

ICEBREAKER 101 – Volume X:

How Do You Like Them Apples?



FOR THE  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CORRECTIONAL TRAINING  
PERSONNEL



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## Dedication

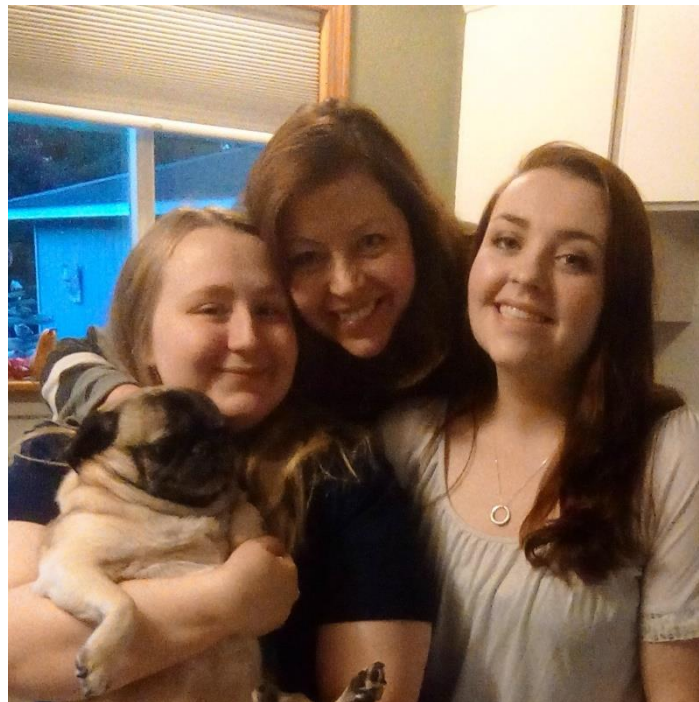
*Without these three, I would not be me.*

*Bridgette, prompter of originality,*

*Robyn, muse of integrity,*

*Julie, wielder of positivity.*

*Without these three, I would not be me.*



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## What is all this talk about apples?

Welcome back, gentle readers, to IACTP's Icebreakers. This is the latest in a series of classroom exercises that feature a corrections/criminal justice slant. Many are quirky, but they are designed to get the attention of staff and students in the hardest, most stressful vocation. My goal with this is to make memorable training to help bring home lessons that may save the lives of corrections staff, offenders and the public.

In 2014, the first compilation (shamelessly named "The Bouchard 101") featured 101 icebreakers that I wrote over a 10-year period. These came from four different icebreaker books released about two years apart from each other. "How Do You Like Them Apples?" is the newest compilation of over 100 more icebreakers that I penned for IACTP. These were featured in four icebreaker books for IACTP from 2015 - 2017:

1. The College Edition;
2. Shooting for Excellence;
3. Hello, My Name is Problem;
4. Undamming the Ice.

Why would the completion be called "apples"? To answer this question let's engage in a little punning. Is your bushel of apples inhabited by a listless class or tough subject matter? Will you consider a trusty collection of basic fare to sustain a class? Is your core curriculum in need of reassessment? Does one bad apple spoil the whole bunch? Are your icebreakers unappealing? Are the seeds of knowledge left unplanted?



Whatever your training needs, perhaps these exercises will serve as a cornucopia of food that feeds minds during difficult training times, imparting lifesaving lessons along the way. Like apples in general, there is a huge variety from which to select. So, come explore a veritable orchard, sometimes unusual, but always focused on producing the best apples one can find. The most important group that corrections professionals serve, the public, depends on this.

Joe Bouchard,

*Joe Bouchard*

January 2018



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## Icebreakers 101: The College Edition



January 2015

## Are you cautious or paranoid?

Has someone ever labeled your caution as paranoia? This is likely something that happens to all corrections professionals at one time or another. Of course, our caution keeps us safe on the job. Those outside the profession cannot fully appreciate the distinction unless they are in our vocational shoes.

I teach criminal justice classes for a local college. As a corrections professional, I strive to integrate vocational realism while delivering information about the structure, functions and history of corrections. At times, I see the surprise of those not in the profession about the intense caution that we take for granted.

While explaining the concept of masked actions and ulterior motives, a student asked me, “Are you paranoid?” I assured her that I am just cautious: The job in corrections strengthens that attribute. To buttress this point, I crafted a short classroom exercise.

This classroom exercise can be conducted at all levels of corrections – from pre-professionals in introductory classes to seasoned veterans.

First, the facilitator delivers the definitions.

**Caution** is an alertness and prudence in a hazardous situation; care; wariness. “Caution – Falling rocks. Drive with care.”

**Paranoia** is an intense fear or suspicion, especially when unfounded. “Mark was certain that a swarm of carnivorous ants would interrupt the picnic.” Paranoia is no laughing matter. It can be described as a mental disorder characterized by any of several types of delusions.

Then, the instructor presents each of the fifteen scenarios and asks the class: Does this make you feel cautious or paranoid?

1. You park your car and you double-check that you locked it? What if you do so twice?
2. At home, you pat your pocket for your work keys and panic when you do not feel them.
3. In a public bathroom, you double back to see if you flushed the toilet.
4. You hear voices outside and on your neighbor’s lawn. You peer out your venetian blinds, being careful to open them only a tiny bit so that no one will see you looking.
5. You do not answer your telephone because the caller ID lists a private number.
6. You place a clean sheet of cardboard on your driveway under your engine overnight to see if you are leaking oil or transmission fluid.

7. You believe that your neighbor is siphoning gas from your car, so you tape a razor to the gas cap in hopes of snaring the culprit.
8. You store a few gallons of clean water in your car in case your radiator malfunctions.
9. You change your passwords on your computer once a month.
10. You dismantle your Facebook account when a childhood friend that you never liked tries to friend you.
11. Another vehicle passes your car on the highway. Your cruise control is steady at 54 miles per hour in a 55 zone. You keep a close eye on the car that just passed you.
12. You observe someone walking around your car. The person looks at your license plate and starts writing on a pad.
13. You see a mouse in your house one morning. You buy and place a dozen sticky traps.
14. You come home from the grocery store and find that the apple sauce you just bought has a popped-up freshness indicator. It looks like the seal was broken and you contemplate the integrity of the applesauce.
15. You get a bowl of soup from the crock on the salad bar at the restaurant. You find a kinky, long red hair in the soup. You look at others who have also selected soup.

There are no right or wrong answers to this. Many of the circumstances can be qualified by the instructor to make the point that distinctions are not always easy. Active classes will certainly have lively discussions.

In corrections, it is good to know how you may react to certain situations. An exercise like this is helpful in that manner. It is useful to ask oneself, Am I cautious or am I paranoid?

Thanks to Brooke Mleko for asking me “Are you paranoid?” That was the catalyst for this exercise.



## Art of the steal

Interpersonal dynamics often pose an interesting set of circumstances for any instructor. As in life, when someone is new to the workplace, the addition or subtraction of one team member can set in motion ripples that change the game.

This exercise is created with the college class in mind. The instructor will divide the class into two or three teams and use these teams for icebreakers and classroom exercises over the entire semester. This is a great way to view the development of interactions between students under competitive circumstances.

When established teams are comfortable and working well together, shake things up. Initiate a few changes in the lineup with a steal.

In the Art of the Steal, there are three options:

1. **Instructor based modifications** - The instructor assesses the teams and moves one player each to another team.
  - a. This can be done to intentionally create a dream team or to promote what looks like an unfair advantage. The lesson in this could be that nothing is fair in the world.
  - b. Conversely, the instructor can try to even out the teams based on perceived abilities.

2. **Captain based modifications** - Each team captain has to steal one player from one other team. Captains are exempted from the steal. Captains must stay with their team, in all of its manifestations, through the entire semester.
3. **Democracy in action** – All of the members of a team decide/debate which member of another team will be selected. This may be the most confusing option. However, this may provide more observations about team dynamics than the Instructor and Captain based option.

In all options:

- One player is stolen from another team.
- This is done one team at a time.
- Each team shall take one player from another team. This is mandatory. If a team says “Pass” the request will not be honored.
- If there are three or more teams, the instructor will tell the stealing team from which other team they may steal. This is done to keep teams at or about the same number.
- A player who was sent to another team cannot be taken back by the team from which the player came.



Ultimately, it is up to the instructor to select which option will be used. The fun of it is to watch how teams accept the changes imposed on them. There will be interesting dynamics.



## Codes and decoding

As long as there are lock ups and prisons, there will be coded messages. Yet, knowing this immutable fact does not make it any easier to decode. Realistically speaking, many codes will go unbroken.

Still, it is useful to give students an opportunity to solve some riddles before they start employment in corrections. This comes in four elements which are listed directly below and published in full on the following pages.

1. The puzzle
2. The first clues
3. The clues put together
4. The key

Deliver each element in order and give the groups a few minutes each to allow questions/discussions.



### 1. **The Puzzle**

This could be a message found in someone's area of control. What does it say? Give a few minutes for groups to look for patterns.

Psp lgm xghsqa hteh htaga si xq qgxwagisgz

zgg hta yahhag ezhag j?

Vteh si hta gaeigx zgg htsi?

qgmyp sh ja gatehap hg ex exhercxsiu hta

rggmd tgyipi zgg exghtag?

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

Haeuvcgq iewai yswai.

Rggp bcj!

## 2. **The first clues**

A key of sorts was found. It is related to the puzzle that was previously distributed. What do the numbers in the right column mean? Give students a few minutes to discuss and attempt to decode the message.

