

HOPE LIVEthnh

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# LIFERS *BEYOND THE* *YARD – CONSTRUCTING A* *PRISON LIFE* - Curriculum and Lesson Plans New York State Pilot Edition

Facilitator's Name:

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**HOPE LIVES FOR LIFERS**  
**PROJECT** *Sentence Planning*  
*Curriculum*

Course: Sentence Planning Curriculum  
(pilot)

Number of Sessions:  
15

Facility: Eastern Correctional  
Facility

Dates:  
TBA

Class Schedule: Weekly 2-hour  
sessions

Classroom Location:  
TBA

Facilitators and  
assistants:

Lawrence  
White

William "Eric"  
Waters

Ronald  
Jenkins

Sophia  
Giovannitti

**COURSE DESCRIPTION** Developed by Lawrence White while serving a long-term prison sentence in New York, and updated with the support of the Hope Lives for Lifers team, the Sentence Planning Curriculum is designed to empower and support incarcerated individuals serving sentences of 15 years or more, by educating such individuals on the mapping and effective management of long-term sentences. Participants in this course will be introduced to a set of universal principles and guidelines for good behavior during confinement; through this course, participants will be introduced to a framework of good behavior that is motivated by personal belief, as opposed to merely following authoritative rules. The course promotes two fundamental goals: (1) striving for freedom and restoration, and (2) leaving confinement in a better condition than when one started. It does so while preparing participants to maximize their success in three major aspects of prison life: individual and environmental survival, the struggle for freedom, and personal growth and development.

**COURSE ORGANIZATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS USED** The Sentence Planning Course is structured in five modules: Introduction/History (2 sessions), Novice Stage (4 sessions), Seasoned Stage (4 sessions), Standing Stage (3 sessions), and Reintegration/Reflection (2 sessions). This course uses participatory instructional methods that include the use of co-facilitation, role-playing, reading and workbook assignments, theater exercises, and reflective writing.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND COMPETENCIES**

#### **Course Objectives and Competencies**

Participants will be able to understand, articulate, and practice:

- Sentence planning core principles and guidelines
  - Internally motivated positive behavior
  - Applying the principles and guidelines

- Novice stage of imprisonment: individual and environmental aspects of adjustment
- Seasoned stage of imprisonment: growth and development; working toward parole
- Standing stage of imprisonment: maintaining hope and planning for the future
- Reintegration: returning to society and community involvement

**RELATIONSHIP OF COURSE TO CORRECTIONAL REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION** This foundation level course is designed to provide participants with the knowledge, values, and skills to promote positive personal development and good citizenship.

**READINGS Study Papers** American Friends Service Committee. *Long-Termers' Survival Manual*. Frankel, Victor. *Man's Search for Meaning* (excerpts) Castaneda, Carlos. *On Personal Power* Castaneda, Carlos. *Becoming a Warrior* Castaneda, Carlos. *The Spirit of a Warrior* Alves, Rubem. *When We Have Eaten of the Same Bread* Borg, Marcus. *The Significance of our Worldview* Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Full Catastrophe Living* (excerpt) Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (excerpt) The Think Tank. *The Non-Traditional Approach to Criminal and Social Justice*.  
 \*Course may include additional readings provided they are given prior approval by DOCCS.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS** All participants are expected to complete all assigned readings and engage in reflective writing or other creative or artistic expressions. All course readings and a blank journal will be provided to all participants.

## **SENTENCE PLANNING COURSE OUTLINE**

### **of Session**

**Session 1 Module**

**1:**

**Introduction/Hist  
ory**

st of an overview of the history and Lives for Lifers and the Sentence Planning s the Non-Traditional Approach to Criminal d the ways in which these non-traditional ideas oming sessions.

**n: Who is Hope Lives for Lifers, and how and why**

**? Facilitator(s): The Hope Lives for Lifers Team**

**Description**

**Learning Outcomes** After this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate:
  - An overview of the sentence planning course, including its history of development, and expectations moving forward
  - Basics of the Non-Traditional Approach to Criminal and Social Justice
- Reflect on:
  - Participants' individual goals for learning moving forward

**Session Outline** 1. Introductions

- Facilitators and participants -  
Description of HLFL 2. Course  
Overview

- Number and type of sessions - Expectations  
and topics that will be covered 3. Larry's story

- History of the development of HLFL's ideas, including  
Larry's

experiences in prison 4. Non-Traditional Approach to Criminal and  
Social Justice

- Explanation of Empowerment theory vs. Rehabilitation theory

- Focus on personal and social transformation 5. Introduction  
to Paulo Freire's participatory education model

- Education as the practice of freedom -

Focus on dialogue 6. Reflection and  
Discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: The Non-Traditional Approach to Criminal and Social Justice  
Study Paper: Excerpt from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by  
Paulo Freire

**Session**

**Specific  
Questions**

Please journal about the following: (1) Your journey out of being in this course? (4) What is one story and how it led you here (2) Your thoughts on the wish you were given upon starting your journal versus traditional approaches to criminal justice. (3)

## **Using Session 2**

**the Manual: Introduction of Foundational Concepts *Module 1:***

**Facilitator(s): Larry White, Sophia Giovannitti and Eric Waters *Introduction/History***

### **Description of Session**

Participants will be introduced to several basic concepts of the Sentence Planning curriculum; these concepts will create a philosophical basis for positive thoughts and behaviors during confinement.

**Learning Outcomes** After this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate the goals of sentence mapping
- Articulate the universal principles of behavior during confinement
- Articulate the role of guidance in the service of a long-term prison sentence

### **Session Outline**

1. Recap of and reflection on previous session 2. Introduction of concept of Sentence Mapping - Novice, seasoned, and standing stages - Determinate, indeterminate, and LWOP sentences - How to break a sentence down into manageable portions - Ability to take ownership of your sentence 3. Introduction of concept of Universal Principles of Behavior During

Confinement - To gain your freedom as quickly as possible - To leave prison in better condition than when you entered 4. Discussion on accountability

- Understanding the necessity of taking responsibility for your past 5. Reflection and discussion:

- How do your behaviors align or contradict the universal principles?

**Readings** Study Paper: Relevant sections of manual.

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) Can you think of a time during your incarceration when you made a decision that would be in accordance with the universal principles? Can you think of a time when you made a decision that would have increased the length of your sentence, or contributed to self-destructive behavior? (2) What were the outcomes of these decisions? Would you have done something differently if you could do it over again? (3) Think about for next session: What were some of the most difficult things to adjust to when you first arrived in prison? What were changes that you expected? What were changes that you did not expect?

## **Adjusting Session 3**

**to Prison? Introducing the Novice Stage *Module 2: Novice***

**Facilitator(s): Larry White, Sophia Giovannitti and Eric Waters *Stage***

## **Description of Session**

Participants will be introduced to what we term the “Novice” stage of confinement. Participants will learn and dialogue about the major areas of adjustment to prison life.

## **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the major areas of adjustment to prison life, and what each area entails
- Thoughtfully reflect on their own experiences as “Novice” prisoners, including the development of new social responses and behaviors

**Session Outline** 1. Recap and reflection on previous session 2. What is the novice stage of confinement?

- First 5 years - Process of adjustment 3. Understanding the major areas of adjustment to prison life:

- The shattering effect of imprisonment - The pains and deprivations of imprisonment - The personal world of the novice long-terms - The challenge of denial - The re-socialization process - Constructing a prison life 4. Reflection and discussion - How can the novice long-terms develop a life-giving attitude? How can he develop new, positive social responses and intentional behaviors?

**Readings** Study Paper: Relevant sections of manual.

## **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) What period of your sentence are you in? Can you describe your experiences in the Novice stage? (2) Do you feel the major areas of adjustment identified by HFLFL are accurate?

Were there other major adjustments to prison you had to make, that we left out? (3)

How did you experience re-socialization? (4) What is the difference between acting and reacting? What does it mean to act intentionally?

## **What Session 4**

### **Should I Do During My Adjustment to Prison? *Module 2: Novice***

**Facilitator(s):** Kimberly Westcott and assistant *Stage*

## **Description of Session**

Participants will be equipped with the tools and social supports to continue the process of exploring what it means to be in prison and to start transitioning from the “free world” toward adjusting to the institutional prison environment.

## **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Use new techniques to re-examine their social and emotional history leading to the present
- Explore institutional and social resources in their new environment

- Develop skills that advance their personal development by creating an evolving development (sentence) plan that fully engages themselves, their peers, the institution, and the outside community in the process

**Session Outline** 1. Learning new social responses:

- Complete exercise and discussion regarding various challenging scenarios you may be faced with in a prison setting (i.e. perceived disrespect; being asked to do something you don't want to do; facing negative temptations) and the benefits and drawbacks of different responses to these scenarios 2. New frameworks, the impact of representation, and perception:

- Introduction of different critical theories and the frameworks they provide for understanding reality and our place in it. 3. Learning intentional behaviors and adopting new tools

- Understanding norms and expectations in a new environment - Discussion of ways we behave differently depending on where we are, whom we are interacting with, and how we hope to be perceived 4. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: TBD

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) How might you respond if a Corrections Officer addressed you in a way that you perceived to be disrespectful? How might you respond if a peer addressed you in a way that you perceived to be disrespectful? (2) What would be the consequences of different responses you could give? (3) Think of a time in prison when you wished you had responded to a peer or C.O.

differently. How would you behave if you could re-do the scenario, and why? (4) Did any critical identity theories discussed in class resonate with you? Are there any you would like to read more about? (5) Do you think it is important to understand a variety of points of view? Have you

encountered many new points of view since beginning your sentence? (6) What are ingrained social responses you have that you wish to change? Can you identify situations that always cause you to react a certain way? Is it possible to imagine having a different reaction?

