

REBUILDING WHAT WE HELPED TEAR DOWN

Introduction By

Kevin H

PACE Life Skills Facilitator

And Chairman

As inmate facilitators of PACE Life Skills we have realigned ourselves with a set of soft skills that has aided our continued road to recovery. By Identifying our deficiencies in the areas of self-development, interpersonal skills, and achieving personal goals, we have been able to turn those deficiencies into strengths. Everyone of us has our own story to tell. Our stories will tell of how we developed low self-esteem, how we lived dealing with our emotions, and dealing with conflict.

A common theme amongst us is that we lacked the necessary tools to work through our negative emotions, ultimately leading to destructive behaviors. We believe whole-heartedly that our related experiences and insight can help divert our youth away from some of the same mistakes that we made. Our mission is to help rebuild what we helped tear down...

About The Facilitators

The proper performance of PACE Life Skills may not objectively quantifiable; therefore a facilitator guided instruction format is utilized. In this manner, a peer-instructor may not only provide instruction, but modeling of the core concepts and lessons that most successful, high-performing adults have learned informally. Students are highly unique in learning ability and functional level, in life skills and deficiencies, in their personal lives and learning goals. A facilitator then may be able to easily be able to relate to students on the basis of similarity of past experiences or upbringing to provide a more personalized level of instruction.

It is for these reasons facilitators may often be required to fill many other roles for students. You may become their trainer, counselor, “positive re-enforcer”, friend, confidant, and mediator of disputes. This is in addition to being their facilitator of learning. This approach allows you as the facilitator to assist students relate the conveyed soft skills, in real time, to student’ lives and situations. This dynamic approach to instruction may be most pronounced where a facilitator may be called upon to address the concerns of students outside of the classroom where a student may feel more comfortable speaking about personal issues.

As stated, this manner of interaction forms the basis of relationships no different than mentorships which seek to assist those on journey gain an in depth understanding of how, learned principles may be applied to unique circumstances, by those who themselves have traveled the same or similar path. In addition students may utilize the facilitator as models of these concepts, understanding this it is important for the facilitator to understand that facilitating can be understood to be a way of life and does not end with the conclusion of the lessons.

Our Facilitators have served a combined 277 years in prison and have a total combined twenty nine years of facilitating experience with PACE Life Skills.

Facilitators and Sponsors

FACILITATORS/CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Mr. Kevin H (Chairman)

Mr. Michael G (Vice-Chairman)

Mr. Claudio A (Sgt. At Arms)

Michael F (Secretary)

Mr. Jesse C

Mr. Jorge C

Mr. Robert C

Mr. Robin C

Mr. MelKean H

Mr. Edwin M

Mr. Elmer P

Mr. Jimmy R

Mr. Chris W

Mr. Jake W

SPONSORS

Ms. Judith Ann Bishop

(Founding Sponsor/Coordinator)

Ms. Samantha Whistler

(PACE Life Skills Youth Program Liason)

The Facilitators and Executive Body would like to thank our sponsors, Ms. Bishop and Ms. Whistler for all their support and hard work; as well as Aaron R (Self-Help Clerk) for all of his help and hard work. We would like to thank Dr. Susan McKee and Clint Massey of PACE for all of their support. Finally we would like to remember the late Dr. John McKee for his vision and insight.

A Few Words From Our Founding Sponsor

Judith Ann Bishop

As an employee of Folsom Prison since February 1991, and a Self-Help Sponsor since June of 1999, I worked with many different self-help programs such as the Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous (AA/NA), with the Military Veterans Group of Folsom; and with the assistance of the Community Resources Manager, and the Folsom State Prison Administration, I was able to activate and coordinate the PACE Life Skills Program and many other SHARP programs that are still used today.

In the late spring of 2013, I was presented with the information about the PACE Life Skills Program for me to review. It was brought to my attention by an Inmate Michael Leslie who came from Avenal State Prison, where he worked in the education department as a teacher's aide in Ms. Maureen Edwards's classroom, had the PACE modules. Inmate Leslie inquired why Folsom Prison did not have PACE Life Skills Program here as Self-Help Program.