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| Vehqsxi | 49940  |
| Xeyyi   | 49941  |
| Ygwa    | 89930  |
| Exhtgxl | 765242 |
| Daggl   | 34721  |
| Qyegl   | 43721  |
| Vsyyevi | 383832 |
| Umyysxi | 894778 |
| bcxai   | 43201  |
| Vega    | 99932  |
| Rgsxi   | 347823 |

### 3. **The clues put together**

It was confirmed that the numbers correspond with names of offenders in the system. (Note: The names and numbers do not, in fact, match in real life.) Imagine that someone did some decoding to discover this. Give your students a few minutes to construct a key.

|                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Last name            | Prison<br>number |
| Vehqsxi =<br>Watkins | 49940            |
| Xeyyi = Nalls        | 49941            |
| Ygwa = Love          | 89930            |

|                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Exhtgxl =<br>Anthony  | 765242 |
| Daggl = Perry         | 34721  |
| Qyegl = Clary         | 43721  |
| Vsyyevi =<br>Williams | 383832 |
| Umyysxi =<br>Mullins  | 894778 |
| Bcxai = Jones         | 43201  |
| Vega = Ware           | 99932  |
| Rgsxi =Goins          | 347823 |

#### 4. **The key**

Give students the key to solve the puzzle. The key was derived from element 2, above. Tell students that this demonstrates that this could be a multi-step process.

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

The decoded message says:

Did you notice that there is no conversion for the letter after B?

What is the reason for this?

Could it be related to an antagonism the group holds for another?

Teamwork saves lives. Good job!

\*\*\*\*\*

It is good to issue a few caveats. Here are some things that may derail meaningful code breaking:

- Poor grammar
- Words run together
- Misspellings by encrypter
- Slang
- Deep codes
- Defensive lines of jargon to slow things down and dissuade

Perhaps there is a natural code breaker in your classroom. You'll never know unless you give them a chance to test their abilities.

## Design a snow fort

If you grew up in an area where there was measurable frozen precipitation, it is likely that you played in the snow. As a kid, many of us in cold climates made snowmen, snow angels, and snow balls. Let us not forget the iconic snow fort. What better place than a snow fort to use the snow balls?

There is much more to making a snow fort than piling snow. At its most formidable manifestation, the snow fort can be an impenetrable citadel. The snow fort, well-staffed and adequately armed, can serve as a key link in safety in an area. It almost sounds like strategic points in a prison.

None of this is to inspire fears of a foreign invasion or imminent snow wars. But in a kid's realm, those scenarios are not out of the question. The purpose of this exercise is to get corrections students to think in terms of plant safety and to employ the ABC's of security.

1. Break the class into teams of four or five.
2. Give them the objective: *Design a snow fort on paper that will be difficult for a group of four or five 'enemies' to capture.*
3. Teams in this will only be allowed to build with shovels and hands. Therefore, realistic dimensions are expected. In other words, you cannot expect that a 20-foot-tall, four-sided monolith can be built in an hour with just shovels.
4. Note that this is all on paper, so it can be done all year round. Teams are not building actual snow forts. (That is, unless there is snow, you have the inclination, and everyone has hats and gloves. This is up to



each instructor, of course. If you seriously consider this an exercise to actually conduct in a snowy field, consider liability policies for your higher education institution.)

5. Tell teams that they must consider what the opposing team(s) might do to capture your fort.
6. Tell them that they may build this snow fort in a 100 x 100-foot area. They may tactically place trees, hills, buildings, and other objects wherever they wish.
7. Insist that this must be an aerial drawing.
8. Let teams work on the paper design. Give a few minutes.
9. Each team in turn must produce a larger version of the paper plan on the board. One person from the team can be the draftsman and do the drawing. Another person can describe what is going on the board and the rationale for each element.
10. Instructor can ask key questions about security:
  - a. Were blind spots considered?
  - b. What shape was agreed upon?
  - c. Were there tunnels?
  - d. Did you consider posting team members as lookouts?
  - e. Was there an arsenal of snowballs?
  - f. What would you do to protect the fort if two groups attacked at once from different directions?
  - g. How is this like prison operations?

There are many lessons of safety to be found in child games such as snow fort. We can learn of resources, staff deployment, weak points, and architecture functioning in our security scheme.



## **Elements of manipulation**

Like it or not, staff and offenders scrutinize new employees in order to gauge their usefulness and dependability. Many offenders look for new staff weakness so they can capitalize on them later for their benefit. All eyes are on the new person.

Colleagues look for the red flags of gullibility, inability to follow rules or a rebellious streak. This is done because ultimately staff depend on each other to maintain safety in an otherwise dangerous environment.

Elements of manipulation is a story-based icebreaker. In terms of materials, one needs next to nothing to conduct this:

1. Break the class up into groups of four or five each.
2. Read the following story to the class. (See below)
3. Distribute a copy to each.
4. Have them write down elements of manipulation depicted in the story.
5. Have a spokesperson report one salient manipulation element found in the story.
6. Have another group do the same.
7. Continue this through the groups until all elements are covered.
8. Discuss how the person in the story could have acted differently and avoided the embarrassment of manipulation.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Jim and Jimmy: A true story of manipulation**

Many years ago, a young guy started employment in a heat treat. For those who do not know, a heat treat is an industrial shop that immerses large steel rods and bars in one thousand degrees plus molten salt baths. Steel parts are sent there from other companies to be tempered or hardened to certain specifications.

This guy (who we will call Guy) was working his way through college. It was his very first industrial job. He was out of his element and a bit nervous.

The place was old and dusty. One could really see the air, as particles from the ages danced in the high ceilings. And it was hot. Even though he was working a midnight shift, February in this setting was hard to get used to because of the high temperature.

Guy was smart enough not to tout his ambition of being a teacher. He did not want to be labeled as an egghead until he had a chance to experience the culture of the shop. He truly wanted to fit in and do a good job.

One night, he saw one of the Jims, Jim Alexander, sitting at the break table. Jim Alexander was a proud veteran of Vietnam and a skilled steel straightener. He was treated with reverence by the others, but was reported to have a savage temper when provoked. Still, Guy sensed that he was otherwise a low-key, subtle intellectual.

Jim Alexander invited Guy to sit down. In a casual tone, he said, “You look pretty strong. Do you work out?”

“No”, said Guy, “I do some running, though.”

“I thought so”, said Alexander. “That takes a lot of strength and determination. I’d bet that pound for pound you are stronger than most of these old guys here.”

And just as those words evaporated in the air, a robust man lumbered up. Although he was in his mid-thirties, a decade and a half older than Guy, he looked boyish, like a 250 pound, 6'5" boy.

This was Jimmy Simpson. Simpson seemed to mean well, but he was playful to a fault. The normal calm of Alexander was juxtaposed by the chaotic, childlike play of Simpson.

"Yer fulla shit, Alexander!" declared Simpson with absolute resolution, "Guy is a girl. He is weak. I could snap his arms with one hand!"

Alexander squared his shoulders, nodded at Guy and said in an icy calm manner, "I will tell you what! Guy is stronger than you think. Just because he is short does not mean a thing. If you went for a run with him, you would have a heart attack and Budweiser would go out of business because you will be on life support instead."

"I don't care about running, Alexander," came the retort from Simpson. "Guy is weak and what is he gonna do? RUN AWAY FROM ME?"

Alexander seemed to have a suggestion. Saying not a word, he pointed to a rope hanging from an I-beam. This rope, ominously in the shape of a noose, hung about ten feet down from the twenty-foot ceiling. It looked like the rope was old when troops landed on Normandy in '44. Still, it seemed thick and secure.

Again, without a word, Alexander spoke volumes. He slapped a five dollar bill on the break table and locked eyes with Simpson. Simpson responded in kind, adding, "Fine, bitch! If Guy can climb the rope and touch the beam, you win. He ain't gonna do it, though!"

"Shut your hole, Simpson. You talk too much!" Said Alexander, supporting the notion that brevity is the soul of wit. "Show this chunky moron what you are made of, Guy."

Simpson, apparently tired of being called a moron and chunky, snarled, “I already know what he is made of – SUGAR! C’mon sweet Guy, show us that you are too weak to climb! Let’s go, spider-girl!”

Guy climbed on a table and pulled himself up on what may have been the world’s oldest rope. Guy was lean and tough and light. He seemed to fly up the rope. Proudly, he clung to the I beam, smirking at Simpson.

The idiot glaze faded from Simpson, replaced by a reciprocal smirk and a subtle air of cunning. He pocketed his five dollars.

Alexander quietly placed his money back in his pocket. There was no bet.

But there was dirt.

Guy came down the rope carefully and shamefully. His brand-new work clothes were covered in age-old soot. He found that he was unexpectedly filthy from head to toe.

Simpson said, “You are strong, Guy, but you are gullible.”

As those words were spoken, the midnight foreman came around the corner, almost as if on cue.

The foreman was a short man, a few inches shorter than Guy. He was a former Marine Corps golden glove boxer and continued to fight through his life. His boxing reputation was solid in the shop and in the nearby Hitching Post bar. In a word – intimidation.

He looked Guy up and down with contempt, paused, and exploded in a torrent of complicated, yet effective expletives. Guy went back to the bathroom to clean up before returning to work. As he rounded the corner, he saw Simpson, Alexander and the Foreman laughing uncontrollably. Guy had been set up twice.

The Foreman said, “You are not the first college kid who fell for the dirty rope trick. Use your head and not your ass, son.

## Fear the reaper

There are certain topics that will always evoke controversy. Chief among these related to the criminal justice field is capital punishment. This is a very simple icebreaker that explores this.

Poll class on different crimes and how they should be executed. Use these questions.

1. Do you believe in capital punishment?
2. What are some general execution options?
3. Who should perform the execution? Are there moral implications?
4. What do you think should be the punishment for the following crimes?
  - a. Premeditated murder
  - b. Kidnapping
  - c. Car jacking
  - d. Rape
  - e. Child molestation

Now, give the questions to everyone. Put them on paper. Use the following polls one at a time in three different stages:

**One – The Individual Phase** – let each person in the class write their answers.

**Two – The Group Phase** – assemble answers and discuss individual answers. See if there is a consensus. Have groups deliver the answers.

**Three – The Class Phase** – Have a recorder combine all answers and open the floor for discussion. Keep a handle on this, as the discussion can take a boisterous turn.





## Five facts from phones

How are instructors like in-flight instructions and messages on the screen at a cinema? In class, we sometimes have to remind students to turn off their smart phones or personal devices so that there will be no interference. Of course, in the airplane, the signals are a potential hazard. In the cinema and the classroom, it is merely a matter of interruption.

