting colors together. Actually, I am. I am an artist. I’m also a cook.”

You can be more than one thing.

“I was a cook. I drove a bus. It’s a work of art, driving a bus. It’s a work of art, cooking. It’s art sitting here talking to you. There’s an art to that. Some people don’t know how to talk to people.

“It’s an art, you know, to sit in a room. For some people, it’s hard to sit, go around in a circle, give different opinions and have differences in those opinions. If you really look at life, everybody’s got

more in common than they have differences.”

What’s one thing you’ve learned about yourself during this pandemic?

“I got patience. Not being in a hurry to get out. Doing things that would be detrimental to your health. Being educated of other things going on, to get a better awareness.

“I noticed there’s a lot of people who learned about racism, which not long ago we never talked about. It’s insane. You got to stand up, you gotta realize where the history is coming from, like the fight for voting rights.”

Any thoughts to share with individuals who are still locked up?

“I put everybody that’s incarcerated in my prayers, because I’ve been on that side. We’re gonna get out of this. Prayer helps. Believe in yourself. And try to make yourself better on the inside. You will get out someday.

“Because you’re down, don’t make yourself feel that way. Don’t make yourself feel down. Do something with your time, and make yourself successful the best way you can—if you can. All you need is a chance and the tools. You learn something new every day, even if you don’t do nothing. Because you’ll learn that since you didn’t do nothing that day, you’ll know that you didn’t make no type of progress.

“So, every day, try and make progress. Be patient. Swallow your pride.”



"There were many people who said this kind of thing couldn't be done, this kind of thing shouldn't be done, and this kind of program would not work. We felt differently. With that belief and with so many people around us, we've created a reality here. And you are part of that rich reality."



"I only wish I discovered it sooner. The members and the cohort have become like family to me, as well as the staff. They've provided so much help and so much insight into my life. It gives me the strength and the opportunity to give something back to the community. It really comes full circle, to be able to learn the skills and have the tools that equip us to give back to the community."



"This is such an amazing, special day for me. I did it. I feel so honored. Within these eight weeks, I validated who I really am. I always seemed to be the one that got kicked in the butt. I always got the short end of the stick. So, with being back in society, having the opportunity to join the reentry program has really boost who I am. You're giving me hope again. You brought out the best in me."



... journey that I had to come out of my comfort zone. Thinking ... comes with a lot of emotions, a lot of feelings. I realized a long ... had to change my thinking, but I also had to deal with the ... were fueling my thinking process. That was difficult. I created a ... in my life. Now here's an opportunity for me to change that— ... way I think, to change the way I feel about myself."



"You motivated me to move forward in life and keep my head up."



PERSPECTIVES

Letting Go of Resentment

We covered the role of faith in being able to stay emotionally stable. Faith, as we use it, is not about religion, it's about commitment—committing to oneself and to others that emotional stability is achievable. Emotional stability benefits everyone we come in contact with, as well as ourselves.

In addition to anger, another challenge many of us face in our journey towards emotional stability is resentment. According to the Oxford American Dictionary, resentment is "the feeling of being displeased about, or feeling insulted by, something said or done." It could be something real or imagined. What we know is that when we think about it, our jaws tighten, our teeth clench, our shoulders tense, and our hands close into fists.

It's easy to get stuck in the past—to focus on what happened when, who did what to whom, why me instead of him. Such thoughts can lead us down even further, bringing up more questions that could eventually derail our progress. Like anger, if feelings of resentment go unresolved they can erode our faith and make emotional stability all but impossible.

So, what are some ways to let go of resentment?

It may be impossible to rid yourself of resent-

ment, however there are many ways to ensure such feelings don't prevent you from making progress and reaching your goals. Author and psychologist Dan Mager wrote in an article that there eight actions to address resentment in more helpful and healthy ways. They are:

1. **Practice identifying and allowing yourself to feel the emotions that come up along with the feelings of resentment.** Such emotions could be hurt or fear. Try to be present with and accept those feelings and the vulnerability they bring up.
2. **Practice being fully aware of your resentment.** Observe it. Allow it to simply be. Hold it. Visualize putting space around it. Notice what happens when you do that.
3. **If possible, try to imagine how you may have contributed to the situation that you are resentful about.** Try to be aware that people (including you) often play a part in the circumstances they are resentful about.
4. **Practice expressing resentment differently.** Share these feelings with safe, supportive individuals whom you trust. Journal or write about them. Weaken their charge through a form of physical activity

that's accessible to you.