I was shown some of the material of the PACE Life Skills Program. I found the material to be very interesting and informative, for everyone to be able to use in everyday life. The PACE Program information I received was incomplete, so I asked Inmate Leslie where did he receive his material for the PACE program. It was my understanding that Avenal State Prison Education Department had this program. At that time I contacted Ms. Maureen Edwards at Avenal State Prison in Education Department, where I learned that all California prisons in the education department receive the PACE Program many years ago as an educational tool. I asked her about the PACE Life Skills Program and how I can get a complete copy of the PACE program. Ms. Edwards was so kind and very helpful with all my questions about the PACE program. She told me she would be glad to send me a copy of a completed set of modules. A few weeks later I received the copy of the PACE Life skill program from Ms. Edwards, which gave me the opportunity to finish reviewing the PACE Life Skill Program.

Due to my interest in this program I contacted the headquarters of the PACE Program, to see if there were an update to this program. I spoke with a Mr. Clint Massey about an update to the PACE program, he stated that the PACE origination was in the process of reformatting the PACE modules from 28 to 25 modules, dropping a few modules and adding one new modules. The time frame of completion of the new update PACE Program was unknown. At that point I decide to go forth and see if the Folsom Prison Administration would approve the PACE Program for Tuesday nights in Arts and Correction (AIC) for 13 weeks at two hour each week. The administration gave the PACE Program the approval to go forward with the new program.

At the end of summer of 2013 the sign-up sheets when out into the housing units to see if anyone was interested in signing up for this new program call PACE. The interest was so intense I had to develop a waitlist for PACE Program because the AIC building could only held 25 inmates at a time. It began with 25 inmates and one facilitator. PACE Life Skills was on its way of becoming of the most popular programs at Folsom Prison. From the first group of PACE Life Skills Program, I was able to find three very good facilitators Michael Parks, Eric Hawkins, Michael Lo, along with Michael Leslie; these are the original four core members who help start the PACE Life Skills Program here at Folsom Prison.

In January of 2014 the PACE Life Skills Program expanded to two groups going at the same time, one in the upper room of AIC and one in the lower room of AIC, which still goes for 13 weeks and two hours of group time a week. Due to the popularity and the waitlist of the PACE program we are still going strong to this day.

PACE Life Skills Curriculum

Self-Development Series Modules 1-8

Module #1 Self-Concept

Module #2 Self-Esteem

Module #3 Self-Confidence

Module #4 Dealing With Emotions

Module #5 Dealing With Conflict

Module #6 Dealing With Stress

Module #7 Dealing With Criticism

Module #8 Dealing With Failure

Achieving Personal Goals Series Modules 9-17

Module #9 Identifying Your Interests

Module #10 Setting Your Priorities

Module #11 Setting Your Goals

Module #12 Making Decisions

Module #13 Problem Solving

Module #14 Planning

Module #15 Managing Time

Module #16 Thinking Clearly

Module #17 Systems Thinking

Interpersonal Skills Series Modules 18-25

Module #18 Listening Effectively

Module #19 Speaking Effectively

Module #20 Being Assertive

Module #21 Relating To People

Module #22 Following Directions

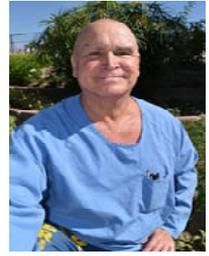
Module #23 Giving Directions

Module #24 Identifying Work Styles

Module #25 Working Well With Teams

Self-Esteem

By
Jake W.



Growing up, I had always been a tall, skinny kid for my age. It was bad enough that I felt so long, lanky, and ungainly, but what made matters worse, when I got into junior high school, I had a growth spurt that made all of my pants were “high-waters” (they were two or three inches from the tops of my shoes!) This made me feel very self-conscious and conspicuous. It also caused me to develop very low self-esteem and speech problems. I stuttered.

I felt as though I was a freak. I could hardly talk because of my stuttering. Also, it seemed as though several bullies had made it obvious that they intended to pick on me, push me around and harass me, so I got into fights a lot. These were not the older kids, from the upper grades. They were kids my own age and grade levels.

The PACE Life Skills program has helped me in so many ways. For example, the modules on self-esteem and self-confidence have helped me in dealing with my self perception. Dealing with emotions and dealing with criticism have helped me with some emotional hardships that I was going through. The modules on speaking effectively, being assertive, and relating to people have helped me to stop stuttering and control myself better when I am around large groups of people.

Jake W. has been in prison for 27 years on a 25 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 3 years.



Self-Esteem

By

Chris W.