Why not let students use the devices that they carry to help in the education process? Get them off Facebook and onto a problem that you pose.



Of course, if this is a classroom on grounds of a correctional facility, possession of a cell phone, especially inside the secure perimeter, is very likely to be a matter of possession of dangerous contraband. For this exercise, let us suppose that this is college classroom or a conference away from the facility. After all, we wish to educate, not facilitate a contraband crime.

This exercise can work only if students have personal devices with them. At this writing, the inexpensive nature, culture and ubiquity surrounding smart phones almost ensures that there will be at least two in the group.

1. Ask students who have a smart phone on their person to raise their hands.
2. Divide the class into two teams, making sure that there is at least one smart phone on each team.
3. Remove one person from each team. These will be the observers.
4. Give each team a topic related to criminal justice. For example, assign Bernhard Goetz for one team and Carrie Nation for the other. These, as you know, are people who took the law into their own hands. Alcatraz and the nearest State prison serve as another example of topics.
5. Tell each team that they must find five facts on the topic you assign.
6. Tell students that they have to use their smart phones to find the five facts and present them to the class in five minutes.
7. Have the observers look at who in each group handles the information from others. They may witness solo work or perhaps a team effort.
8. Have each group present the five facts that they chose on their assigned topic to the entire class.
9. Let observers describe to the class how the information dynamics worked in each group.
10. Ask teams what sort of problems they encountered in this task.
11. Give another topic to each team. Perhaps it could be probation for one team and parole for another. One could also give first degree murder to one team and vehicular manslaughter to the other. Tell the teams to organize themselves to efficiently find five facts about the topic in five minutes.
12. Give the advice “Try for efficiency and good use of all team members.” Will there be a division of labor? Will one person record the facts? Will another select and present the facts or will it be a team of presenters? It is hoped that the teams learned from the observers’ comments.

13. Let the fact finders find facts.
14. Let the observers observe.
15. Deconstruct the icebreaker as before.
16. Discuss issues such as:
  - a. Did teams note the differences between information on .com, .edu, .gov and .org?
  - b. Who is the fastest phone jockey?
  - c. Who selected the information to be presented?
  - d. What was the tone of the information? Was it shocking, factual, quirky, dry, or supported by citations?
  - e. Did the students benefit from the advice of the observers?
  - f. Who took charge?

The speed at which we access information is dizzying. Yet, we sometimes have to wade through so many bits of information and decide which is most pertinent and interesting. In the end, no matter the technology, interpersonal dynamics is what makes teams succeed or fail.

Personal technology in the hands of students does not have to be an enemy to the education process. Let the technology work for your lessons.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Some topics for Five Facts from Phones:**

- Prisons in the United States and prisons in Mexico
- Sentencing guidelines for possession of marijuana in Washington State and in Arkansas
- Death penalty by hanging and by firing squad
- *Morrissey v. Brewer* and *Lewis v. Casey*
- 14th Amendment and 8th Amendment
- Gun towers and security perimeter vehicles
- Community corrections and maximum-security prisons
- Security classification and programs classification
- Escapes and assaults in prison
- Cognitive thinking programs and narcotics anonymous programs



## Going Blind

By Amy Ruohonen

The feeling of the unknown...

That moment of knowledge blindness...

That time of not knowing...

It happens to everyone.

This icebreaker shows what a vital role your team plays in the big picture. Nobody can do it alone. Communication and the ability to work together are vital parts of corrections and this demonstrates how good communication and teamwork can make or break an assignment.

To begin break group into teams. You will need a marker board (we used an easel and that worked fine), markers, a timer, a blindfold and different objects written on scraps of paper. Note: we selected objects of varying degrees of difficulty to test the waters, you could choose your difficulty beforehand and just do that one, or do multiple levels.

For the first round have each team chose a “director” and an “artist”. Once the artist is blindfolded, the director then chooses a scrap of paper from those available. (Putting them in a box or bin of some sort works well.)

The director will then describe what to draw by saying how to draw.

**Example I:** The object is a flower.

“Draw a circle, starting at the center of the circle, loop out then come back to the original circle, repeat around the entire circle.”

**Example II:** Object is a tree:

“Start at the base of the page. Draw a line up approximately 5” then draw another line parallel to it. Etc.”

Note: I left the students with minimal guidelines to see where they would go with it. I noticed one group that would say draw a line up... “STOP”.

We gave a limited amount of time for them to draw, our limit was one minute. This is easily adjusted depending on the difficulty.

Once the time was up the rest of the team including the artist would guess what it was that was drawn. (You could also allow the other team members to guess while the artist is drawing.)

We also gave them a limited amount of time once the artist was finished to guess the object. If they couldn't guess it the opposing team had one guess to get it. The team chooses a new artist and director for each round.

Remember, this exercise is to show the importance of good communication and teamwork, but also watch the student dynamics and their interaction. Watching it from the instructing standpoint for the first time, this was a very enlightening exercise for me. Kudos to Joe Bouchard for allowing me the opportunity. (Editor's note: Thanks, Amy.)



\* As a final competition we gave each team a well-known person to draw. Since our instructor Joe Bouchard was filling in on one of the teams to even out the numbers, we rigged it so his team would get him as the subject. It was an added bonus for us that he ended up being the artist that last round. Pictured above is Bouchard proudly displaying his blind self-portrait!



## Gone fishing

It is no surprise to those of us in the corrections profession that prisoners will build simple, yet ingenious ways to communicate. Chief among these is building ‘cars’ and honing fishing skills.

Weighted envelopes with dental floss or string can be seen scooting across the floor of the cell blocks everywhere. Using a car and fish line, the skilled fisherman can with one slide land the message or contraband in another’s cell. Other tactics include two fishing lines on the rock at the same time with one of them snagging the other.

For the two groups of three student each that are pictured below, I began my criminal justice lecture with the following materials on the center table.

- 4 risers. In this case, they were 1 ½” cans of play dough. They can be anything of that size. Children’s building blocks work well.
- 2 yard sticks
- A pad of paper
- Envelopes
- Dental floss or string
- Tape

Used to my style, they knew that there was going to be an icebreaker during class. Still, devoid of hints or emotions, I delivered the lecture while occasional questions were thrown my way about the materials.





After the lecture, I posed these two questions:

1. How can prisoners in segregation communicate?
2. How can prisoners communicate with no words?

Then I asked them if they could assemble something that simulates the bottom of a door. With not too many leading questions, both teams taped blocks on each end of a yard stick.



Then I asked them to assemble a device to send messages from one “door” to the other. Trial and error yielded an envelope with dental floss taped to a corner and message written inside. Eventually, since the ‘cars’ could not slide the entire length of the 12-foot-long table, one student devised a weight with a thin wallet. The weight was crucial to keep the car and message from leaving the surface of the table and stalling a few feet from the starting place.

Then we discussed the hazards that a prisoner might have in transmitting the message. Some that the students suggested were:

- Staff could intercept
- The message could never arrive due to a malfunctioning car
- The prisoner fisher might be inept at sending the message
- The car may land in the wrong prisoner’s hands

It is useful for students to engage in this exercise. It gives them an understanding of just how easy it is for prisoners to convey information. Also, it reminds them of the responsibility of corrections staff to eliminate fishing. There is no official end to fishing season behind bars.



## **Gone fishing question sheet**

1. How can prisoners in segregation communicate?
2. How can prisoners communicate *with no words*?
3. How does one build a car and fish?
4. How can staff limit this sort of communication?
5. Can fishing and cars ever be eliminated?

## Is your photocopier dangerous?

This is a show and tell/reading/discussion type of icebreaker.

1. Take your students to a photocopier and have them look at it for a moment.
2. Ask them this leading question: “How this could be used in an institutional setting to disrupt or make conditions more dangerous?”
3. You may get a few answers like: broken plastic as shanks, shards of glass, and metal. Others may suggest that the use of the photocopier for copying pornography, blank legal forms, and other documents could earn money for prisoners and create a new illicit service. Prompt the students with leading questions.
4. Give the following article to students to read and discuss afterwards.
5. This could segue into a discussion about how other seemingly innocent items could prove dangerous in the wrong hands.

If you think about it, the photocopier in your office is a lot like the brakes on your car. You really do not consider them until they malfunction. On the surface, faulty brakes are dangerous to drivers, passengers and everyone on the road. Yet, it does not seem so with the photocopier. If it is broken, the repair person comes and takes care of matters.

But, do we really think of the hazards that are possible with photocopiers? Is your photocopier, broken or otherwise, dangerous? This may seem silly on the face of it. How can a piece of office equipment present peril?

This all depends on the environment. In terms of the world of corrections, anything goes. Almost anything that you can think of can be used in a way that could compromise the safety of all inside. The ingredients for this vulnerability are simple. All it takes is an unattended photocopier and an enterprising prisoner who seizes an opportunity.

Anything an offender can make with or strip from a photocopier can be considered contraband. Like all contraband schemes, this produces an uneven playing field – upsetting the balance of security. Prisoners with the power of barter have an advantage over others. Their power poses a threat to operations.

A large part of how staff effectively manage any correctional setting is through contraband control. Holes in security like an unattended photocopier can prove fatal in very direct ways (like a stabbing) or in indirect ways (like a climbing power of a prisoner who specializes in barter).

The dangers come in two basic forms. They are mechanical dangers and dangers related to unauthorized use. In other words, prisoners can make weapons or produce documents that will earn them power through strength or favors.

Mechanical dangers are parts that can be taken from any machine. Once, I once tried to fix a paper jam on an older model. Because of a fatigued plastic link, out fell a 12 inch by 1-inch paper guide made of metal. It was more than a part that fell out of place: It was a lot of shank stock.

Another copier featured an Allen wrench that snapped in place in the front panel. For most people, this is simply a tool to fix the machine, located in a handy place. To the contrabandist, this is a mini shank on the ready.

Similarly, some models come with a plastic stylus recessed into the body of the machine. With the element of surprise, this can damage soft tissue like the eye, or pierce a major artery.

Think also about the toner, plastic parts, glass and other components of the copier. It is truly an interesting array of danger sitting in your office.