### **Imagining Session 5**

**and Experiencing the Adjustment to *Module 2: Novice***

**Prison Facilitator(s): Ronald Jenkins and assistant *Stage***

### **Description of Session**

Participants will utilize interactive learning techniques (theater exercises, role-play, dialogue) to further develop their critical thinking and reflection skills with respect to adjusting and thriving during the service of a long-term sentence.

### **Learning Outcomes**



After this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the advantages of intentional action over instinctive reaction
- Replace emotionally reactive behavior with intentional behavior based on thought

**Session Outline** 1. Warm-up – Reshaping the Patterns of Your Responses:

- Participants complete simple exercise demonstrating the challenges and benefits of changing behavioral patterns 2. Role-Play – Clarifying the difference between intentional action and instinctive reaction:

- Participants enact several realistic scenarios and interpersonal experiences they may encounter in prison - Participants explore the variety of verbal and behavioral responses that are

possible in each scenario - Participants engage in dialogue regarding the benefits and drawbacks (both long-

term and short-term) of each possible reaction/response 3. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** N/A

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) During the in-class exercises, how did it feel to change your pattern of responses? What was difficult or easy about it? (2) What are the qualities of character necessary to change your habitual responses to situations involving conflict? What steps could you take to change your habitual responses? Do you want to change? Why? (3) Consider how the strategies you experienced or observed during the role-playing

relate to the goals of taking control of your sentence and establishing ownership of the prison rules and regulation for your own purposes. What does it mean to follow rules? Who benefits in the short term and long term? (4) Consider how the strategies you

experienced or observed during the role-playing

might be relevant to the guiding principles of achieving freedom as soon as possible in better condition than you were when you entered prison. Did you learn new strategies that could help you toward achieving these goals? (5) How does the ability to reflect before taking action give you personal power? What are the personal attributes you

possess that endow you with power? (6) How do you react to being told what to do all the time? (7) What are the things that make you feel free?

### **Am Session 6**

**I succeeding in my adjustment to prison? *Module 2: Novice***

**Facilitator(s): Larry White, Sophia Giovannitti and Eric Waters *Stage***

### **Description of Session**

Participants will reflect on their understanding of the Novice stage. The session will be reflection and discussion based, with dialogues regarding ways to improve the Novice section of the curriculum.

## **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Clearly articulate their thoughts on the Novice stage, including suggestions for improvement of this section of the curriculum
- Offer peers experiencing the Novice stage guidance on how to get through the adjustment period

**Session Outline** 1. Recap and reflection on previous session

2. Are you succeeding in applying the universal principles of behavior during confinement?

- Challenges - Successes 3. What are your suggestions for improvement of the outline of the Novice stage? 4. How would you assist someone in succeeding in his adjustment to prison life?

- Mentorship of peers 5. Discussion of Carlos Castaneda study papers

- Personal Power - The Spirit of a Warrior 6. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: *The Spirit of a Warrior* by Carlos Castaneda.

Study Paper: *On Personal Power* by Carlos Castaneda.

## **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) Are you convinced that it is in your best interest to act with the universal principles in mind? (2) Is gaining your freedom your most pressing concern? (3) What kinds of choices can impede your path to freedom? What kinds of choices may quicken it? (4) What have you gotten used to and made work for you about your prison life?

What are you still struggling to adjust to? (5) What does it mean to be an activist on your own behalf? (6) In light of the fact that you are stripped of so much of your identity upon entering prison, how do you maintain your personal power? What is true personal power? (7) Do you have the spirit of a warrior? How can you encourage this spirit in others?

## **What Session 7**

is a “prison lifestyle”? Introduction to the Seasoned stage *Module 3:*

**Facilitator(s):** Larry White, Sophia Giovannitti and Eric Waters *Seasoned Stage*

## **Description of Session**

Participants will be introduced to the primary components of what we term the “Seasoned” stage of confinement. Participants will learn and dialogue about the goals of the Seasoned stage, including working toward and planning for release.

## **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the central concepts of the Seasoned stage
- Articulate ways in which a Seasoned prisoner can work toward parole release

**Session Outline** 1. Recap and reflection on previous session

2. Who is a Seasoned prisoner?

- Moving beyond mere adjustment - Years 5 through parole consideration - Focus is on construction of a “prison lifestyle” 3. Elements of prison survival - Individual survival -

Environmental survival - The “stakeholder” concept 4. Growth and development

- The Rehabilitative Phase - Developing a critical consciousness - Focusing on internal development 5. The struggle for freedom

- Utilizing the universal principles in accordance with working toward parole -

Understanding avenues of release - Program participation and disciplinary behavior 6.

Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: Relevant sections of manual.

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) Are you in the Seasoned stage of your incarceration? What has your experience been like so far? (2) What are ways you could better work toward your release? (3) How do you feel about going before the parole board? (4) What are some ways that you have grown since entering prison? (5) What are your goals for improving yourself and your environment?

### **How Session 8**

**do I plan these years of survival, growth and development, and my struggle**

### **Module 3:**

**for freedom? Seasoned Stage**

**Facilitator(s): Kimberly Westcott and assistant**

### **Description of Session**

Participants will learn about and discuss the concept of Life Course Development.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate an understanding of the Life Course concept; i.e. the ways in which past, present, and future experiences/choices/environments influence and shape each other
- Identify areas of personal development they hope to focus on throughout their sentence
- Identify areas of community development and engagement (within or outside of the prison setting) they hope to focus on throughout their sentence

**Session Outline** 1. What is the seasoned prisoner’s commitment to personal development?

- Understanding the “Life Course” - Understanding the various domains of personal and collective growth within

the prison setting - How to cultivate physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth while

serving time 2. Exploration of community:

- Discuss the various communities participants are engaged in - Who comprises the prison community? What responsibility do seasoned prisoners have to this community? - Introduce group facilitation techniques - Complete prison mapping activity 3. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: TBD

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

- (1) In what ways do you want to cultivate growth in yourself and your community? How might you work to achieve these goals?
- (2) What is the importance of cultivating an emotional support network? Do you feel you need such a network?
- (3) Who is in our community? Why do we need a community? What can we do together?
- (4) What does aging mean to you? What does growing mean to you?
- (5) What uses can you think of for group facilitation? What types of groups are you interested in facilitating? What skills do you have to offer your peers, and what skills might they offer to you?

### **Imagining Session 9**

**and experiencing my survival, my growth and development, and my *Module 3: struggle for freedom Seasoned Stage***

**Facilitator(s): Ronald Jenkins and assistant**

### **Description of Session**

Participants will clarify how they got here and where they want to go from here; they will explore how to transform that awareness into ongoing acts of liberation.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Redefine their identities in the most positive terms possible.
- Identify and develop skills and talents they wish to utilize to their fullest potential.

**Session Outline** 1. Warm-up – Constructing, Deconstructing and Reconstructing a Self-Image:

- Participants complete introduction/re-introduction exercise demonstrating different ways we can see ourselves - Participants discuss their self-image before coming to prison
- 2. Role-Play – Reenacting life turning points
  - Participants reenact, observe, and discuss the turning points they have identified as central to their lives - Participants reenact scenes in multiple ways in order to highlight various attributes and choices - Participants play out future potential turning points, exploring future possibilities - Participants reflect on the meaning of these past, present, and future

potential

turning points, including their positions and choices within the scenarios 3. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** N/A

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) How has your self-image changed since you began your sentence? What did you identify as your positive and negative attributes prior to prison? What do you identify as your positive and negative attributes now? (2) What have been the major turning points of your life, both positive and negative? (3) Can you identify ways that past turning points could have worked out differently? How can you use this understanding to ensure better turning points in the future? (4) What advice would you give your peers in thinking about their futures? Would

you give yourself the same or different advice? (5) How do you see yourself? How do you want to see yourself? How do you want others to see you?

### **Am Session 10**

**I surviving, growing, developing, and continuing my struggle for freedom?**

**Module 3:**

**Facilitator(s): Larry White, Sophia Giovannitti and Eric Waters *Seasoned Stage***

### **Description of Session**

Participants will reflect on their understanding of the Seasoned stage. The session will be reflection and discussion based, with dialogues regarding ways to improve the Seasoned section of the curriculum.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Clearly articulate their thoughts on the Seasoned stage, including suggestions for improvement of this section of the curriculum
- Offer peers experiencing the Seasoned stage guidance on how to get through the adjustment period

**Session Outline** 1. Recap and reflection on previous session

2. What elements of prison survival are you struggling with, and what elements are you succeeding in?

- Personal reflections on individual and environmental survival - Personal reflections on growth and development - Personal reflections on the struggle for freedom 3.