Growing up, I was not raised by my mother or father. I have never met, nor seen my father. I was born at Mather Air Force Base, in Rancho Cordova, CA. My grandmother raised me, with the help of my aunts. My mother was an alcohol and drug addict and she was abusive towards me, verbally and emotionally. Verbally she would say harsh words to me, physically, she beat me.

I remember feeling embarrassed by her behavior. I always felt like I had a chip on my shoulder because of that. When I went to my grandmother's, I felt so alive, so loved and wanted. Everyone there was sober, clean and loving. At about the age of thirteen, my mother's drug addiction had gotten severely worse. We moved every couple of months, or she would abandon us by leaving me and my sister with my grandmother for two or three months.

At fifteen, I felt like I was had to work to keep us with some money. My first job was at a convalescent home. This left my sister with my mom or her addict friends, which I did not like. I would see kids not much older than me selling drugs to my mom and her friends. This caused me to feel angry, embarrassed, and insecure. I began committing crimes, which resulted in me getting locked up, as a young father. I began to want to change; however, my insecurities led me to fear what my friends (who also were committing crimes with me,) would be thinking.

After searching my past, I can now see how my low self-esteem played a big part in my decisions. The module on self-esteem has made a lasting impression on me and has helped me to see my ideal self, the person I want to be. I now understand my worth and take pride in who I am and what I do. The people who see me respect me for being positive, and my thoughts are valued. I can now identify what I am good at and those strengths have truly helped me to overcome any challenges that I may face.

Chris W. has been in prison for 14 years on a 27 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 4 years.

Dealing With Conflict

By

Elmer P.



I grew up in a single parent household. My mother worked two jobs; she was barely there for me. My father was never in the picture. I am the oldest of five boys. My childhood consisted of me tending to my brothers and the household (cooking and cleaning), making sure that their homework was done, while my mother worked. By the age of thirteen I began to excel at sports, (football, track, and wrestling). Joining any sports team was my escape from home. I began to resent the responsibilities of having to take care of my brothers as my mother worked. The resentment that had built up in me caused me to move out of my mother's home when I was fifteen. I got a job as a dishwasher.

By my father not being in my life, my uncles were the men I looked up to for that “manly” advice. Their way of dealing with life and its situations was what I adopted as my own way of thinking. As time went on, school and sports did not matter any more. I began to have an attitude in which I felt that I was better than the next person. My attitude had me believing that it was my way or the highway. I had developed a sense that no one could tell me anything, other than my mother. No others mattered.

My belief was, that being out on my own I had everything figured out. That way of thinking led me to get in trouble at school. I began hanging out with the wrong crowd, hanging out in the streets. I began to have fights and arguments on a daily basis, just because I did not agree with what was said to or about me. That attitude affected my life tremendously. Having that negative attitude and being that person that was not thinking clearly throughout my teen life, led me down a path in which I did not know how to deal with conflict. By the time I was twenty-two I had committed a heinous act of murder. I took a man's life because I did not know how to think before I reacted. With a messed up attitude and not knowing how to deal with conflicts caused me to not see the consequences of my actions. Not knowing how to deal with conflict in the right way had led me to be doing twenty-six years of prison time on a life sentence.

Now, due to an extensive time with the PACE Life Skills group, I now know how to deal with conflicts and criticism, whether it is good or bad. I can now take advice from others, whether they have been in my shoes or not. I no longer possess a negative attitude. PACE Life Skills has given me the tools that will help me to deal with conflicts or any other adversities that life may throw my way. I now want to be that person that will help others understand the many aspects of dealing with adversity before they end up in my shoes.

**Elmer P. has been in prison for 24 years on a 38 to life sentence.
He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 1 year.**



Self-Concept

By

Edwin M.

My name is Edwin McMillan; I am forty years old and have been incarcerated since I was nineteen years old after a conviction for kidnapping to facilitate carjacking. During this time I was compelled to reflect on my life and how my upbringing and decision making resulted in my missing out on so much of life and causing so much hurt and suffering to the victims of my crime, the community, and my own family.

I realized I had committed senseless crimes that would have never happened if I had understood a few simple things about myself. For instance, being blind to my emotional states when I had been sexually molested by a family member at six years old, then years later, the divorce of my parents, then being bullied for having Alopecia (permanent hair loss), created in me an extreme distrust of authority figures (including rules and laws), and a crippling negative self concept and self-esteem.