Unauthorized use of copiers can pose a threat to everyone in any facility. There are many items that an offender can copy that will fetch a good price and the power that comes with it. These items are not shanks, but they can provide an offender a base of power over others.

Some of these tradable items are:

- Pornography
- Blank legal forms
- Copies of legal pleadings that are templates – just fill in your name
- With white out or paper covering a crucial area, an offender can produce a copy of what looks like an official document, but altered.
- Betting slips
- Security Threat Group paraphernalia

How do we enhance safety? This is quite simple and it is what we have been trained to do.

**Observe** – Watch prisoner porters and others in the area near photocopiers. Support staff should be as vigilant as uniformed officers.

**Report** – Issue the proper misconduct reports. Inform others of offenders who take a special interest in the photocopier. Their inquisitiveness may be a prelude to illicit action.

**Prevent** – Keep offenders away from sensitive office tools. Store them in areas where there is no prisoner access when possible.

With all things corrections, much hinges on our vigilance. What we observe, report and prevent can install daily operating procedures that will enhance safety for staff, offenders and the public.



## It's hot in here

Tamper-proof is not necessarily an accurate term. Some measures to block access to systems, mechanisms and objects have flaw which can be overcome by observant or inventive operators.

An example of this comes to mind. I recall a family that had a 1973 Cadillac. One of the family members frequently took the car without permission. Because of that, the owner of the car placed a club on the steering wheel. For those who do not know what a club is, think of an adjustable locking mechanism that renders the steering wheel immobile by abutting against the inside of the windshield.

Little did the owner know, the thief detected a flaw. The steering column was built with tilt and telescoping features. With the telescoping steering wheel left fully extended, it was a simple matter of contracting the column and slipping the club out and taking the car where he wanted.

Preventative measures are only as effective as the level of flaws in the plan.

I thought of that when I saw a plastic case with venting holes over a thermostat in the college in which I teach. This case also featured a lock. Part of what I do in my corrections classes is to challenge students to look for flaws in security. This builds a mindset that works well in a prison or jail setting. The more flaws we detect in any system, the better we are able to repair the system and enhance security.

For this icebreaker, all that one needs is a thermostat equipped with a ‘tamper-proof’ case. If you do not have one in or near the classroom, a photo or diagram of one will suffice.

1. Let small groups of students gather around the thermostat. Tell them to look at details.
2. Do not divulge the purpose of the exercise. Give no instructions but to look at details.
3. Allow thirty seconds to soak in the details.
4. Abruptly call in the first group and send the next group to look at details.
5. Repeat as many times as necessary.
6. If you have a lively group, you are likely to have many questions about the reason for assessing details. Let the students ask question, but do not divulge anything.
7. When all are gathered, talk about baby-proofing and prisoner proofing areas.

When I tested this exercise on students, they thought that this was a contraband exercise. They thought of the many weapons that could be made from the case, the thermostat itself, and the battery. They were thinking in a security mindset, but I wanted them to focus on something else.

I said, “These are great ideas about how someone could create something harmful out of the thermostat and the case. What I want to know is: “How can someone breach the system to adjust the temperature?”

Students shifted gears and came up with the following ideas:

- Pick the lock
- Bust the case
- Ask someone to adjust it yourself (not a nefarious breach, but still a method of adjusting the temperature predicated on persuasion)



- Break the hinge
- One student noted slots in the case which served to vent the unit. With a bent paperclip, she maneuvered the controls through the slots

Next, I asked how the system could be improved. Students answered:

- Use a stronger material
- Do not include holes for paperclips in the design
- Do not tempt those who would tamper with a see-through case
- Cameras
- Move thermostat to a secure area

Ultimately, each corrections staff should know that there are very few things that are tamper-proof. This assertion is not cynicism. It is a realistic assessment of the situation. As one repeats this exercise, many more answers and tactics will be discussed. With this in mind, corrections facilities can become safer places.



Big thanks to the Gogebic Community College CJC 103 class on Monday night in November 2014 and special guest Martha “Kowalski” Anderson for helping with this exercise.

## Neighbors

By Amy Ruohonen

On a marker board/easel write a small list similar to the one below: (these are potential neighbors).

- a homosexual couple
- a rock band
- a school teacher
- a preacher
- a Hispanic couple
- doctor/nurse

Go through each group and ask the class/group to raise their hand if they would want to live by each. Write this tally on the left-hand side of each neighbor. Then go through the list again asking who would not want to live next to each, write this tally on the right side of each.

Typically, most choose to live next to the preacher, teacher, doctor/nurse, etc. and choose not to live next to the others. At this point ask for examples of why they would want to live next to them and why they would not for each potential neighbor.

After discussing this for a bit reveal a bit more about each.

- The homosexual couple just adopted a child
- The rock band moved to town seeking quiet and only practice at their studio across town.
- the school teacher abused a student.
- The preacher- molested kids.
- The Hispanic couple- runs a nonprofit to assist kids with special needs.
- The doctor/nurse- sell prescription drugs.

The idea for this one is to show how each of us, whether we mean to or not, discriminate and we should all be aware that we can't judge a person by who/what/what color they are, rather who they are as a person. Their profession, gender, and race can have very little to do with who they are as a person.



## Of what qualities are effective corrections staff comprised?

Have you ever thought about what it takes to have success in corrections? Certainly, favorable circumstances are necessary. Yet, even with optimal events, the corrections professional cannot perform as well without positive core traits. What are some core qualities?

A student in my Criminal Justice class was also taking an English class. One of his writing projects was to describe how to do something well. He chose “How to be a great corrections officer” and needed six sources. He asked me to be one of these sources.

I agreed to an interview on one condition. I asked that he consider modifying the topic slightly. I asked that he change it from how to be a great corrections officer to how to become a great corrections staff person. After all, as a programs professional, I cannot speak with authority on custody staff. He agreed, and I gave what I deemed are necessary qualities in order to succeed in corrections.

Right off the bat, I said:

1. **Ability to follow instructions** – After all, in a paramilitary setting, one has to act along the lines of policy and procedure. The chain of command facilitates this.
2. **Good sense of humor** – The ability to laugh, especially at oneself, is a healthy way to cope with the negativity of the vocation. For a long career, it is better if one has a good sense of humor than a bitter outlook that will always lead to cynicism and disillusionment.

But, there had to be more essential qualities. I thought of some on my own (see below) and your students can come up with some in addition to the two abovementioned qualities.

This is an easy icebreaker to conduct.

1. Read the above to students or craft your own introduction
2. Split them into groups
3. Have them list what they think are five essential qualities to succeed in corrections
4. When consensus is reached (through a five to ten-minute group discussion) have a spokesperson deliver results to all
5. Have a recorder write these on a marker board or some place for all to see
6. Through discussion, obtain a class consensus from the group answers
7. Compare to my answers below
8. Ask for reasons why these are so important in corrections

Below please find answers 3 – 10 of the good qualities I selected.

3. **Broad perspective** – Staff need to look at the larger operations in addition to their own area. All areas are important. But the interconnectivity of these areas needs to be conceptualized and brought together through professionalism.

4. **Integrity** – The person with integrity does what has been promised. There is a dependability that comes with this position. The person who demonstrates integrity does not promise the stars to placate the persistent offender. She promises what she can and stands by her word.

5. **Vigilance** – This is the ever-watchful person. He does not get lost in the boredom and monotony of simple watching. Rather, he watches and reports.
  
6. **Tenacious** – Quite simply, someone with this quality does not give up when things become difficult.
  
7. **Objective** – According to dictionary.com, this is someone who is not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice; based on facts. In our quasi-judicial function as corrections staff, we should never be driven by personal feelings. When an offender who you witness committing an offense has proven obnoxious in the past, it should not be part of the current offense.
  
8. **Flexible** – Although corrections is run on predictability, it is wise to be able to think out of the box when necessary. Flexible thinking in situations that require discretion is helpful. This flexibility may provide solutions for vexing operations problems later.
  
9. **Calm command** – If you are not in charge, someone else is. Those who possess calm command show those who they lead that everything is under control and that leadership is not an ego trip.
  
10. **“What if?” mind** – This quality is best used when the staff blends in well and looks disinterested and nonthreatening. The key is that the person is ready to spring into action as necessary. That is because while watching, the staff person engages in hypotheticals. This is like a short stop who thinks, “What if the ball is hit here? Where do I throw it?” Then, when the ball is in the neighborhood of the shortstop, it is executed as planned.

Perhaps your list of top qualities for effective corrections staff differs from mine. In the end, it is the interplay of several admirable qualities that make the

individual. And the interplay of good corrections staff is a crucial part of a well-run, safe facility.



Thanks to Nick Lanctot for the concept.

## **Pizza Deli, Pizza Deli! Get your pizza in the deli!**

There are a few three-word phrases in the English language that evoke a universally positive reaction from the recipient. Some of them are:

1. I love you!
2. You are hired!
3. Hey, lottery winner!

Less committed, yet still potent are the words, who wants pizza?

In this training exercise, pizza is the bait. Simply acquire enough pizza for the entire group. It is crucial to the exercise that at least one of the pizzas comes in a cardboard container. You can start a lecture of any sort while the students innocently enjoy the pizza, possibly oblivious to your ulterior motive. A good lecture for this icebreaker is contraband control.

Break into the central part of the lecture in any way you see fit. I inaugurated it thusly:

Here is the scenario. You are a minimum-security prisoner who is employed as a porter in the administration building. Staff have left a huge mess in the lunchroom. The holiday party included many pizzas that came in cardboard boxes.





Staff is complacent and is not watching you. You know that there is some value in the cardboard, so you take it.

1. How to get it to cell or pod?
2. What can you make of the cardboard?

Have your students break into groups and list the possible answers to these questions.

In the fledgling run of this exercise, one student actually made a body cast that could be inserted at the beltline under baggy clothing. They admitted that it could be detected with a quick pat search. This introduced the topics of shakedown, “fake-downs” and predicting which staff are less likely to search.

Another student said that the cardboard could be hidden and brought in piecemeal.