Introducing the Contract

- Staying accountable to meeting your goals 4. What are your suggestions for

improvement of the outline of the Seasoned stage? 5. Discussion of study papers: what

parts stood out to you, and how are they applicable to the Seasoned stage?

- When We Have Eaten of the Same Bread - The Significance of our Worldview - Man's Search for Meaning 6. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: *When We Have Eaten of the Same Bread* by Rubem Alves  
Study Paper: *The Significance of our Worldview* by Marcus Borg Study Paper: Excerpt from *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankel

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) What is your worldview? How has being in prison affected your worldview? (2) What do you think it means to "understand" another person? What is the importance of shared experiences? (3) What are some ways in which you are proud of yourself? What are some ways that you aren't? (4) What does dignity mean to you? (5) What are your contract goals? Who will help you in staying on track to meet these goals?

### **How Session 11**

**do I deal with repeated release denials? Introduction to the Standing Stage**

#### **Module 4:**

**Facilitator(s): Larry White, Sophia Giovannitti and Eric Waters *Standing Stage***

#### **Description of Session**

Participants will be introduced to the primary components of what we term the "Standing" stage of confinement. Participants will learn and dialogue about the challenges of the Standing stage, and the importance of maintaining hope.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate a clear definition of the Standing stage of confinement
- Identify challenges of the Standing stage and consider means of overcoming these challenges

**Session Outline** 1. Recap and reflection on previous session

2. What is the Standing stage of confinement?

- A standing prisoner has applied for release consideration and been denied - A standing prisoner continues to do everything in his power to strive for

release 3. Responses to release denial

- Continuing your efforts to achieve release - Understanding your release denial 4.

Prison Aging Process

- Understanding the rigors of prevailing prison conditions - Maintaining mental and physical fitness 5. Brief discussion on study papers 6. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: Relevant sections of manual.

Study Paper: Excerpt from *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankel Study Paper:

Excerpt from *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) Have you been denied release? How did you feel before, during, and after your this happened? (2) Is there anything more you can do to show your readiness for release? Are you doing everything in your power to work toward your freedom? (3) How have you aged since entering prison? How do you stay young? (4) What can you do to maintain strong physical and mental fitness? (5) How are you preparing for release? (6) What is the role of hope in your life? (7) What does “conscious living” mean to you?

### **Can Session 12**

**I avoid losing hope at this stage of my incarceration? Module 4:**

**Facilitator(s): Kimberly Westcott and assistant Standing Stage**

### **Description of Session**

Participants will dialogue and learn about interlocking systems and institutions across criminal justice and social welfare systems. Participants will lead aspects of the session themselves utilizing group facilitation techniques.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate an understanding of the intersecting aspects of the criminal justice system and the ways in which they impact participants’ futures.
- Articulate goals regarding ongoing personal growth, community engagement, and striving for freedom in the future.

**Session Outline** 1. Discuss role of judiciary, corrections and parole board

- Understanding what the parole board focuses on - Understanding the most effective ways to demonstrate the genuine changes

people have made throughout their sentences - Maintaining hope even if you feel you are being unfairly judged, or your

accomplishments not recognized 2. Engage in respectful group-facilitated discussion

- Participants have an opportunity to showcase peer leadership skills learned in previous sessions - Participants demonstrate their support for one another through honest,

challenging, and respectful dialogue about hope and the future - Participants focus on their ongoing plans for personal and community growth 3. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: TBD

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) Do you have coping strategies for disappointment in your life? Are your coping strategies helping or hurting you in the long run? (2) How can you rely on

support from your peers and community members when dealing with the disappointment of release denials? (3) How might you transform disappointment into liberating action? (4) How can you maintain your sense of self while feeling like that self is not recognized by the outside world? (5) What are some ways you work on the maintenance of your psychological health? Do you have creative outlets, people you enjoy talking to, places you can go to calm down and regroup?

### **Imagining Session 13**

**and experiencing hope through disappointment *Module 4:***

**Facilitator(s): Ronald Jenkins and assistant *Standing Stage***

### **Description of Session**

Participants will focus on finding the inner strength to overcome discouragement in the standing stage.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate the importance of maintaining hope in the face of disappointment
- Identify strategies to manage and minimize potentially overwhelming stressors

### **Session Outline** 1. Warm-up – Embody and tame your stress

- Participants assign their “stress” an animal form - Participants embody this form and then work to understand and tame it 2. Role-Play – Reenacting stressful scenarios and invoking the wisdom of elders

- Participants reenact, observe, and discuss stressful situations they have experienced in the past - Participants invoke the voices of wise elders/teachers who they think may be

able to help the person experiencing stress in the scenario - Participants support and encourage one another through dialogue and music 3. Reflection and discussion

**Readings** N/A

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) What methods for dealing with stress enacted in the role-playing scenarios do you think might be useful to you in the future? (2) What are the qualities of character

necessary to deal with stress and maintain

hope in the face of adversity? (3) When has music ever provided you with inspiration in a difficult time of your

life? What were the words in the songs that gave you encouragement? (4) Who are the

individuals or heroes from the past whose advice you would value if they could travel in

time and appear at your side in stressful times? What would they say to you? What

aspects of that individual’s character do you see as a role model for yourself as you



strive to realize your full potential in the future? (5) Have you ever turned negative circumstances into an opportunity to change your life for the better? Have bad events in your life ever ended up having good effects?

#### **How Session 14**

**can I succeed on the outside? The Reintegration Stage *Module 5:***

**Facilitator(s):** Larry White, Sophia Giovannitti and Eric Waters *Reintegration and Reflection*

#### **Description of Session**

Participants will be introduced to the Reintegration stage. Participants will learn and dialogue about the challenges and goals of Reintegration, and how to prepare for such an experience.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate an understanding of the full meaning of Reintegration
- Reflect on their own goals and concerns regarding Reintegration

**Session Outline** 1. Recap and reflection on previous session

2. What is the Reintegration stage?

- Return to society following release from prison - Transitional Release - Re-entering a changed community 3. Reentry vs. Reintegration

- Reentry encompasses job, housing, and basic needs - Reintegration encompasses a full re-engagement with the free society that the

prisoner had left behind 4. Accessing areas of support

- Community and non-profit organizations - Family and friends - Faith communities 6.

Reflection and discussion

**Readings** Study Paper: Relevant sections of manual.

#### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) What are your hopes and fears regarding your own reintegration? (2) Is there a

marker of successful reintegration to society? (3) What can you do to prepare for

reintegration? (4) Who or what organizations are you in touch with on the outside? How can you

further your connections to ease your reintegration when the time comes?

#### **Taking Session 15**

**what I've learned forward *Module 5:***

**Facilitator(s):** The Hope Lives for Lifers Team *Reintegration and Reflection*

#### **Description of Session**

In this closing session, participants and facilitators will dialogue about the successes and challenges of the curriculum, as well as participants' goals for the future.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Reflect on what they learned throughout the curriculum, and explore how they will use this knowledge moving forward
- Identify suggestions and challenges regarding aspects of the curriculum they hope to improve

**Session Outline** 1. Individual sharing of thoughts and reflections on the experience of the course

2. Gathering of constructive criticism and feedback regarding course facilitation, layout, and goals 3. Discussion of opportunities for ongoing involvement with HLFL 4.

Discussion of lifers' plans and hopes for both the short-term and long-term futures

**Readings** N/A

### **Session Specific Questions**

Please journal about the following:

(1) What were your favorite and least favorite course sessions? (2) Were there any topics not covered that you feel should have been covered? (3) Do you have suggestions for improving the content, layout, or facilitation of the course? (4) What is the most significant message you are taking away from this experience? (5) How will you continue to use knowledge you've gained throughout this experience as you move forward in your sentence? (6) Are you interested in become a peer mentor or group facilitator? (7) How do you feel differently about your sentence now, versus when you began this course? How do you feel differently about yourself? How do you feel differently about your future?

# HOPE LIVES FOR LIFERS *BEYOND THE YARD*

– *CONSTRUCTING A PRISON LIFE* A  
manual by and for those determined to overcome long

term/life incarceration - New York State Pilot Edition

# HOPE LIVES FOR LIFERS

prison sentences.

This manual is the result of that collaboration.

Larry White

## *FROM THE PROJECT'S COORDINATOR*

The material for this manual was written out of a deep and searching need for answers concerning the service of a twenty- five year to life prison sentence. The prospect of living in prison for twenty-five years before becoming eligible for release was both frightening and overwhelming for me. Nothing in the experience of ordinary life had prepared me for such an extraordinary undertaking. How does one come to grips with the idea of surviving a quarter of a century under living conditions that cause pain and suffering?

Perhaps the most alarming aspect of the service of a long-term prison sentence is the lack of guidance and direction to provide information about how to proceed. Neither the court that imposed the sentence, nor the prison system that provided the environment were able to provide the information I required to plan a course of action. How was I to begin to tackle what seemed an enormous period of time?