All of these frustrations led to me trying to commit suicide when a failed crime spree cumulated in the kidnapping, carjacking, and robbery of multiple people on January 7, 1998.

The PACE Life Skills program was able to help me connect the dots and understand how my negative self-concept and low self-esteem caused me to perpetrate a great amount of anger and frustration. This anger and frustration prevented me from attaining even the simplest of goals, so I failed in school and became a follower to other kids that I perceived to have acceptance and confidence. I learned through the curriculum that I failed to establish the priorities or practice clear thinking, because in my negative state of mind I could not conclude that I was worthy.

Life skills also showed me that because I was living in the extremely negative state, I could not be concerned with other peoples' feelings. Therefore I was unable to work with others. The jobs I did have, I was unable to take or receive directions or work with others as a team.

Life skills showed me how to build up my self-image and self-esteem. I now have a healthy self-confidence and am proud to say that I consider the feelings of others in all of my interactions and eagerly look forward to working in team environments. As a result, I am happier than ever and am finally ready to start living.

Edwin M. has been in prison for 20 years on a 7 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 3 years.

Dealing With Emotions

By

MelKean H.



When I was a kid I did not know how to deal with my emotions. I would feel bad when my schoolmates would tease me about my weight, my clothes, or my cleanliness. This would cause me to lash out. I would respond in a negative way that usually led to me getting into trouble.

I was involved in many fights and arguments throughout my lifetime. I had to learn how to not project my negative feelings (Anger, Hurt, and Frustration), onto others. I had to learn that it was okay to feel certain emotions, just as long as I did not respond to them in the wrong way. Learning to properly deal with my emotions helped me with my stubbornness, resentments, and other character defects that may come along.

I learned how I was not going to let my feelings dictate how I responded to different situations. Learning how to control my emotions helped me to make better decisions. By doing this, I have increased my chances of having a positive outcome as opposed to having a negative situation.

Controlling my emotions affected me in a positive way, by helping me to recognize and to be self-aware of how I was feeling. Dealing with my emotions in the right way has given me the patience to help others to understand and deal with their emotions as well.

MelKean H. has been in prison for 24 years on a 26 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 4 years.

Self-Concept/Self-Esteem

By

Rob C.



In my early years (5-12), I grew up in a very diverse neighborhood, surrounded by a very loving and supportive family. I played sports, had and went to sleepovers, and went to different events with my friends and their families. I did not pay much attention to the looks and comments that came my way, when I was out with my white friends and their families, because I was told not to. “They’re just ignorant,” I was told.

This was the first time I remember feeling ashamed for myself and feeling embarrassed for my friends and their families. This had a subtle, yet profound influence on how I felt and thought about myself, and who I was and where I fit in. I say where I fit in, because when I was with my black friends and some of their friends and families, I would be accused of sounding “white”. Due to the conditioning, that most boys are taught, I toughed it out. I didn’t let it bother me. I laughed it off, all the while, all I was doing was running and escaping further and further into this person that I was never meant to be.

Both my self-esteem and self-concept were lost. Through programs such as PACE Life Skills, I have been able to discover me, my true and authentic self. In addition, the more that I learn from these programs, I have been able to equip myself with the skills and tools needed for a successful me.

Rob C. has been in prison for 22 years on a 29 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 1 year.

Dealing With Emotions

By

Mike G.

As stated in my previous narrative, I came from a broken, abusive home. The physical and mental abuse left me feeling angry, frustrated, afraid and ashamed. As I grew older things got worse. I vented my anger and frustration at people who did not deserve it.

My senior year I vented my anger on the football field and fractured another kid's spine, almost crippling him. This caused me to bottle up my emotions. I pretended that I was "normal". This was far from the truth. I had emotional issues that I did not know how to deal with. I continued to bottle up my emotions into adulthood. I did not know how to ask for help and was too ashamed to try and learn how.

Finally the frustration and anger built to a breaking point. In that moment I took an innocent life. I, at one point, considered suicide. I suffered from a severe bout of depression from what I had done. The shame was too much to bear. I had taken a mother's son...a man's brother...a community's friend and trust. This is not even considering what I did to my family and community.

Once I was in prison I started getting help. I had a person to talk to...a sociologist who ran a self-help program on anger management. He taught me the importance of talking to someone you can trust about your issues.