Here are some of the utilities that students thought of for the cardboard:

- Wick
- False front or false bottom for locker
- Dummy shank that looks dangerous if colored with marker
- Handle for a weapon
- A way to jam lock
- Make a small shovel
- Make a small box or an unobtrusive smart phone case
- Use as an exercise bar – lift yourself with cardboard as a handle under the bunk above you
- Kindling for a distraction
- Body armor
- Rape blocking ‘belt’
- Material to soak in drugs for unobtrusive hiding place

- Rough rolling paper
- Filler material for marijuana or tobacco
- Club
- Dildo
- Nun chucks

In the end, we are increasing contraband awareness in order to make the institution safe for staff, offenders, and the public. This is not a school for smugglers. Additionally, this is a way to demonstrate to pre-professionals that what appears innocent, often is not. Bon appetite!



Thank you, Robyn, for the catchy, musical title. Thank you, Amy “Ruo” for help as a special guest star in this exercise.

## STOOPID laws!

While in line at the local grocery store, I saw one cashier move from her till to another. She had to scan alcohol for another cashier who happened to be less than eighteen years old. Both cashiers were friendly and engaged me in conversation about the transaction. Both agreed that it was a rule that hindered operations.

I pointed out that it may be more than a rule. It could be a law. From there, we spoke of some of the seemingly stupid laws on the books.

For this icebreaker, we will look at what is practical and what is law.

1. Break the class into groups of four or five,
2. Have them create three laws that seems extremely impractical. Give them examples:

Swedish is the official language on Sundays,

All dogs larger than fifty pounds must wear a red bandana around their neck,

Closed mouth smiles are not permitted at lunch time.

3. In turn, have each group present the fictitious laws to the whole class.
4. Have them justify why these laws might have been enacted. Example: You may not feed a squirrel a cigarette. The justification is that the cigarette may be lit, and the squirrel may start a chimney fire.

5. Read the list below. (The following were accessed from [www.stupidlaws.com](http://www.stupidlaws.com) on 11/29/2014.) Have them guess which of them are not or never were actual laws somewhere in the United States. Note: All of the below are or were actual laws at one time.

- A man can legally beat his wife, but not more than once a month.
- You may shoot Native Americans if more than five of them are on your property.
- It's illegal to carry a Bible or to talk to anyone about Jesus Christ.
- Since 1173 it has been illegal to die.
- All business signs in the province of Quebec must be in French.
- Eating a neighbor's baby is strictly forbidden.
- It is considered an offense to shower naked.
- All lollipops are banned.
- It is illegal to say any sentence containing more than 4 words in English.
- In Oregon, a dead person cannot be required to serve on a jury.
- In Illinois, animals can be sent to jail.
- It was once illegal to not wear clothes while taking a bath in a bathtub.
- It is illegal to paint a horse in Vermont.
- It is illegal to own gold
- It is illegal to store your own stuff in your own garage
- Atheists are disqualified from holding office or testifying as witness.
- An invitation from a third party trumps a restraining order
- A statute forbids people in bathing suits from appearing uncovered on the streets in Waikīkī.

- Surfers must express themselves using a vocabulary of no more than one hundred words.
- Cap guns are illegal.
- One-armed piano players must perform for free.
- You may not have oral or anal sex.
- It is illegal to use a laser pointer to start a riot.
- It is illegal for barbers to threaten to cut off kid’s ears.
- Cussing over the telephone is against the law.
- You may not make love in a freezer.
- Horses are not allowed out on the streets and highways at night unless the animal has a “bright” red taillight securely attached to its rump.
- Kisses may last for no more than five minutes.
- You may not sell toothpaste and a toothbrush to the same customer on a Sunday.

On one productive night in December, I premiered *STOOPID laws!* These students (See image below.) created the following examples of laws that are not necessarily for the public good.



Some are graphic, and others include an inside joke. All qualify as STOOPID, as required by this exercise:

- ✚ You aren't allowed to watch YouTube videos while on the toilet. (This prompted a quick division in the classroom)
- ✚ You can't do yoga if you're teaching a college class. (I assumed that this is not just during the semester, but also during class.)
- ✚ You cannot walk your pet goose while walking your pet dog.
- ✚ It is illegal to 'sag' skinny jeans.

It is illegal to have 'shitty' eyebrows. ("Shitty" is not something that could be deemed scatological in this sense. Rather, it is instructive of the ambiguities found in some statutes. The adjective for eyebrows needs clarification in order to be an enforceable law.)

- ✚ To receive a driver's license in high school, you must have all A's on your report card.
- ✚ If it is raining outside on a Monday afternoon, you must go outside and dance naked. (I did ask them to create STOOPID laws, after all. This qualifies.)
- ✚ You shall wear pink on Wednesdays.

Logical or not, there are many odd laws on the books. Sometimes, the laws are less ridiculous when the roots are discovered. Some are enforceable, and others are ignored.

Never-the-less, it is interesting.



## What is your lame excuse for being late?

We all know people who will be late to their own funeral. Try as they might, the state of being early is never in their cards. But that does not exempt the rest of us from occasional delay. Even for those of us that are painfully punctual, we will likely be tardy at one time or another. With so many variables, possible roadblocks and mistakes, the odds simply will not always be in our favor.



It is obvious that classroom participation runs the gamut. But it is important to open communications and interplay. Otherwise, no matter how well written the instruction materials, it may be a two-dimensional endeavor.

To start each class off with a chance for everyone to participate, I write four questions in the board. In formula icebreakers, the first three are almost always the same, generic introduction questions.

1. What is your name?
2. What year of school is this for you?
3. What is your ultimate vocational goal? (“Uncertain” is an acceptable answer.)

The fourth question is the slightly odd, icebreaking question. For this icebreaker, the pivotal question is “What is your lame excuse for being late for class?” I used this on the first week of class this semester with a suitable buildup.

*“As you enter the room, the class is already assembled. The instructor stops abruptly in mid-sentence. He looks up from his roster and locks eyes with you, piercing your unsuspecting soul. Ashamed, you nod in a sheepish manner. Without drawing additional attention to yourself, you try to find a seat as far from the front as possible. Murphy’s Law is in effect and the only empty chair is front and center. All is eerily quiet, and he inevitably barks out the obvious, ‘You are late! What is your lame excuse for being late to class?’ As you complete the cycle of blushing, you offer this excuse...”*

As an example, I stated my answers to the first three questions and offered a twist on the classic excuse (the 4<sup>th</sup> element) – “The dog ate my car keys.”

The excuses that followed from the students were varied, ranging from common to incredible. But, it was a way for students to think on their feet after delivering basic information to their peers. Plus, it gives the instructor the first glance at class dynamics.

None of this is to mitigate the disruption that lateness can cause. However, a light-hearted look at odd excuses can set the stage for a creative semester with increased student participation. What is your lame excuse?





## What is your theme song?

Hip Hop,

Emo,

Metal Head,

Pop,

Rap,

Polka,

Gregorian chant.

These are just a few genres of music. All of them have a following. Some adherents vehemently defend what they consider the best music. It is all very subjective and personal. For music, people will argue and defend to demonstrate their allegiance to what they believe is the true faith.

I cannot say that wars were started because of this. But passion and strong opinions come to the fore when people are asked to choose their favorite song. Fortunately, there is a way for the intrepid facilitator or instructor to tap into this energy.

To start each class off with a chance for everyone to participate, I employ a variety of formula icebreakers. I write four questions in the board. In formula icebreakers, the first three are almost always the same, generic introduction questions. Some examples are:

1. What is your name?
2. What year of college is this for you?
3. What is your ultimate vocational goal? (“Uncertain” is an acceptable answer.)

The fourth question is the slightly odd, icebreaking question. For this icebreaker, the pivotal question is:

4. What is your theme song? (As a bonus, ask why the person relates to the song.) As an instructor, especially if you have what looks like a shy group, you may want to give a minute or so to think. You should also be honest and lead the group. For example, for number 4, at this writing, I would say, Iron Maiden's "The Trooper" is my theme song. I identify with it because of the powerful and inspiring introductory riffs."



It behooves you to ask yourself some questions:

***Do I run the risk of ridicule?***

Of course! But you risk that every time you step away from the podium and in front of the class. In fact, this exercise may be the start of a running joke. The real question is: How will you transform the possible ridicule into quality instruction?

***Will everyone know the song that you chose?***

Possibly not. I chose a song that is a decade older than most of the students I currently teach.

***Should you choose a song that the students will know?***

You should only do this if it is a song that you identify with. Don't modify your true answer in order to find a consensus in the class. Be honest and your students will likely follow your example.

***Can I play the riff for them?***

Why not? You are the instructor! You have the technology. Or, you could invite your cool-as-hell brother with his electric guitar to demonstrate. Perhaps, students will play a snippet of their chosen ballad, ditty or war cry from their mobile device.

Now that you have assessed yourself as a pillar of integrity and a citadel of truth, proceed with the exercise.

Keep in mind that this icebreaker is an excellent segue into the security threat group module.

1. You can take a historical romp through popular music and describe, for example, how metal heads identified themselves with clothing, band names and other styles.
2. Recent and current examples can be sought from the class.
3. The point is to identify group behavior with a common bond. In this case, it is musical preference. In the case of a gang, there are economic and socio/protection elements.

This is not a music appreciation class. But, discussion can go in that direction. However, it may be good to let it flow in that manner, as individual and group identifiers can point up how people act in gatherings and structure. Of course, it is not rocket science. This is ultimately a way to get people to speak in class on their first day. Have fun, rock star!



## What's in a name?

This is an extremely quick and easy icebreaker that can drive lively discussions. There is the pejorative term “GUARD” for the widely accepted and proper “OFFICER”. But how about the way we refer to those who are serving time behind bars? What do you think of when you hear each of the following terms?

1. Resident
2. Convict
3. Prisoner
4. Offender

Rank these in your order of appropriateness.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Are there any other terms to refer to the incarcerated?

Do any of these terms seem too soft?

Do any of these terms have a connotation that seems unprofessional?



## Why should I trust you?

Short and sweet. Sometimes the best concepts are simple and require few words. This is an example of this.