It soon became obvious to me that I would have to search out and study available literature on longtime confinement, as well as identify and collaborate with others who were up to the task of developing a road map for serving extended

LARRY  
WHITE

## Testimoni al

*The Hope Lives for Lifers manual is a must for individuals serving a life sentence. It is*

*comprehensive and thoughtful with clear explanations about the intricacies of prison life. It helps*

*one to become aware of the challenges faced at each stage of incarceration allowing for a better*

*grasp and control of the circumstances and responses. It allows one to define and redefine his or*

*her position in the penal process which allows for better use of time in prison. Ultimately the*

*Hope Lives for Lifers manual helps to create successful rehabilitation and reentry.*

*One of the myriad of concepts that resonate in the manual is the idea of the novice*

*prisoner who struggles adapting to a new life of following rules and taking orders. Like many*

*prisoners I fostered a warped self-image upon entering the penitentiary. I had a hard time obeying*

*guidelines during my first few years of incarceration because I felt exactly like what the manual*

*describes on page 11 “Who are you to tell me what to do? No one tells me what to do...”  
On page*

*10 the challenge of accepting one’s sentence is illuminated. Denial of reality, exacerbated by false*

*hopes of winning my appeal, caused me to deny accepting my long prison sentence until I*

*exhausted all of my appeal remedies. Only then did I realize that I was not going to be released*

*anytime soon and had to adjust.*

Chris  
Payton

Chris served 19 years of a life sentence in New York State and is now a graduate student at Columbia University earning his Masters in Social Work.

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# Introductio

n

**About the American Friends Service Committee** The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice, as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing on continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, we nurture the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social relations and systems.

AFSC works to end mass incarceration, improve conditions for people who are in prison, stop prison privatization, and promote a reconciliation and healing approach to criminal justice issues.

**Using this manual** This is an active manual, and is, in a sense, a work-in-progress. It should be taught, discussed, and challenged. It is not a frozen piece of writing; it is a teaching and learning tool. You can and should agree, disagree, add to, and break down what is said in these pages—all that we ask is for you to engage with these words and reflect upon what these ideas mean to you. It doesn't matter if you never made it through junior high or if you have a college degree.

This manual is designed to help guide all long-termers - regardless of sentence type, from all backgrounds and walks of life. It is an invitation to dialogue—to start a conversation about how and why you got here, and where you can go by moving forward in a meaningful way.

In order for this manual to be most effective, you must be reflective throughout. Looking at who you were, including the full set of circumstances that brought you to prison, and owning all of this is necessary. Your growth and development can only be measured by where you started. You must remain mindful of the crime for which you were convicted, the underlying factors and the totality of your life's journey. This does not mean that you should dwell in the past or define yourself by it. Instead owning where you started from is meant to foster your progress towards your freedom and betterment that must be your goal.

Throughout this manual, you may find references to various DOCCS programs and



other department-specific information. If and when you come across these references, it is important to understand that the most accurate information will come from DOCCS staff and therefore, we urge you to seek them out for guidance and fuller understanding.

You may also find suggestions on how to care for your mental and physical well-being throughout this manual. We urge you seek professional guidance from healthcare providers as you consider these suggestions.

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**Development and purpose** For the person who receives a long-term sentence, the burning question they face is how to deal with what appears to be an overwhelming amount of time. They think, “Where and how do I begin to tackle the problem of serving such a sentence? How do I break it down into manageable proportions so that it does not overcome my ability to plan a course of action? Where do I obtain help in answering these questions?”

As a person sentenced to spend a major portion, if not the remainder, of your life in prison, the mechanics of doing time becomes part of a total life experience rather than simply an interruption in your life. As long-termers, you are not tourists in prison; you are not just passing through. Answers to questions concerning how to deal with such extraordinary circumstances cannot always be provided by family members, supporters, or criminal justice practitioners. If the answers to these questions could not be found, it might be very difficult to cope with long-term confinement in a successful and healthy way, but we think that many of these questions are answered in this manual.

Our primary purpose in developing a self-help manual is to provide information on the mapping of a long period of imprisonment, and to provide instructions and advice necessary for adjustment, survival, and personal growth in a prison setting.

**Understanding a long prison sentence** A long-term prison sentence, including a life without the possibility of parole sentence, has three distinct parts that should be clearly understood by the person serving such a sentence. These sentences have a minimum period of incarceration, a maximum period of incarceration, and primary

release mechanisms. A minimum period of incarceration is the minimum amount of time to be served on the sentence. The maximum period of incarceration is the maximum period of time to be served on the sentence. A primary release mechanism is the type of release consideration designated for that specific kind of sentence.

A long-term sentence as considered in this manual is a prison sentence that requires the person to serve 15 years or more before becoming eligible for release consideration. This applies to four distinct kinds of prison sentence:

- An Indeterminate Sentence has a stated minimum period of incarceration and a stated maximum period of incarceration, such as 15-30 years. The primary release mechanism in an indeterminate sentence is parole release and conditional release.
  
- A Determinate Sentence has a stated maximum period of incarceration, such as a flat 15 years. The minimum period of incarceration in such a determinate sentence is 6/7 of the maximum term of incarceration, or 12 years and 9 months. The primary

release mechanism of a determinate sentence is conditional release.

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- A Life Sentence is considered an indeterminate sentence, but it carries no maximum term of incarceration, only a stated minimum period of incarceration, such as 25 years to life. The primary release mechanism for a life sentence is parole consideration.
  
- A Life without Parole Sentence has a minimum period of incarceration and a maximum period of incarceration that are both the same. The primary release mechanism for a life without parole sentence is Executive Clemency.

# Sentence Mapping

Mapping is a process of segmenting a long-term sentence into distinct periods. This allows the sentenced person to figure out a course of action designed to achieve personal development and freedom from incarceration. In other words, if you have a 25 year to life sentence or a 25 year flat sentence, mapping that sentence allows you to break the time period down into smaller, more manageable segments with guidelines and goals for each segment.

25 years is a long time; it may be easier for some long-termers to plan in terms of smaller time periods instead of concentrating on the whole 25 years. For instance, it allows you plan for the first five years, then the second five years, the third five years and so on until you have completed the entire 25 years. Doesn't it seem easier to plan in terms of five years than the whole 25 years?

The way we see it, the entire long-term sentence (both the minimum and maximum periods of imprisonment considered together) can be divided into three distinct stages: the **Novice Stage**, **Seasoned Stage**, and the **Standing Stage with Freedom** as the goal. The novice stage covers the first 3 to 5 years of imprisonment at a state correctional facility. During this time, the long- termer is new to the state prison system and has to make the adjustment from the free world to the closed world of the prison setting. At this stage of the sentence the long-termer has to learn new social responses and intentional behaviors that will allow for embracing the rules and regulations of the prison environment as a path to release, and to construct a prison lifestyle based on principles and guidelines.

The novice long-termer gradually becomes a seasoned long-termer, adapting to the prison setting, learning the social responses and intentional behaviors that are needed to construct a prison lifestyle. A seasoned long-termer has learned the

Universal Principles of Behavior during Confinement and how to negotiate the prison setting. A seasoned long-termers primary concern is how to serve the sentence in a way that will lead to release from imprisonment at the earliest opportunity. The need to learn sentence planning arises from the fact that a

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seasoned long-termers will spend the major, if not all, of the minimum period of imprisonment preparing for release consideration.

The seasoned long-termers becomes a standing long-termers if denied release at least two consecutive times. A standing long-termers has passed through the

novice stage of confinement and has negotiated the seasoned stage. The standing long-termer is at a stage of incarceration where all possible means of earning release have been explored.

Identifying with these three stages of confinement allows the long-termer to orient to a life inside; to create a new identity that is distinct and that has a purpose, rather than simply being lost and indistinguishable among a mass population of prisoners.

# **UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES OF CONFINEMENT**

## **1 TO GAIN YOUR RELEASE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE**

## **2 TO LEAVE YOUR CONFINEMENT IN**

# BETTER CONDITION THAN WHEN YOU ENTERED IT

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## Chapter 1 – Embarking on the Long Bid – The Novice Stage

As a novice long-termer, you are beginning a sentence that involves the service of 15 years or more before becoming eligible for release. The term “novice” means that this experience is new for you – no one has yet taught you how to do a long bid, and you are entering a world that you are unprepared for. The novice stage is the time that you adjust to your environment, and begin to think critically about how you will be able to make a meaningful life for yourself behind the walls.

At the novice stage, the transition from the free world to the closed world of the prison setting requires major personal adjustments, and such adjustments eventually lead to the construction of a prison lifestyle. During the novice stage, it is important to keep in mind certain areas of adjustment and concern. It will be

helpful if you can gain an awareness and consciousness of your situation as a recently sentenced long-termer. During the novice stage, many changes are taking place in your life that are out of your control, and it is a good idea to identify and think about these changes, what they mean and how to handle them, rather than blindly allowing them to happen to you.

Most important to you as a novice is the idea that there is a difference between acting and reacting. As a novice long-termer, you want to learn how to act intentionally, meaning how to think about what is happening and then behave in such a way that makes sense and is beneficial to you, without harming others. You do not want to react, which would mean responding to what is happening around you without thinking about it first. Reacting is giving up your control to other people—remember, you are the only person who can control you, and you have the power.