Through PACE Life Skills I continued to hone these skills. I now understand that everyone feels the emotions that I do. What's important is how you deal with them. Life may sometimes be hard, but all you have to do is ask and someone will listen to you and help.

Mike G. has been in prison for 20 years on a 40 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 3 years.

Self-Esteem

By

Kevin H.



I love sports. Growing up I realized that I had an athletic ability that ultimately helped me excel at playing football, track, and baseball. I took pride in my abilities, feeling as though I could accomplish anything. I can remember when the coaches and my friends' parents would come up to me and tell me how good I was. They offered to pick me up and take me to my practices and games.

At the time, having someone take an interest in me, despite the reason, meant a lot. Their response validated how good I believed I was. However, the interest others had in me wasn't the same as having two people who matter the most in my life, my parents. No matter how good I was or how many times I tried to convince my parents to come, they never did. That's when I began doubting myself, feeling as though I was not deserving of the interest I received.

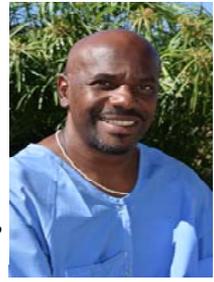
On the outside I tried to appear that I was okay, knowing that on the inside I was struggling with low self-esteem. I found myself resenting those who had their parents there for them, often becoming violent. I was afraid to talk to my parents about how I was feeling because I was not sure what their response would be. I now understand that keeping it all in was not the right thing to do, more so, because I wasn't resolving my problems.

Looking back, I know that I had legitimate reasons for feeling the hurt that I felt, for not having my parents there to support me. I now understand that I had the ultimate say in my belief of myself. I was good in sports; I was getting good grades, and was staying out of trouble. That was more than enough for me to be proud of achievements. If I could tell my past self anything that would help him feel good about who he is, I would simply say, "continue to feel good about your strengths, challenge yourself to do better, and take pride in who you are, because you are worth it."

Self-Esteem

By

Robert C.



I had very low self-esteem, which led to issues of self-confidence, from an early childhood all the way into my adult life.

It started at home with my parents, who both worked to make a living. I was the oldest of three children, so I learned at an early age I was responsible for my brother and sister. When things weren't right at home I would get the blame for whatever wasn't right, so I would think I couldn't do anything right. Then, having a learning disability didn't help because the kids would laugh and tease me. Being ridiculed and having adults degrade me took pieces of my self-esteem, which led me to being a very shy kid and adult. Not willing to open up to other people, whether it was my teachers, parents, coaches or friends and co-workers, I wasn't willing to ask for help, even when I truly needed it.

Having low self-esteem had me scared, frustrated and angry, which led me to commit a crime where someone lost their life by me not having the tools to really address my low self-esteem. I continued to walk through life half empty and making bad decisions along the way.

Since I've taken the PACE Life Skills program, the curriculum helps me with connecting my self-esteem in the right direction to my abilities. Whenever I played sports my self-esteem was always high. Once the game was over I would go back into my shell, but now I understand how to believe in myself. I needed small victories in my quest to boost my self-esteem to become a better person. My small victories over my learning disability allowed my self-esteem to truly blossom with pride in my abilities. I now have an Associate's Degree from college. I am proud of my achievements and feel good about myself. I'm able to open up and see the beauty in being a humble person. There is an old saying, "You can't see the forest because of the trees." Now my eyes are wide open and I see the beauty of Life Skills.

Robert C. has been in prison for 21 years on a 25 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 1 year.



Self-Esteem

by

Jorge C.

I grew up in Tijuana, Mexico, just across the San Diego border. I had a lot of friends in the neighborhood, but I always felt left out because I did not go to the same school as my friends. I went to a private Catholic school in San Diego. I felt left out, which caused me to have low self-esteem among my peers. I looked for ways to overcompensate my feelings of not fitting in when I was made fun of or teased, for going to Catholic school and for having to wear a school uniform all the time.

I reacted with threats of violence and in some cases, fighting with my friends. Others started to fear me and I misinterpreted this as respect. Therefore, I continued to lash out in violence. This escalated to many types of illegal activities and drug. My reputation grew in a negative way, but I thought any reputation was what I wanted. They did not know that on the inside I was scared and just wanted to fit in. I attracted a group of friends that thought the same as I did, and did the things I did. Our actions led to the murder of another human being and I was sentenced to fifty years to life in the state penitentiary. I was a teenager when this happened, and now I am in my forties.