Trust is the glue that holds corrections together. Certainly, policy and procedure tell us what to do and when to do it. However, if we cannot trust one another to do the right thing on the job, this already difficult vocation of corrections becomes even more challenging.

To say that trust is concern in corrections is to utter a colossal understatement. What better concept can you find to start a semester in corrections education?

To start each class off with a chance for everyone to participate, I employ a variety of formula icebreakers. I write four questions in the board. As stated elsewhere, in formula icebreakers, the first three are almost always the same, generic introduction questions.

### Formula icebreaker

1. Name
2. Job aspiration
3. Time in school or on job

The last question is:

4. Why should I trust you?

This was an instant classic. I rendered my three answers as a way to get the ball rolling. Then I told them that they really have no reason to trust me. I laid out my credentials and some of my philosophy, but came back to the notion that they had to assess my actions in order to match an amount of trust to it. I also said, “My

goal is not to promote distrust. Rather, I am here to get you to think with a critical eye.”

The answers you get will vary: from funny and self-aggrandizing to serious and nervous.

But, the tone is set: Be careful (but not too paranoid).

You may extend this exercise by asking why trust is so important in the field. In addition, instances of staff gone wrong can be illustrated and recounted. We note that this behavior is the exception rather than the rule. However, these are far-reaching actions that impact us as a profession.

This is an excellent segue into modules that deal with staff relations and staff misconduct.

I hope that I have earned your trust so that you are comfortable enough to employ this icebreaker.



## Worst on the first

Do you remember your first day on the job? If you are like most people, you wanted to perform without flaw. At the very least, you did not want to stick out. Who wants to be remembered as the person who made a big mistake?

The actions committed on the first day of a job can cast a long shadow. Nicknames and reputations are formed. These are hard to shake. Like it or not, colleagues remember the mistakes more than accomplishments.

This is compounded in corrections. Not only are coworkers on the watch, they are trained to observe and are adept at reading body language. As though that is not enough, many offenders are watching every move of new hires, aware that this may be an opportunity to mitigate what they believe are difficult conditions of confinement.

Staff scrutinize because they will ultimately need to depend on you. Offenders watch and analyze because your potential missteps might indicate an eventual opportunity for introduction of contraband or other forbidden favors. Mistakes happen. Most are innocent, but all are remembered. Don't be nervous: All eyes are on you!

I believe that the first day of a corrections/criminal justice college course is the perfect time to consider how one will act during the first day of employment in the corrections field. After all, the feelings of uncertainty would be present in both the actual place and the supposed job. There is a certain continuity.

This can be executed well with a formula icebreaker. With formula icebreakers, three common questions are asked of all in the room. The 4th question is pivotal. Number four gets to the heart of the matter. In this icebreaker, the questions are:

1. What is your name?
2. What year of school is this for you?
3. What is your ultimate vocational goal? ("Uncertain" is an acceptable answer.)



4. What is the worst thing that you can do on your first day of work at a prison or jail?

This requires just a marker board and a marker. Of course, the four questions can be created on computer and projected on a screen. Ask these questions of one student. Once they have answered, ask them to “pick a victim”, the next person to answer.

It is useful to ask this of neophytes, so you can gauge their comprehension of what is permitted and what is not. This is an opportunity for them to think of the many things someone could do wrong in a sensitive setting. It is never too early to think of doing the right thing.

Another question could be: If you committed this, what should your course of action be? What do you do or to whom do you report?

Depending on group interplay and other factors, you could harvest an interesting set of answers for number 4. Perhaps you will hear: throwing up, fainting, blurting out an ethnic or racial slur, crying, being late, unintentionally unlocking a prisoner, hurting an offender, losing the keys, or panicking.

This can segue into many different instructor-led discussions including staff misconduct, policy and procedure, code of ethics, and the employee discipline process.

Did you know what the right thing to do was? You probably knew through common sense and initial training. In the end we want to do the right thing. That is why we must consider the worst on the first.



## Would you rather...?

Sometimes when you are offered a choice, it is not really much of a choice. Have you ever played the game “Would you rather...?” This is where you are asked to select one of two grim or gross choices. For example, “Would you rather retrieve your eyeglasses that fell into a port-a-potty or search for your driver’s license in a full dumpster?”

Let’s shift from the scatological and germ-ridden to something vocationally oriented. Think about the worst job you have ever held. Now, consider this question: Would you rather work in a prison or as an air conditioning technician in the underworld? Not everyone would vote for a prison as a place of employment, even if the alternative offered features the ultimate in bad working conditions and a veritable Boss from Hell.

On October 1, 2014, I gave my CJC 110 Criminal Justice class the assignment to create three of these. This what I offered as an example.

Would you rather fight a horse sized pug or ten pug sized horses?

A week later, there was an interesting flow of these from the students. Initially, I told them that the best ten will be included in the new icebreakers book. However, I have included more, so those who use this exercise can dip into the CJC 110 student’s creativity.

1. Would you rather be dragged through the mud by a horse or drag a horse through the mud?

2. Would you rather always be tired or never be able to fall asleep?
3. Would you rather have a fast but shoddy car or a slow but nice car?
4. Would you rather frisk someone or be frisked?
5. Would you rather use sand paper as toilet tissue or hot sauce as eye drops?
6. Would you rather be able to fly or have the ability to be invisible?
7. Would you rather walk into a dark room barefoot that has Legos strewn all over or take candy from a stranger?
8. Would you rather have a staring contest with Chuck Norris or a tickle fight with Freddy Krueger?
9. Would you rather know when you are going to die or how you are going to die?
10. Would you rather run over fifty pounds of nails that would mess up your car to the point irreparability or hit a cow with the car?
11. Would you rather sleep in Alcatraz all night or play Russian roulette?
12. Would you rather give up all sweet treats or salty treats?
13. Would you rather smell like eggs perpetually or be permitted to only eat eggs for every meal?

14. Would you rather get your leg bitten off by a shark or have your eyes stabbed with a fork?
15. Would you rather have Cheetos fingers all your life or a kernel of popcorn in the back of your throat that you cannot dislodge?
16. Would you rather be in a tornado or in a burning house?

For those who can and will work in a corrections setting, not all tasks are created equally. Some prefer the tedium of working midnights over a crowded dining hall duty. Others may prefer to work on a yard during a hot day rather than watch the walk during a snow storm. No matter what you do or where you are, you could be offered choices that are not really desirable.

Even if the corrections lesson of less desirable jobs is not introduced, this is an icebreaker that will give the opportunity for all students to express themselves in an unorthodox manner.



## You do not have to answer that

Do you need a good icebreaker to segue into discriminatory harassment? Your inspiration might be as close as your memory of a job interview from hell. This is a simple icebreaker that has very few steps.

1. Break the class into small teams.
2. Have each team build a list of uncomfortable questions that one might hear at a job interview. I do not mean a legal uncomfortable question that might be asked. An example is: Tell me about your incarceration (because you checked “yes” on a former felony conviction.) I mean an illegal question like, “Are you happily married?”
3. Present each question and ask the class if these are legal or not.
4. Ask class if there is a way that each question could be asked in a more legal manner.
5. Segue into your discriminatory harassment module.

One of the most traumatic experiences that anyone can have is a job interview gone bad. There are many bad interview questions out there, but are we all aware of them? This exercise may help give understanding appropriate (but uncomfortable) and inappropriate questions.



## You have a boo-boo?

In any correctional setting, we cannot afford to take anything for granted. Small things can be gathered in abundance over time and transformed into something for which it was not intended. Think of a common staple and one rubber band. There is nothing too sinister there. However, with 20 rubber bands and as many staples, one can make a mace enhanced with small metal spikes and a flexible handle.

What about the times that there seems to be a valid need for something? What do you do when an inmate asks for something sounds reasonable? What do you do when you are asked for a band aid? In most circumstances, you should give the offender a band aid.



Given that premise, let us suppose that over time, an enterprising and persistent inmate saved up twenty unused band aids. What, apart from applying them to a wound, would he or she do with them?

1. Break the class into teams of four or five;

2. Give one team member twenty adhesive bandages;
3. Have the groups talk about what they could use them for;
4. Have the groups review proper band aid distribution;
5. Have one person report out to the entire class;
6. Have a person on hand to write the answers on a smart board, white board or flip chart.

Here are a few answers that you might find:

- Adhere notes or shanks to the floor facing side of a table or shelf
- To disable a lock
- To camouflage cigarettes in a band aid box
- To trade for other contraband

It may be that an offender has a real need for an adhesive bandage. It is probably best to ask the inmate to show you the cut before you give a band aid. Yet, it remains that little things mean a lot. And getting a class to talk about the little things can help raise contraband control awareness.

## You're going to love my Bigfoot

Do you believe? Is it possible? Or is there no way that the legendary primate is alive?



News items come and go. Scandals and hot topics are temporary. But the existence of Bigfoot is truly a durable debate. And on this subject, everyone can have a strong opinion.

What does the real Northwoods Icon look like? We truly have no hard evidence. For this exercise, there are seven qualities to consider:

1. Height
2. Weight



3. Color
4. Sound
5. Smell
6. Special powers (if any)
7. Diet

All of this is like a just like a jury ascertaining a truth from conflicting stories. We build our perceptions from fragments of legends. We can recreate how these beasts look and act. This is done in “You’re going to love my Bigfoot” in four steps: Preliminary Hearing, Lone Juror, Full Jury, and Adversary System.

#### I. PRELIMINARY HEARING

The instructor polls the room about their belief in Sasquatch. Stories may come from this and strong opinions may surface. Once all are polled and have had time to have their say, the Instructor delivers these instructions, “The issue at hand is not the existence of Bigfoot. I want to know what you think it might look like and act. For this exercise, suspend all doubt. In this world, Sasquatch exists. So, on to the LONE JUROR PHASE. Describe Bigfoot as you see him based on the worksheet.”