*“Don’t become too occupied with what is happening around you; pay more attention to what is happening within you”* **Mary Francis Winters**



What are 10 things (5 positive and 5 not so positive) I remember/am experiencing during my “**Novice Stage**” while trying to adjust to long term incarceration?

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Journaling and Reflecting Questions during the Novice Stage

KEY

## WORDS

Novice, Principles, Guidelines, Hope, Denial,  
Shattering, Identity, Lifeline, Activist, Freedom,  
Reflection, Action

1. What do these words mean to me?

2. Can I see myself as a novice long-termer? Does that change the way I think

about  
myself?

3. What do I miss most about being on the street? What do I miss least?

What is different for me in prison? Is anything the same?

4. What is the hardest thing to get used to in prison? What is the easiest?

5. Do I know anyone inside or outside who can help me get through this and

stay on track? Do I want help? Why or why not?

6. What does "following the rules" mean to me? Who benefits if I follow the rules? Who benefits if I don't? Are these benefits short or long-term?

**Journaling and Reflection Questions during the Novice Stage**

Answer the questions on page 9 and add any additional thoughts /ideas





## Things to focus on during the Novice Stage – Areas of Adjustment

**The shattering effect of imprisonment** As a person sentenced to long-term imprisonment you have to come to terms with the fact that your previous life is over, and that you're starting a new life. You face a long-term/permanent separation from home, spouse, children, job, social life and friends. It is too easy to assume that you are somehow ready for this experience, and will not suffer the same type of anxiety most of us would if we were suddenly faced with dramatic and frightening changes. As a long-termer, the amount of time that you will be gone is much too great to expect things to stay the same.

Without a full consciousness of the way in which your everyday world has changed, you might underestimate the pains you're likely to experience. Others may wrongly assume that your apparent ease represents a natural adaptation to prison conditions, and not one which has been personally constructed as a solution to apparently intolerable problems.

**The pains and deprivations of imprisonment** When you are newly confined in a prison setting, you suddenly face a situation in which you are no longer seen or treated as you were accustomed to in the free world. The way you saw yourself on the street is not the way you will be treated in prison. In the street, you have all kinds of things that you can select, own, and do to make an identity for yourself—the kind of clothes you wear, the kind of food you eat, the way you talk and laugh and act, and everything else you do, say, and perform on a regular basis.

When entering the closed prison setting, you are put through a reception process where you are stripped of most of your personal possessions and articles of self-identification—your identification kit—the most significant of these possessions being your full name. You are programmed as a number, deprived of your personal gear, and are provided with standard issue clothing, uniform in character and uniformly distributed. In other words, you are prevented as much as possible from presenting your usual image of yourself to others, from expressing yourself as an individual, if this is at all contrary to the rules and regulations that pertain to the care, custody and control of prisoners. It is understandable that this may cause you to feel a complete loss of autonomy, and a sense that your individual thoughts, needs and ideas no longer

matter. Living in a tightly controlled environment and feeling your self-image under attack is painful and threatening. As a novice long-termer, you can solve some of the problems of identity and self-image by re-taking control of yourself in this new environment. You may re-evaluate who it is that you truly are, without your usual, superficial identifiers, and in doing so, you may construct a meaningful and unique prison lifestyle.

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**The personal world of the novice long-termer** The personal, free world life of the novice long-termer is not completely terminated upon prison confinement. You can still strive mightily to maintain as much of your previous life as possible. Maintaining contact and control of valued elements of your former life, such as material possessions and meaningful relationships, is important. These treasures of your life constitute a bridge to a future life upon release from imprisonment. While maintaining these contacts and possessions can be very beneficial for a long-termer's morale and well-being, if you are solely focused on maintaining these things, it can have a detrimental effect on building a life for yourself within the prison walls. It is important to maintain contact with the outside while understanding and accepting that the world outside is going on without you, and is not frozen waiting for you to return to it. Just as the outside world is growing and changing, so should you!

**The challenge of denial** A long-term sentence can be extremely hard to accept. It can be difficult at first to wrap your mind around the length of time you have been sentenced to, and it is common to be in denial about the fact that freedom from confinement may require a long and protracted struggle.

Many novice long-termers hold the strong belief that legal grounds for a successful court appeal of their sentence is an absolute certainty. However, legal appeals, even when they are grounded in convincing facts, are often unsuccessful, and even if they are successful, may take years to complete. Therefore, it is crucial at this stage of confinement that you come to the realization that there are no absolute certainties concerning the outcome of legal appeals.

Careful research in any prison law library of the statistical success rate of legal appeals will lead to the sobering realization that one should "expect the worst and hope for the



best.” This does not mean that you should give up on pursuing legal appeals and tapping into every possible avenue of overturning your sentence. On the contrary, you should pursue these methods fully and passionately, keeping realistic expectations in mind.

**Resocialization and adjusting to a prison setting** Adjustment to the prison setting is of utmost importance and will require learning new social responses and intentional behaviors. Adjustment means to learn how to act and behave in new ways that allow you to fit into your environment without a lot of drama and controversy. To adopt new social responses means that you learn to respond to the social situations in the prison setting in such a way as to conform to the rules and regulations and to avoid the drama of personal confrontation. These are intentional behaviors, a way of behaving that you develop to gain personal acceptance as well as personal respect for the way you negotiate all the drama in your surroundings.

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As a novice-long termer, you are suddenly deprived of all kinds of things that you are used to getting like favorite foods and physical contact with loved ones, as well as things like respect and privacy. It is important that you learn to adjust to these deprivations and understand that even though you may be experiencing challenging situations in which you can't get the things you want or act in the way you want, or in which you feel disrespected, **you** are still in control of yourself, your actions, and your identity. No one can take that from you. If you don't adjust to these deprivations in a healthy way, you might end up constantly rebelling against prison rules and facing disciplinary consequences and added time. You might withdraw from your environment, closing yourself off to opportunities for growth and meaning while you are inside.

When situations come up that are unpleasant, challenging, or disrespectful to you in some way, you must THINK, REFLECT, and then ACT. Think about getting out of prison as quickly as possible. Don't do something that will get you in trouble and put you in special confinement, or extend the time you have to serve. Here's an example: a C.O. says, "Go in your cell." You may not want to go—you may be out there talking to people, but you've got to go! You say to yourself, "I don't want to go," but you have to. You have to learn new social responses. In the street, if somebody told you that, you'd say, "Who

are you to tell me what to do? No one tells me what to do. I don't feel like going inside.” But here—that's out. You must learn *new social responses*. You must behave in such a way that doesn't require any disciplinary action, a way that appears to others that you are reforming your behavior—i.e. changing your behavior to more positive responses. As highlighted above, you must REFLECT, and not just REACT—this means that you need to think about why you are doing the things you're doing, rather than simply reacting without thinking first, lashing out and/or acting the way you used to.

**Constructing a “prison life”** As a novice long-termer, you are facing an extended period of time in prison, and you must adjust to that fact by constructing a prison lifestyle. Your life as you know it may have been disrupted and even shattered. In the wake of this destruction lies opportunity to construct a new life in response to the new living conditions, deprivations, needs and adjustments that you are now facing. Without a full understanding of the way in which the everyday world has been broken for the long-termer, we can underestimate the pains experienced. It is a mistake to assume that an apparent ease in confinement represents a natural adaptation to prison conditions, and not one which has been personally constructed as a solution to intolerable problems.

As a novice long-termer, you have a challenging task laid out for you: to develop the ability to withstand the pains and deprivations of imprisonment, while at the same time embarking upon a path of personal growth and development that leads to release from confinement. ***You must not give up hope!*** Instead, you can construct a prison lifestyle by adjusting to the prison setting and adapting new social responses and intentional behaviors that not only conform to administrative rule and regulations, but will sustain and guide your efforts for release. In doing so, you will contribute to and learn from your environment, and create a meaningful life for yourself on the inside.

Constructing a prison lifestyle is to develop a style of living based upon principles and guidelines designed to achieve release from confinement as quickly as possible, and to leave prison in a better condition than when you entered. You construct a prison style of living guided by personal intent not helter-skelter!

This manual is designed to help you to develop a personal prison lifestyle by following the Universal Principles of Behavior during Confinement. There are other long-termers who have decided to live in prison the same way they lived on the streets. Their prison lifestyle is an attempt to continue the way they lived in the free world, as if nothing has changed. That is madness! It's like living in Alaska as if you were living in California, and

wondering why there is no summer weather. Alaska is not California, just as the closed prison setting is not the free world! Never be afraid to face reality, because if it's not reality, it is not real!!

## Universal Principles of Behavior during Confinement

**Sentence planning** A major problem facing a novice long-termer is how to plan to serve this sentence so as to achieve the greatest benefits. The very idea of spending decades in harsh confinement raises questions about your ability to survive such a long ordeal. Such reflections may overwhelm you and sweep aside any positive thoughts you may have of personal development. When you begin to consider how to serve your sentence, you will have to take a serious look at your ability to plan for the future, to develop a clear and definite purpose, and to consider the need for intellectual growth. All this may be new to you and will require a **positive, life-giving attitude** about your situation.