I have changed my way of thinking through many self-help groups, getting several college degrees, and an extensive support network of family and loved ones who are true friends. All of my so called “friends” from back then have disappeared.

Now I know who I am and my self-worth. The change did not come overnight and it was a lot of hard work and honesty. However, it did happen and I am a better person because of it and am now a better father to my son.

Jorge C. has been in prison for 22 years on a 50 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 1 year.

Dealing With Conflict

By

Kevin H.

Problem solving was very challenging for me. I learned from watching the interaction within my family and amongst my peers that confrontation was an acceptable means of expression. I remember being told that “if somebody hits you, you hit them back”, along with sayings like, “don’t let him/her talk to you like that”, or “don’t let nobody push you around”.

Coming from a broken home with an absentee father and a mother dealing with addiction, I needed an outlet, a way to express the hurt and anger that was stirring inside of me. So I reverted to what I knew, ultimately disregarding who I hurt because what I was going through was all that mattered at the time.

As I got older, the way I dealt with conflict wasn’t all that different. The consequences, however, were more impactful. Verbal confrontations more than often led to violence. Communities were directly and indirectly victimized by my actions and because I failed to gain control of my actions. This led me to be incarcerated for twenty-four years on a life sentence.

I’ll admit I am ashamed to realize how many people I’ve hurt along the way. I understand now that it wasn’t all about me. Even more so, what I’ve learned from the module Dealing With Conflict, was that I didn’t have a right to negatively project my hurts onto others. Instead, I should have chosen to confide in someone to help me resolve the internal feelings that I was struggling with. Having people in my life to talk to when I’m not feeling good about myself has been very productive. Especially those that have endured some of the same experiences that I have, which is why we, as a collective group have chosen to share our stories.

Kevin H. has been in prison for 24 years on a 35 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 5 years.

Dealing With Conflict

By

Mike G.



I grew up in a broken home, with a terminally ill mother.

Her illness caused severe pain, which manifested in anger and violence. Anything could set her off. Therefore, when this would happen I would send my little brother and sister out to play. I would then face her wrath alone. I spent most of my youth battered, bruised, broken, and angry.

I never learned to deal with my anger or how to resolve conflict. My answer to conflict was to start fights. This pattern continued through high school. I channeled my pain and anger into something made for conflict...football. This allowed me to seem like a nice, quiet young man on the outside. This was not so. My senior year in high school I nearly crippled a kid on the field because of my anger and aggression. For years I continued to bottle up my anger and frustration until I finally exploded. The conflict led me to wrongfully take a man's life.

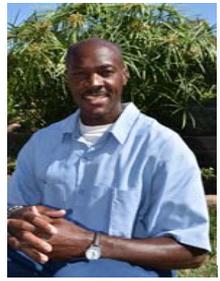
PACE Life Skills has helped me hone and sharpen the tools that I have learned since coming to prison. The conflict resolution tools I learned have helped me to see that not all battles must be fought; in fact, life is not a war to be won or lost. Life is a journey with obstacles to navigate, but a wonderful journey nonetheless.

I have finally learned to approach conflict in a calm, peaceful way. Finding solutions to conflict has become key. Even more important is avoiding aggressive behaviors that lead to conflict. Why resolve a conflict when you can prevent it with a simple kindness, respect, and the generosity of a good heart? Each cycle that I facilitate I learn more from the men around me and gain a deeper understanding of dealing with conflict and conflict resolution.

Dealing With Emotions

By

Michael F.



I grew up in a single parent household with my mother and older brother, and we struggled financially; as a result, my brother and I regularly wore second hand clothes. I felt really embarrassed when I was at school due to the weird look I would be getting from the school kids, who would also laugh at me when they thought that I did not hear them making fun of the second hand clothes that I wore. I thought the only way that I would be like my peers was if I wasn't poor.

I often felt helpless, alone, and unseen. Although it was not my fault that my household struggled financially and that my mom was doing the best she could, (but it wasn't enough), I began to feel I had to do something, not only to help my mom financially, but really, I was determined to stop the negative criticism that I thought of myself and what was received from the kids at school. I began to steal from clothing stores through my teen years. That pattern of crime continued into adulthood resulting in my current incarceration.