#### II. LONE JUROR PHASE

Everyone in class will fill in descriptions for the seven the qualities. This is a part of the exercise in which the individual works independently. For example -

|          |                      |
|----------|----------------------|
| Height - | 8 feet tall          |
| Weight - | 350 pounds           |
| Color-   | Reddish<br>brown fur |
| Sound-   | Wailing howl         |
| Smell-   | Rancid skunk         |
| Powers-  | Elusive              |
| Diet-    | Omnivore             |

### III. FULL JURY PHASE

The class is split into two groups. Each group may find a truth from all of the varied individual answers. Just like in juries, there will be debate, and some will cling to strongly-held ideas, even if they do not necessarily believe in the existence of Bigfoot. One person will write the consensus for the seven qualities.

### IV. ADVERSARY SYSTEM

Each team in turn sends a spokesperson to the front of the room to deliver the consensus description. Without a doubt, the answers will vary. Allow both sides to issue a rebuttal. The instructor may rule on the merits of each quality. The juries turned lawyers may even see the instructor/judge rule a mistrial, as there is no evidence.

This exercise touches on the court system, evidence, emotion, rulings, and group dynamics. Public speaking and persuasion skills are also honed. Not too bad for a creature that many believe does not exist. (Personally, I need more evidence, but it is a great tale.)

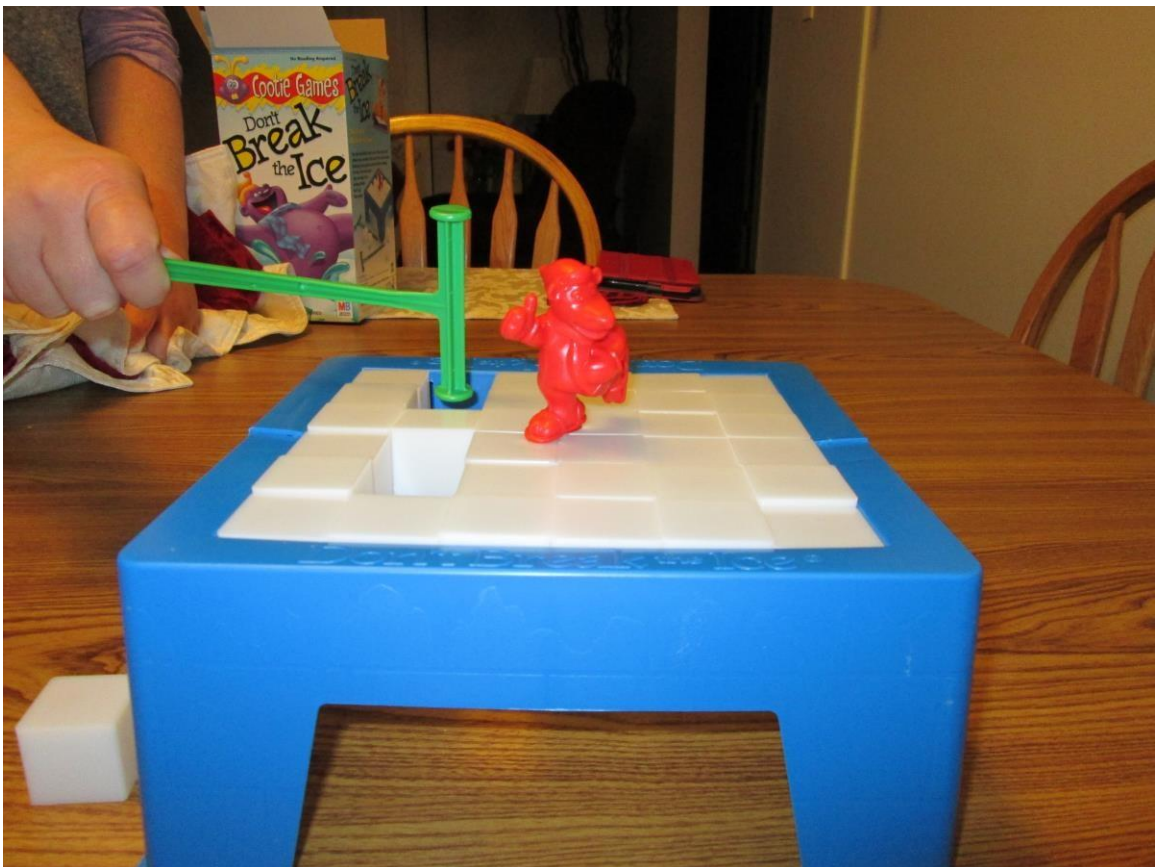
Tell it to the judge: Is he or she going to love your Bigfoot?



*Special thanks to Kelly Ruonavaara for the title of this icebreaker.*

## You're treading on thin ice, buddy!

Can the wrong answer chip away at a facility's defenses? If you do the wrong thing based on erroneous information, can it hurt you and your institution later? The answers to these questions are "Yes, they could." And you never know which innocent mistake in the culmination of many can topple the structure.



It is almost like the classic game of "Don't Break the Ice" in which players take turns in knocking out plastic blocks one at a time from a horizontal frame. The blocks are wedged in tightly. However, with each block that is knocked out in

turn, the structure gets weaker. Eventually, the removal of one block will force the others to fall.

This is a fun learning exercise that uses a quiz format and a classic game. This is a good game run after lunch. It is a way to review what was learned in the morning and to get participants to get up and move around in the post-meal lethargy.

1. Acquire the game “Don’t break the ice.”
2. Learn the rules if you do not know them already.
3. Create a list of thirty or so questions related to corrections, preferable something that was covered earlier in the day.
4. Go around the room and ask the first person a question. If the participant answers this correctly, go on to the next person with a new question.
5. If the person gets a question wrong, she or he must knock out one of the blocks of ‘ice’ on “Don’t break the ice.”
6. The structure generally will not fall apart with the first few blocks knocked out.
7. If you are familiar with the group, you might instigate some playful banter in order to make the icebreaker nervous.
8. The person who is unlucky enough to have the ice break loses.
9. Explain that this is a cumulative loss. Everyone is really responsible. It is just the person with the ultimate wrong answer that shattered the stability.
10. Segue into a module on teamwork or staff dynamics.

Mistakes are cumulative, and training helps to avoid mistakes. With an icebreaker that literally breaks the ice, this is an achievable goal.

## Sometimes they teach you

To some, this may sound cliché or even cheesy. But, I do not care! That is because this is a true story. Sometimes, you learn or relearn valuable lessons from your students.

After a decade and a half of teaching, I thought that I had seen everything. Yet, on December 8, 2014, I learned that there was more to see. All student in my CJC 103 class were taking the final exam. All seemed peaceful and routine. My mind drifted to what I needed to do once I returned home.

Amid the diligent scribbles of students demonstrating their knowledge on paper, the crackle of a radio jarred the room. The voice attached to that crackle emanated from a student's volunteer firefighter radio. That radio belonged to student Nick Lanctot. I watched Nick as the voice on the radio called for responders to the Copper Country Mall maintenance room where there was smoke. Nick was a third of the way through his final looked up and said, "I have to go!"

Like a flash, Nick ran to the scene of the hazard.

A potentially dangerous fire was in the mall/college complex and Nick was the first person there. He and others contained the hazard and maintained calm while fire trucks arrived. The fire did not spread and all inside were safe.

Nick is such a polite person that when he returned to his exam, he said, "I am sorry." He downshifted from the adrenal infusion and completed the exam. His humility was amazing.

I am glad that Nick was on hand on that night. I commend him for his dedication, knowledge and training, and his humility. I am thankful that he and his team members were able to keep me and the rest of the students and instructors safe.

What did I relearn? One of my chief goals is to acclimate students to the many dangers inside the walls without inspiring panic. If that lesson is well-absorbed, then I consider it a successful semester. On occasion, a student will demonstrate to me that he or she understands how to act under pressure. Nick Lanctot did just that on December 8. And for that, I am grateful. Sometimes you can teach students how to react under pressure. Sometimes, they teach you.





## OPERATION ICERBREAKER: SHOOTING FOR EXCELLENCE

2016



## Captain Obvious Test Trio

“I should have known the answer. It was so obvious!”

If you have been in education for a significant amount of time, it is likely that you have heard such a sentiment from a student or two. It comes with the territory.

I believe that it makes good sense to employ the obvious as an education tool. This is where Captain Obvious come in.



Captain Obvious, or any Instructor or Facilitator, can run this icebreaker with a minimal of materials and just a little imagination. First, make a five-question test on any topic being covered in class or the training module. You may use those below or make up your own. There are a few requirements for the questions:

1. All questions are to be written in a true or false format
2. All answers to the questions will ultimately be false
3. The answers to all of the questions will be unbearably obvious
4. All questions will have a back story of discussion to drive home the point



So, let's salute Captain Obvious with the following tests.

### **Captain Obvious' test on contraband control**

- 1. It is best to feel under a shelf from left to right, just like reading a book.**

FALSE! Right to left or left to right does not matter. One should never *feel* for contraband. That is an invitation for getting cut or injured.

Corrections is an environment where everything is potentially infectious. It pays to look rather than to feel blindly.

- 2. When you discover narcotics on a model prisoner, it is OK to give a warning.**

FALSE! Wrong is wrong and dangerous is dangerous. Verbal slaps on the wrist are ineffective and do not dissuade this sort of behavior. Besides, policy mandates reporting this.

- 3. If you find a shank in prison but no one claims it, it was never a danger.**

FALSE! Just because no one claimed it does not mean that malicious intentions were not present. A dangerous weapon is a dangerous weapon, regardless of who may have possessed it.

- 4. If your car keys are missing in the facility, there is no need to report their absence. Prisoners do not have access to the car.**

FALSE! It does not matter if there is no access to the car. The keys are still dangerous. They could be sold as metal stock to another prisoner. Besides, the Inspector, pursuant to policy directives, shall be notified.

- 5. When you make coffee, it is not worth the fuss to bury the filter and coffee in the trash. No one would ever try to use garbage coffee.**

FALSE! There are many incarcerated dumpster divers who would love to acquire that prize. In fact, anything that is discarded has a use in the world where the residents are deprived of many basic things. Pride is out the window in a setting where many will smoke a contraband cigarette that was stored under the sole of a shoe.