5. **Learn and practice relaxation and self-calming techniques.** Breathe deeply, a few times. Repeat. Try meditating and practicing mindfulness.
6. **As difficult as it may be, try to practice treating those people you feel resentment towards with kindness and compassion.** Accept that this might not be possible, but keep it in mind.
7. **Resist the urge to be a channel for the resentment of others.** Resentment of others can have an almost magnetic pull. Don't buy into it. Resist the urge to join in the negativity.
8. **Practice applying the understanding that unless you've learned how to change the past, it's as good as it's ever going to get.** Find ways to remind yourself of this whenever you need to — you don't have to like what's happening in the present or has happened in the past in order to accept it. Acceptance will free your attention from the shackles of resentment. Acceptance will enable you to be more skillful in the present.

What is working for you? Let us know.

EVENTS

MONDAYS (ONGOING)

Women’s Group

5:30-7:30pm, a safe space open to women for engaging conversations related to everyday life, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 819 7876 0844, Passcode: 087117)

TUESDAYS (ONGOING)

Forward Thinking Men’s Group

5:30-7:30pm, open to men for decompression and sharing of challenges, barriers, achievements, and everyday events, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 838 3610 6614, Passcode: 537151)

WEDNESDAYS (ONGOING)

Restorative Practices: Arts Class

5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 853 0178 5241, Passcode: 144468)

THURSDAYS (ONGOING)

Restorative Circles

5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 813 1747 0885, Passcode: 370520)

OTHER

Transportation Services

8:30am-8:00pm, Monday-Friday, available for free to all justice-impacted members in Contra Costa County for medical appointments, legal appointments, COVID-19 testing, probation services, job interviews, and more; call (510) 679-2122 for more information; people who are in custody and awaiting release from county jail, please connect to this service through the Game Change for Success (GPS) program

Mobile Resource App

Housing assistance, employment, education, vocational training, legal services, recovery support, and family support services made accessible directly on a smartphone, through the following QR Code:



Reentry Network App

EXPLORATIONS

We want to promote your artwork, photography, and poetry. Please write us at one of the mailing addresses below. Be sure to include “Reentry Newsletter Explorations” in the subject line.

POETRY

#LetMIPeopleGo by Joshua Loop

In these prison institutions take a look at how they handle us.
Restricted from family members, & overpriced phone calls, it’s scandalous.
In the healthcare system the doctors do-little like they talking to animals.
Maybe we better suited with veterinarians.
Lights on all night, like I need a ambien.
Prison situated far from most of our homes.
Though we counted in the census but restricted to vote. It’s
gerrymandering.
Did I mention they leave the lights on, like motel 6? It’s really damaging, to my sleep pattern &
When I parole, they expecting me to be a patriot like Cripus Attucks.

So it shouldn’t be a shock when most are post traumatic.
Recidivist or even radical.
Make me want to riot like they did in Attica.
You should ask, what conditions foster the

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joshua Lopp is serving 14-40 years for being the driver in a robbery at the age of 19. Currently, he is working on his associate’s degree (AA). With a pending request for clemency, he has plans to bring light to social injustices. He has a passion for writing and directing plays that focus on social injustices, many of which he has performed in prison.

criminal mentality? And hampers growth?
Or are we only focused on...punishment?
Let’s face reality. If studies show, from amnesty international, that education drastically, reduce crimes a hundred fold, and once you know what the number is. Then why the hell are we, hellbent on punishment? But the government answer with, the trouble question of, who’s funding it?
So forget our humanity. Take programs from under us.
The cycle goes on, it’s insanity.
And let me mention, I got a Bunky in the midst of a pandemic. Ain’t no such thing as social distancing.
And we always hungry because the food lacking nutrition. I’m counting on my family for money, because the commissary price gouging, it’s ridiculous. These are just examples of harsh predicaments faced by prisoners.

GAMES

Fill in the blank squares, so each row, each column, and each block contain all digits 1 thru 9. Answers will be in the next issue.

CURRENT ISSUE

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ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS ISSUE

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8	3	5	2	9	6	1	4	7
6	7	1	5	3	4	9	2	8
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co.contra-costa.ca.us

The following icons are included in the sections and next to specific events as a visual aid, for readers who prefer to scan our content. We hope you find them useful.

- Housing
- Family
- Financial
- Education
- Health
- Employment
- Benefits
- Legal