During my incarceration I have participated in various self-help groups that have provided me effective tools to successfully deal with my emotions. These tools help me to maintain awareness that emotions do not have to leave me helpless; that I am very capable of viewing myself with value, not over valuing expensive clothes to define me; and certainly not committing crimes as a solution to dealing with my emotions.

Whenever I perceive a situation that influences a negative emotion I do not jump to conclusions without fact finding. I ask someone to be rational about the situation and give feedback. That way, I am able to give myself a positive self-talk. There are always options for me to utilize order to better deal with my emotions. Benefiting from having positive tools to respond with is very important for everyone, therefore, I volunteer as a facilitator in the PACE Life Skills here at Folsom state Prison. Not only does the twenty-five curriculum material guide each participant to a deeper sense of personal insight and ways to effectively cope with their emotions, but also further develops their understanding of empathy in a mindset as considerate human beings. It is my privilege to be willing and able to attempt to reach and teach our youth of today in ways to respond to life's challenges.

Michael F. has been in prison for 12 years on a 40 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 1 year.



Dealing With Conflict By Claudio A.

I grew up in an environment that led me to have low self-esteem, low self-confidence, and confusion on how to deal with my emotions. Growing up hearing things like you are not as smart as your brother...why can't you be more like your cousins...you can't do that , so why waste your time... having to choose between a wide or narrow belt to get hit with, and you are too fat to play sports.

However, the most impactful words were the ones hardly ever spoken, word of encouragement. I used to stress over having to make important choices between one thing and another. Consequently, I had difficulties in dealing with conflicts.

The module on Dealing With Conflict has shown me that there are positive ways of dealing with conflicts. I learned to not take thing personally, keep my emotions out of it, get all the facts, refrain from shouting, and make sure that it is the right place and right time to discuss the problem, stick to the issues, and learn to compromise if needed.

I do not always need to heave the last word. I took me a long time to get from under the negative view of myself and a defeatist mindset. I continue to grow, emotionally and intellectually, with the determination that when given the opportunity I will give back to the community by helping the youth be more sympathetic, empathetic, and to be fully aware and proud of what it means to be a productive member of society.

Claudio A. has been in prison for 15 years on a 15 to life sentence. He has been a PACE Life Skill Facilitator for 2 years.

The History Of PACE Life Skills

“Nothing succeeds like success.”

-Dr. John McKee

The PACE Learning Systems method and design, in both its soft skills programs and its academic curricula is the result of the life’s work of the late John M. McKee, Ph.D., who is credited as one of the premier leaders in correctional education history. Dr. McKee established the Rehabilitation Research Foundation to develop what would become PACE’s approach to learning system design, through years of federally funded research at the Draper Correctional Center in Elmore, Alabama. After more than a decade of research on correctional education and learning systems targeted toward offenders, Dr. McKee founded PACE Learning Systems in 1977. Dr. McKee would later establish Behavior Science Press and the Institute for Social and Educational Research.

From his research, McKee asserted that offenders needed a three-legged stool to support successful reentry. They needed a specific trade skill, remedial education in basic academic skills, and social skills development. While social and soft skills development was often overlooked in education settings at the time, we know today that three-fourths of entry-level employers consider strong soft skills to be just as important as technical skills and academic credentials (if not more important). Soft skills, those covered in this course and manual, can be more predictive of life success than a credential for high school equivalency – a connection that Dr. McKee made through his work with offenders over four decades ago.

Years of research instilled in Dr. McKee the firm belief that traditional education had failed many students, school failure caused many prisoners he was working with to have negative feelings about learning. This adverse view of academics and learning environments, he discovered, played a key role in his students’ continued failure and high levels of recidivism. McKee, through his specially designed learning programs, supported students’ success in small, manageable steps. Small successes, if tied together with many other small successes, would develop into great achievements. McKee is known for his phrase “nothing succeeds like success,” as it refers to the power of positive learning experiences and their influence on future learning experiences. Dr. McKee, along with his wife Dr. Susan McKee, thereafter dedicated their careers to promoting the academic and personal success of these so-called “unreachable” students who are accustomed to failure.

“The old saying, ‘Nothing teaches like success,’

has been my guiding principle, and I hope, my legacy.”

~Dr. John McKee, Founder,
PACE Learning Systems