Developing such an attitude requires an organized program of empowerment, one that may be provided by community-based services like Hope Lives for Lifers, or by lifer organizations themselves. As in any serious effort designed to produce beneficial results, a well thought-out plan of action is required. Such a plan should be based on **sound principles and effective guidelines**.

**Principles and guidelines** The term "sentence planning," as used in this manual, is the process of using the Universal Principles of Behavior during Confinement to structure the service of a long-term prison sentence. Contrary to popular belief, there ARE principles that form the basis of codes of behavior governing prisoners of every kind and distinction.

Whether one is a prisoner serving a prison sentence, a hostage in a kidnap, or a captive in a war,

there are two primary principles governing behavior during confinement: **1) To gain your freedom as quickly as possible, and 2) To leave confinement in better condition than when you began it.** These principles are universal in that they apply to all forms of confinement.

**The First Principle is to gain your freedom as quickly as possible**, not only identifies the ultimate goal to be reached, but it also provides guidelines for achieving that goal - to act as quickly and expeditiously as possible. To act expeditiously is to take no action that would impede or delay the achievement of your freedom. This requires a critical awareness of your behavior and a commitment to a process of liberating action. Liberating acts are behaviors designed to expedite rather than impede your freedom. Liberating acts are the result of an important process: **REFLECTION and then ACTION**. When faced with a decision, you must reflect upon the guiding principle, and then act accordingly.

**The Second Principle is “to leave confinement in better condition than when you started it”** and provides direction and guidelines for personal growth and development during confinement. Just as freedom is an essential characteristic of human existence, the ability to grow and develop to the full extent of your ability is an inherent expression of that freedom. That is why the two principles must be carried out together. You must not only struggle to obtain your freedom, but as an essential part of that struggle you must pursue every opportunity for the growth and development of your human potential.

**Living by principles** Because principles provide rules and guidelines that govern behavior, living a life governed by principles may not be an easy matter at this stage of your incarceration. The discipline and commitment required must be learned and internalized. The learning process begins with an understanding of the principles, and a belief that strict adherence to them will achieve positive and beneficial results. Understanding the principles may not be a problem. However, developing a motivating belief that such principles can easily be followed in a prison setting requires you to carefully consider any reservations or concerns you may have. One such concern is the popular belief among many prisoners that strict adherence to prison rules and regulations is a sign of weakness and an inability to stand up to authority, of “being down with the administration.” Such beliefs may be popular with peers and provide a cool image, but they do nothing to improve your efforts to free yourself, or to positively affect your growth and development. If your beliefs do nothing to motivate behaviors toward freedom, or improve growth and development, then they will surely promote actions that result in continued confinement.

**Application of the universal principles** As a novice long-termer, you must learn the Universal Principles of Behavior during Confinement as a foundation for constructing a prison lifestyle. It is these principles that provide the guidelines for adapting new social

responses and intentional behaviors.

**When faced with a decision to act, the novice long-termer reflects upon the principles as a means of deciding if the outcome of the act would be beneficial or harmful.** If the act will improve your chances to gain release as quickly as possible, then the act is a liberating act. If the act will result in spending a longer period in confinement, then the act is harmful and destructive. As you continue your efforts to construct a prison lifestyle by applying the universal principles, you'll gradually become a Seasoned Long-Termer.

**In summary** The novice stage of confinement begins when a recently-sentenced person arrives at a reception facility for sentenced offenders. You are now facing a major life change that you must accept as part of your lifeline. You will face the struggles and deprivations that come with a long-term prison sentence, but by accepting the universal principles, you will also maintain the hope and certainty that you can grow, progress, and have a full life inside of prison. The transition from the free world to the closed world of prison confinement requires adjustment to the prison setting. The novice long-termer must understand and accept these areas of adjustment. In order to understand what is happening, what you're up against, and the profound effort required of you to not only withstand these new circumstances, but to thrive within them, as a novice long-termer, you cannot expect to act the same way in prison as you did in the street. You must adjust your behavior and set new goals and expectations for yourself during this period of confinement. Adjusting to the prison setting as quickly as possible will allow you to get down to the hard but rewarding work of making an engaging life for yourself inside prison. In living by the universal principles of confinement (*1. To leave prison as quickly as possible; 2. To leave in better condition than when you came in*), you will learn to become **an activist on your own behalf**, working for goals that benefit your growth and development as a strong and resilient human being.

## Suggested Readings during the Novice Stage

### ***PERSONAL POWER!***

It is up to us as single individuals to oppose the forces of our lives. I have said to you countless times: only a warrior can survive. A warrior knows that he is waiting and what he is waiting for; and while he waits he wants nothing and thus whatever little thing he gets is more than he can take. If he needs to eat he finds a way. Because he is not hungry; if something hurts his body he finds a way to stop it, because he is not in pain. To be hungry and to be in pain means the man has abandoned himself and is no longer a warrior; and the forces of his hunger and pain will destroy him.

The spirit of a warrior is not geared to indulging and complaining, nor is it geared to winning and losing. The spirit of a warrior is geared to struggle, and every struggle is a warrior's last battle on earth. Thus the outcome matters very little to him. In his last battle on earth a warrior lets his spirit flow free and clear. And as he wages his battle, knowing

that his will is impeccable, a warrior laughs and laughs.

I have learned that the countless paths one traverses in one's life are all equal. Oppressors and oppressed meet at the end, and the only thing that prevails is that life was altogether too short for both. Today I feel sad not because my mother and father died the way they did; I feel sad because they were Indians. They lived like Indians and died like Indians and never knew that they were, before anything else, men." **Carlos Castaneda, *A Separate Reality*** (Castaneda, *A Separate Reality*, 1991)

It doesn't matter what one reveals or what one keeps to oneself. Everything we do, everything we are, rests on our personal power. If we have enough of it, one word uttered to us might be sufficient to change the course of our lives. But if we don't have enough personal power, the most magnificent piece of wisdom can be revealed to us and that revelation won't make a damn bit of difference.

That's the flaw with words. They always force us to feel enlightened, but when we turn around to face the world they always fail us and we end up facing the world as we always have, without enlightenment. For this reason, a warrior seeks to act rather than talk and to this effect he gets a new description of the world – a new description where talking is not that important, and where new acts have new reflections.

You didn't have this knowledge before. Now you do. I have revealed it to you, but it doesn't make a damn bit of difference, because you don't have enough personal power to utilize my

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revelation. Yet if you did have enough personal power, my words alone would serve as the means for you to round up the totality of yourself and get to the crucial part of it out of the boundaries in which it is contained.

"He came to my side and poked my chest with his fingers; it was a very light tap. 'These are the boundaries I'm talking about,' he said. 'One can get out of them. We are a feeling, an awareness encased here.'" **Carlos Castaneda, *Tales of Power*** (Castaneda, *A Separate Reality*, 1991)

## ***Reflections on the Readings***

What powers do I have? (Physical strength, mental strength, patience, intelligence, creativity, etc.)

What are some different meanings to the word “power”?

What powers do I not have that I want?

What steps can I take to cultivate these powers?



**Reflection Questions on the Readings** Answer the questions on page 19 and add any additional thoughts /ideas





## Support and guidance during the Novice Stage

If your facility has a lifers' group, here are questions that they can help you answer. It is always good to talk to people who have experienced similar things, who may have insights on how to do a bid, get through a day, stick with a goal, or make a difference. Talking can be difficult, but it is usually worth it.

- How can you maintain your connections to the outside world, while not living in it?
- How can you hold onto your past connections, but make sure that you aren't LIVING in the past?
- What is the difference between reacting and acting?
- Why is it important to REFLECT and then act?
- How can reaction be harmful?
- How do you manage to control your feelings enough that you don't lash out, but think about the behavior that will help you become free in the long run?
- How do you handle being told what to do all the time?
- What are the things that make you feel free?
- What do you find most tiring about prison life? Is there anything you've found inspiring, that you think could inspire me too?
- Did it take you time to fully adjust to prison life? How long? Do

you feel like your bid has changed you?

- Is there anything you still haven't adjusted to?

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**Support and Guidance Questions during the Novice Stage** Answer the questions on page 22 and add any additional thoughts /ideas





## Chapter 2 – Working Toward Release – The Seasoned Stage

As you transition from the novice long-termer to the “seasoned long-termer” you begin to adjust to the prison setting and start constructing a prison lifestyle that will sustain and guide you to the release consideration phase of your sentence. The need for sentence planning arises from the fact that a seasoned long-termer will spend the major, if not all, of the minimum period of incarceration preparing for release consideration. This ultimate goal of the seasoned long-termer requires sentence planning. In planning the service of the rest of your sentence, you must focus your attention on three aspects of prison life:



What are 10 things (5 positive and 5 not so positive) I remember/am experiencing/anticipating during my **“Seasoned Stage”** while struggling for freedom

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## Journaling and Reflecting questions during the Seasoned Stage

KEY WORDS Survival, Struggle,  
Adjustment, Determination,  
Indeterminate, Stress, Spirit,  
Collective

1. Have I made the necessary adjustments to transition from the novice to the seasoned stage?
2. How do I feel as a seasoned long-termer?

3. Does that change the way I think about myself?

4. What have I learned over the years about how to better survive and thrive

during this

bid?

5. What are specific signs of my physical, mental, and spiritual health and

development

?

6. What life goals have I created for myself as a long-term?

7. What do I still need to work on in order to achieve these goals?

Answer the questions on page 27 and add any additional thoughts /ideas





## Things to focus on during the Seasoned Stage

# Survival

The first consideration in planning for a long-term sentence is personal survival. The prospect of serving a considerably long period of imprisonment raises questions of personal survival that all long-termers must address. Freedom can only be achieved if you remain alive, and so survival comes first and freedom becomes the second primary goal of a seasoned long-termer.

**Prison survival** In carrying out efforts to gain your liberty, your first concern is the **ability to survive what may be a long and protracted struggle**. You must survive the pains and deprivations of imprisonment while engaging in the complex, stressful, and tedious work of freeing yourself. To do this, you must develop survival techniques. Prison survival requires a holistic approach that addresses both your welfare and the welfare of those around you. A holistic environmental approach means an approach that takes multiple things into consideration; the long-termer needs to focus on ALL aspects of prison survival, and not address only one aspect at the expense of another. To this end, **individual survival concerns the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the prisoner**. Environmental survival concerns the ability of long-termers to sustain their well-being within the rigors and stress of prison conditions.

**Individual survival** Techniques for individual survival set guidelines for the following: **Diet, Physical Fitness, Mental Fitness, Self Esteem, Stress, Spirit, and Beliefs**. As a seasoned long-termer, you will learn individual survival techniques by internalizing the following guidelines:

**DIET** includes not only what you eat but everything you ingest, your entire bodily intake, including drugs, alcohol and tobacco. As a seasoned long-termer you must learn to guard with great care what you put into your body, because survival and inner strength, not pleasure, are the overriding concerns.



**PHYSICAL FITNESS** entails more than muscular strength and endurance; it also includes the concept of wellness. Wellness results from health in the body, mind and spirit in relation to your overall environment. You feel good physically, your emotions are almost always stable, you like yourself, and your relationship with others is positive. That may sound like an overwhelming task, but it is an achievable state of being. Keeping physically fit improves self-image, emotional well-being, and for some creates a sense of spiritual focus.

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**MENTAL FITNESS** refers to the state of having a healthy mind, with the ability to adapt to and cope with the circumstances of life. Your body, your mind, and your spirit all face significant challenges during confinement. To meet these challenges with focused, positive energy, you need to be mentally fit. If you are mentally healthy you will be able to cope with stress, adjust to changing circumstances, form healthy relationships, and assume a positive attitude towards life. The key consideration to be addressed in the achievement of mental fitness in prison is self-esteem and stress management.

**SELF-ESTEEM** is how you feel about yourself. How you feel about you is a critical component of how you handle life - its failures, successes, and ultimately the happiness and meaning of life. If you see yourself as worthy, lovable, likeable and trustworthy, you have positive self-esteem. The way you view yourself has a profound effect on the way you serve your sentence. Primary elements for building self-esteem include accepting yourself, setting goals, and developing personal power.

**STRESS** is the wear and tear within the body in response to any demand made on it. The demands on the body can be physical or psychological, and stress can occur in response to either positive or negative events. For instance, stress can result from a parole board notification of release as well as a notification of denial of release. The notification of denial is certainly more stressful than the notification of release, but they are both alike in the ways in which your internal body mechanisms respond.

A person adapts to a problem whatever the problem may be, even the ones encountered in day-to-day living. You are under stress when the temperature changes a few degrees because your body has to make certain adjustments. Adjustments occur continuously

throughout life and may be as small as the temperature change just mentioned or as large as confinement in prison or release denial.

Stress can affect your health. The hopeless, helpless feelings that result in emotional and physical exhaustion are common problems in prison. Your ability to cope with stress and maintain control of your life is fundamental to prison survival. The proper term for too much stress is “distress”, a situation in which your ability to handle stress has been overwhelmed. You can learn to handle stress effectively and minimize its damaging effects by directing pressures into a productive force and using the factors that cause stress as motivators for positive action. Such techniques, called stress management, are a critical part of prison survival.

**SPIRIT** is that part of you that is connected to some larger existence, some larger set of values. For some individuals this perspective or outlook comes from religious belief, while others find it in a personal philosophy or set of moral principles. Our spirit is the essence, the core of our being, and it finds expression in our beliefs and values.

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**BELIEFS** shape and form our thought patterns and thereby affect our emotional and physical reactions. If your personal philosophy or spiritual beliefs strengthen and center you, then the thoughts derived from your philosophy will lead you to positive emotional and physical reactions. The more you maintain a positive spirit, the more you can draw upon your vital self-preserving energy. This energy gives you strength and the motivation to avoid negative, self-destructive behaviors.

Your spiritual values affect your overall well-being. If you have a weak or negative personal philosophy, your thoughts may produce negative emotional and physical reactions. For example, if you believe people are basically untrustworthy and manipulative, then you may have unfulfilling relationships, which may result in feelings of isolation and depression. If your spiritual orientation is threatening to your well-being by leading to thoughts of alienation and fear, or by failing to provide the philosophical beliefs and spiritual values required to sustain your life struggles in prison, then you may have to consider choosing a more constructive spiritual path. You may wish to seek out religion or alternative life enrichment techniques to relieve stress and increase spiritual awareness.

**Environmental survival** Environmental survival concerns your ability to sustain your well-being given the rigors of prevailing prison conditions. Prison conditions are the result of policies that emanate at the highest levels of State government, primarily the Governor's office. It is the response to these policies by the prison administrators who must carry them out, as well as the state prisoners who they directly affect, that produce the rigors of prevailing prison conditions.

At the basic level where prisoners experience direct impact on their well-being, prison conditions result from state policy in the following areas: **security and control, rules and regulations, housing, food service, health care, state issue, visits and packages, commissary, work assignments, reform programs, correspondence, and recreation.**

The first two areas are broad in their application and require clarification. **Security** refers to the prevention of prisoners escaping the confines of the prison. **Control** identifies the processes and mechanisms employed to establish order within the facility. Policies at this level concern the overall operations and security of the prison, and determine the facility's security level. Types of crime and length of sentence, time spent out of the cells, degrees of movement throughout the facility, amounts of recreation and programs, and the flexibility of rules and regulations are guided by these classifications.

**Rules and regulations** govern every aspect of a prisoner's life and range from regulations between prisoners and staff, and even between prisoners and their families and loved ones. According to the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, the

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stated objectives of prison rules and regulations are: "To protect the prisoners from potential harm, either as a result of injury to their person, or loss or damage to their property" and "to establish standards of behavior which are both reasonable and consistent."

The remaining areas need no explanation. Collectively they constitute the primary program and service operations whose level of performance determines prison conditions. There is no question that prison conditions are set and maintained at the minimum standard of living considered desirable in free society. It is the disparity between standards of living in free society and living conditions in the prison setting that gives rise to the rigors of prevailing prison conditions.

Imprisonment entails a re-socialization in which prisoners have to adapt to prison as a way of life. Old ways of living are shattered and they have to adjust themselves to the deprivations of prison. They might adjust in a number of ways but they must come to grips with a new reality - a new situation in which the events in the prison setting fail to confirm their prior experience.

**Adjustment** to the reality of imprisonment does not mean a mere acceptance of the fact that one will be confined for an extended period of time and therefore become accustomed to such a condition. It entails more than a perception of reality that the prison is home for an extended period of time. **To adjust is not to merely endure.** True adjustment entails a struggle to establish a sustaining relationship between the prisoner and the prison setting. A sustaining relationship is one in which you are able to make adjustments in your behavior as well as make improvements in your environment. Both the personal adjustments as well as the improvements in the prison setting are for the well-being of the prisoner. The prisoner who has re-socialized and adjusted to the prison setting is not a static, unchanging individual. This person is constantly working to improve themselves and the conditions they're living under.

The ability of the prisoner to improve prison conditions is a crucial aspect of prison adjustment and is at the heart of the struggle for environmental survival. The act of improving prison conditions is carried out by long-term prisoners on the **individual level** as well as on the **collective level**. On the individual level prisoners have the option of utilizing procedures within the prison system, such as Grievance Resolution Proceedings, the Inmate Liaison Committee process and direct appeal to prison administrators, or by addressing sources outside the prison system, such as courts, legislators and government agencies.

On the collective level long-termers have the option of becoming members of the Inmate Liaison Committee and/or an inmate organization. The Inmate Liaison Committee is a

representative body authorized to address prison conditions on a facility level. An inmate organization is a collective activity that has been approved by the prison

administration to develop constructive interaction between prisoners and free world community.

As you progress through your incarceration, accept the responsibility to work with others to make the conditions of confinement safe, conducive to rehabilitation, and tolerable. You should also anticipate sharing your expertise, as developed through your experiences, to help improve individuals, communities, and systems.

Seasoned long-termers should be made aware of the interrelationship between the struggle for individual survival and the struggle for environmental survival. Individual survival concerns the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the long-termer. Environmental survival requires the prisoner to navigate the realities and challenges of the prison setting. Taken together they constitute the primary techniques required to survive the pains and deprivations of imprisonment while engaging in the tedious and often stressful endeavor to earn freedom.

**The stakeholder concept** As a long-termer your connection to the prison system is very different from those serving shorter sentences, you must view yourself as a stakeholder. You must invest your energies not just in your individual wellbeing, but also in the larger realities. Participate in opportunities to improve the circumstances for all in the prison setting. Join think tanks, liaison committees, and grievance committees and other avenues that work toward improving circumstances. The prison is where you live; work to make it livable.

## Growth and Development

The second universal principle governing behavior during confinement - *to leave confinement in better condition than when you began it* - sets the standard for conduct that encourages growth and development during confinement. A seasoned long-termer must not only survive confinement in the sense of remaining alive, but **must maintain the process of growth and development that gives human existence its essential character.**

To be human is to be free - free to grow and develop to the extent of one's potential.

Thus, the struggle for freedom is inseparable from the process of growth and development, and both must be carried out together during the course of confinement.

In a prison setting, the process of growth and development begins with participation in assigned academic, vocational, or therapeutic programs.

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At this point, we need to consider the concept of **rehabilitation** and its importance as a **primary objective** of a long-term sentence.

As a seasoned long termer you must understand the primary objectives of your sentence. A long- term prison sentence, either indeterminate or determinate, has two primary objectives: **punishment** and **rehabilitation**. The amount of punishment given in a prison sentence is stated in the length of that sentence. For instance, an indeterminate sentence of 5 to 10 years carries less punishment than an indeterminate sentence of 25 years to life, just as a determinate sentence of 5 years carries less punishment than a determinate sentence of 25 years. Rehabilitation in a prison setting generally refers to programmatic efforts to reform offenders by instilling new social responses and intentional behaviors that lead to lawful conduct. In other words, prison is supposed to turn a person into a law-abiding citizen, by punishing that person for their past choices while providing opportunities for that person to improve themselves (through education, training, counseling, etc.) Rehabilitation is at the heart of all long term sentences, and it is the basis of the minimum portion of an indeterminate sentence, which is often understood by the prisoner as the time in which he/she must take the greatest strides in his/her the rehabilitation, as it forms the primary consideration for parole release.

Participation and achievement in rehabilitative correctional programs is an essential indication of personal growth and development during confinement; however, the process of growth and development involves more than just participation and achievement in these assigned programs. **At the heart of the growth process is the development of a critical c o n s c i o u s n e s s that leads to liberating action.**

At some point in the process of growth and development, the seasoned long-termer becomes critical of the circumstances – i.e., his imprisonment. The long-termer is faced with and must answer the basic questions: **How did I get here and where am I going?**

Becoming aware of the personal and social realities that led to and are involved in imprisonment, the long-termer becomes committed to ***the transformation of those realities as an ongoing act of liberation***. Liberating acts are intentional behaviors that the seasoned long-termer makes in order to achieve freedom as quickly as possible.

**Understanding your current condition and redefining yourself** As discussed in the Novice section, long-term confinement leads to a form of re-socialization in which the incarcerated person must learn to adapt to prison as a way of life. Old definitions are shattered, and the long-termer has to adjust to the deprivations of prison. One might do this by withdrawing or, on the other hand, by continual rebellion.

The range of such adjustment is a response to the pains of imprisonment—the incarcerated person's privacy is invaded, they are programmed as a number, and the old self is assaulted. These are the various forms of what he/she experiences as "disrespect." To adjust to this

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ongoing experience, the individual must have access to processes that help determine who and what he is in terms of this present situation. **These processes are used to build up a personal reorganization in which the prison setting actually helps, rather than hurts, the individual.** The incarcerated person must examine the realities of the prison setting in order to assess one's relationship to the setting, and to successfully construct a prison life. In doing so, a long-termer can come to redefine and empower themselves in relation to his present situation. To determine who and what you are in terms of your present situation, you must first define your present situation.

Presently, you are convicted, sentenced, and imprisoned. Your present situation, however, is the result of personal circumstances and social outcomes. An analysis of the personal circumstances that led to your criminal behavior involves a review of the events, situations, and factors that influenced your decision to commit a crime. Most often, our responses to events and situations are triggered by processes that we are not fully aware of, and so we do not appreciate the role that our thoughts and attitudes play in our emotional and behavioral responses.

These responses are caused by our *interpretation* of an event or situation, rather than by the event or situation itself. Once we identify the events and situations to which we respond, we can better examine the manner in which our thoughts and attitudes about

these events and situations were converted into action, i.e. Criminal behavior. Through better understanding our own thought processes, and what led to our current situation of confinement, we can start the path of growth and development that will allow us to leave confinement in better condition than when we began it.

## The Struggle for Freedom

The Struggle for Freedom refers to efforts that long-term prisoners make to **achieve their release from incarceration**. The Struggle for Freedom should be guided by principles and guidelines that long-term prisoners believe will lead to their release. The Universal Principles of Behavior During Confinement (to gain one's freedom as quickly as possible, and to leave confinement in better condition than when it started) form the basis of codes of behavior that structure the service of a long-term sentence.

**Understanding the first principle** Understanding the first principle (**to gain one's freedom as quickly as possible**) starts with the realization that freedom from imprisonment is of paramount concern. Gaining one's freedom as quickly as possible is a motivating force that all prisoners can agree with, yet few act upon as a daily, practical form of behavior. When the goal of freedom is accepted as a guiding principle, the long-termer can internalize and utilize it as the basis for liberating acts and forward-thinking behavior. In other words, it is not enough to merely agree with the principle as a motivation. Rather, it must be accepted as a guide to personal behavior that the seasoned long-termer

believes will improve his opportunity for release from imprisonment.

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The basic question then for the seasoned long-termer is **how to determine what behaviors will lead to his/her release from imprisonment**.

**Program participation** Program participation in a prison setting involves assignment to an academic (schooling), vocational (training), industry (work)



programs, or therapeutic (treatment) programs. Individual assignments are based upon a number of considerations such as:

- At minimum earning a high school diploma or equivalency;
- Assessments/Case Plan recommendations;
- Preference or qualifications of prisoner; need to meet the requirements of DOCCS.

In addition to its value as a primary factor in parole considerations, program participation is of great importance regarding a long-termer's effort for growth and development. This feature of program participation will be addressed in the segment dealing with growth and development. It must be remembered that program participation constitutes a major course of daily activity during the period of imprisonment. Although over time particular program assignments may change for various reasons and may entail participation in activities strongly disliked, the long-termer must never lose sight of his primary objective, namely to free himself as quickly as possible. In this regard, because program participation is a primary factor in the consideration of parole release, the long-termer must endeavor to make his participation in assigned programs notable if not outstanding.

**Good Behavior** Rules and regulations govern every aspect of a long-termer's life and range from regulations between prisoners and staff, even between long-termers and their families and loved ones. According to the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, the stated objective of rules and regulations are to "protect prisoners from harm, either as a result of injury to their person, or loss or damage to their property and to establish standards of behavior which are reasonable and consistent."

Following rules and regulations as a means of keeping a clean disciplinary record is a basic parole release plan of most long-termers. The politics of prison life, however, are such that the best intentions are often awash in a sea of contrary purposes, and the best that a long-termer can do is remain committed in his determination to keep a clean disciplinary record. In this regard the long-termer must be guided by the first principle of behavior during confinement, which is to free oneself as quickly and as expeditiously as possible, and involves reflection followed by action. One reflects upon the principle guiding one's behavior and then acts appropriately. In actual practice the principle of freeing oneself as quickly as possible is internalized by a determination and commitment that precedes and triggers the appropriate behavior. The internalization process is

taught in the **Sentence Planning Curriculum** that will serve as a companion to this self-help manual.

**Primary avenues of release** Perhaps the most crucial information a seasoned long-termer learns in the struggle for freedom relates to the primary avenues of release from prison confinement. We urge you to work with your Offender Rehabilitation

Counselor (O.R.C.) as you explore these **six primary avenues of release** from prison that a long-termer may work toward:

- Parole
- Conditional release
- Maximum expiration
- Court ordered release
- Commutation of sentence (executive clemency)
- Legislative reform

Which avenues of release are available for a certain individual to pursue depends upon such factors as:

- Type of sentence (indeterminate, determinate, etc.)
- The amount of time already served on sentence
- The existence of legal issues that form the basis of court appeals
- Particulars of the prisoner's criminal history (prior felonies, etc.).

Such factors not only indicate which avenues of release are appropriate in the overall struggle for freedom, they also determine at what stage in the service of a

sentence a particular avenue of release comes into play. Some avenues of release are **statutory** while others are **optional**. An avenue of release is statutory when it constitutes an indispensable part of the structure of a sentence. **Parole, presumptive release, conditional release and maximum expiration are examples of statutory avenues of release.** An avenue of release is optional when it does not constitute an indispensable part of the sentence. **Executive clemency, court ordered release, and legislative reform are examples of optional avenues of release.**

**Parole Path to Release** When release via the parole process is the most likely path, long-termers must prepare themselves to address the following questions:

- Will the parole board consider my release to be incompatible with the welfare of society?
- Will I be viewed as likely to re-offend if released?
- Is the seriousness of my crime of conviction of such a nature that releasing me will be viewed as disrespect for the law?

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision has various tools