### **Captain Obvious' test on staff manipulation**

- 1. When arguing with a prisoner, let him go first to state his case.**

FALSE! You do not argue with prisoners, as it puts your authority on a lower level. You can communicate, but never argue. Arguing is a practice that breeds peril.

- 2. It is OK to give gum to a prisoner because it is small and harmless.**

FALSE! It is not harmless. It can disable a lock. Also, prisoners are not allowed to possess gum. Just because a staff person issues it does not mean that a prisoner may have it. In addition, this is the gateway for a set-up.

- 3. You notice that two prisoners are engaged in sexual activities in the bathroom. One of the prisoners says that they are a couple and it is consensual. You cannot break it up.**

FALSE! There is no such thing as a consensual relationship in prison. Staff members should never be talked out of writing a misconduct report. This is a rule violation and may have involved coercion. Don't forget your PREA training.

- 4. If you are manipulated into bringing in a weapon to a prisoner and the manipulator says, "Just this one time", you are off the hook. The prisoner, after all, said just once.**

FALSE! This should be reported to the Inspector for the sake of institutional safety. Plus, what you did was illegal and something that a prisoner could use for further manipulation. There is never "just once" in the manipulation game.

**5. It is OK to hug a prisoner who passed his GED.**

FALSE! Physical contact of this type is forbidden. There are other legitimate manners to reinforce good behavior. “You did a great job when you passed your GED”, is a better way to show support than the inappropriate embrace.

**Captain Obvious’ test on operations**

**1. If you cannot find a staff person to relieve you in order to search for a good Wi-Fi connection for booking a flight on your cell phone, you call the sergeant or central control for assistance.**

FALSE! Unless permitted by policy, you cannot use a cell phone in a correctional setting because cell phones are forbidden.

**2. A tray full of sausages falls on floor in kitchen but just one prisoner sees it. It is OK to pick up the food and serve it, if the prisoner promises to keep quiet.**

FALSE! It is unsanitary. Also, it is wrong to get anyone to lie for you. Breakfast will just have to be delayed.

**3. It is best to keep your knife in your left front pocket during work hours.**

FALSE! Since when should corrections staff be able to bring in weapons?

- 4. It is OK to call in sick on a nice day on Friday even if you are not sick. Someone else will if you do not. You deserve a break.**

FALSE! It is not ethical to call in sick when you are not ill.

- 5. You may toss the keys to your colleague when you have to leave for the day and are in a hurry.**

FALSE! Never toss keys. You lose control, even if for a second.

Do not overlook the obvious when making a point. Captain Obvious is a valuable ally in the battle to advance information.



## Do you want some candy? Part II

*Do you want some candy Part I* appeared in a previous Icebreaker book.

I have a trusted friend who is an early child education professional. Her creativity is boundless. And her bag of tricks rivals that of twenty-year Early Childhood Education veterans. Like me, she knows that the lessons that we need to impart to our students can always be augmented with a demonstration of some sort.

While teaching a bit of science, she mixed Mentos candy/ breath fresheners with Diet Coke. This resulted in a fizzy overflow of the beverage. Kids love to see this and often ask questions about what happened. This is an early childhood education mainstay.

After she conducted the classic Mentos demonstration, she was left with two plastic containers. They were made of light plastic and fit well inside one's palm. As she handed them to me, she said, "what can prisoners do with these?"



My friend knows of my fascination with contraband control. I have often said to her that much of corrections is made safer through simple observations about illicit items and their removal. In its basic state, contraband control is a low tech, highly effective way to maintain security inside the walls.

I took that question to my CJC 103 Criminology class. I offered the scenario that careless staff brought the containers within the secure perimeter. Prisoner porters brought them back to their unit and bartered them. What could be made with these containers? The outcomes I expected were:

1. as a hiding place for small items like a thumb drive;
2. as a melt-able material for a shank or a handle;
3. as a squirt gun – with pressure exerted by the hand on the outside and water or any fluid on the inside, and a small hole, this could be a weapon to shoot a stream of liquid in the eyes.

Here were some of the answers the generally novice group of students offered:

1. as a place to hold smokes or drugs
2. as a palm-sized way to exchange small items
3. as a container to hold feces/urine concoction to assault or “dress-out” others
4. as a tiny place to hold alcohol while fermenting
5. to use as a condom (probably unlikely, but creative, never-the-less)

Often a fresh look at a situation brings new ideas. While number five of the student’s list above is unlikely, it still warrants consideration. That may put others on a path of thinking that can enhance safety. In any event, novelty containers are an interesting wrinkle in the fabric of contraband.

## Ya sick sonovagun!

I told students in my Tuesday night CJC 101 Introduction to Corrections class to try to think of the most shocking punishments possible. As you will see, the following was not just an exercise in sinister thoughts. This was for a prelude to the “History of Punishment” lecture. I intended to demonstrate that punishment methods are relative, not absolute.

With that premise in mind and a method to my madness, I led the students in the following manner.

1. Split class into groups
2. Appoint leader for each
3. Have leader appoint a scribe
4. Direct leader to appoint a spokesperson
5. Tell a tale – Murders have been committed.

*A 25-year-old man and woman of the same age were on a date at a beautiful but remote National Park. They were abducted and later chained in a garage in an equally remote location. Because they could not provide an instant ransom, they were suffocated slowly in the closed garage while a car was running. The CO<sub>2</sub> got to them. Of special note, the man had a small ring and was going to propose marriage. The woman, too, had a surprise. She was going to tell her boyfriend that their wishes had come true. She was pregnant.*

6. Give background for the society in which the murders took place



*You are the judge in a post-apocalyptic, underpopulated world. New births are sacred, and murder is more than immoral in our current sense.*

*Murder eats away at human lives – a rare commodity in the scenario society. Traditional punishment conventions are off the table. It is your job to find a fitting punishment for this crime. How do you deter future criminals from committing such heinous crimes as described above? How do you appease the howling public, who in this scenario are quick to kill a judge who is too soft on crime?*

7. Think with a vengeful, twisted mind. List five fitting punishments for this scenario.
8. Compare all groups' punishments to those of today in the United States.

The suggestions that the groups contrived were creative and even a bit scary. Still, they followed directions and learned that harsh societies may develop harsh punishments. For the record, I credit them for their imagination and truly do not think them sick sonsovaguns. Thanks, CJC 101 students for test-driving this icebreaker.



## Would you rather part II

On October 1, 2014, I gave my CJC 110 Criminal Justice class the assignment to create a “would you rather?” statement. This is a set of two things that are both unpleasant, but the person must choose one.

Would you rather \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?

This what I offered as an example.

Would you rather fight a horse sized pug or ten pug sized horses? The students saw this as a parallel to the question *Would you rather face a large, formidable problem or many small problems?*

Here are a few more:

Another is: Would you rather listen to a drunk Donald Trump for two hours or go car shopping with Hillary Clinton?

Or

Would you rather take Sasquatch out for dinner or go to the movies with Chewbacca?

That was such a fun exercise that I ran it again on 1/13/2016 for my CJC 104 Client Relations class.

I told them, “Now it is your turn. Come up with three would you rather statements” Here is what they came up with.

1. Deal with 10 rowdy inmates or one ringleader?
2. Be an inmate or an officer?

3. Serve time in general population or isolation?
4. Be in charge of level I or level V prisoners?
5. Work night shift or day shift?
6. As an inmate, would you rather stick to yourself or be in a clique?
7. Be stuck inside during a riot with the possibility of talking the perpetrators out of it or be stuck outside with no control over the situation?
8. Be dressed out or face a prisoner with a weapon?
9. Eat food in general population chow hall or alone in your cell?
10. Work in a male prison or a female prison?
11. Become corrupt officer in order to maintain peace or stick to your guns but have an entire cell block against you?

Now, trainers and instructors, ask yourself this:

Would you rather use the questions above or formulate your own in class with the help of the students?



## Of creeps and jerks

Do we treat different types of offenders in different ways? Are all prisoners created the same? In the face of differences, how do we remain professional and consistent at the same time? Perhaps it is best to consider what sorts of behaviors are exhibited by offenders.

Little words can mean a lot. Pejorative words, even if they are mild, tend to have hidden connotations. The following question illustrates this: *Would you rather be called a creep or a jerk?* Let us assess this through the eyes of college students in criminal justice classes.

Here is a quick survey that will certainly stimulate discussion. This is a sure-fire icebreaker that needs no materials and is likely to inspire students to tell stories from their own experiences.

1. What do you think of when you hear creep?
2. What do you think of when you hear jerk?
3. What behaviors are common to a creep?
4. What behaviors are common to a jerk?
5. How do you deal with a creepy prisoner?
6. How do you deal with a prisoner who is a jerk?

The following is a compilation of student's opinions from two criminal justice classes. Of twenty-six college students surveyed, twenty-five said that the label jerk was preferable over creep. The one dissenting student says that he does not care what others think of him and accepts that he is creepy. So, almost everyone surveyed preferred not to be considered a creep.

What about application of the words to both males and females? Everyone seemed to agree in this informal survey that jerk (or its seven letter near-synonym that begins with the letter A) can apply to

all humanity. The word creep, however, was not easily applied to both genders. Most said that females cannot be creeps. One student offered that women would rather be called a jerk than crazy. Whether one agrees or not, this is an interesting concept and it generated some heated discussion.

Let us look at the rest of the survey and the students' answers:

**1. What do you think of when you hear creep?**

Weirdo, someone I would not around my kids, pervert, moral degenerate, stalker, sicko.

**2. What do you think of when you hear jerk?**

Someone who angered someone on purpose, audacious, not afraid of anything, maybe having a bad day.

**3. What behaviors are common to a creep?**

Stalking, voyeur, sneaky, obsessed, bad intent, dirty looking, greasy, could have mental health problems, opportunistic, watching and following people closely.

4. **What behaviors are common to a jerk?**

Rudeness, meanness, use of profanity, messing with people's minds, crabby, cruel for no reason, push people around, says hurtful things on purpose.

5. **How do you deal with a creepy prisoner?**

Talk to them, call them out on their behavior, ignore, know yourself, use firm, fair and consistent behavior, and reassign their cell as necessary.

6. **How do you deal with a prisoner who is a jerk?**

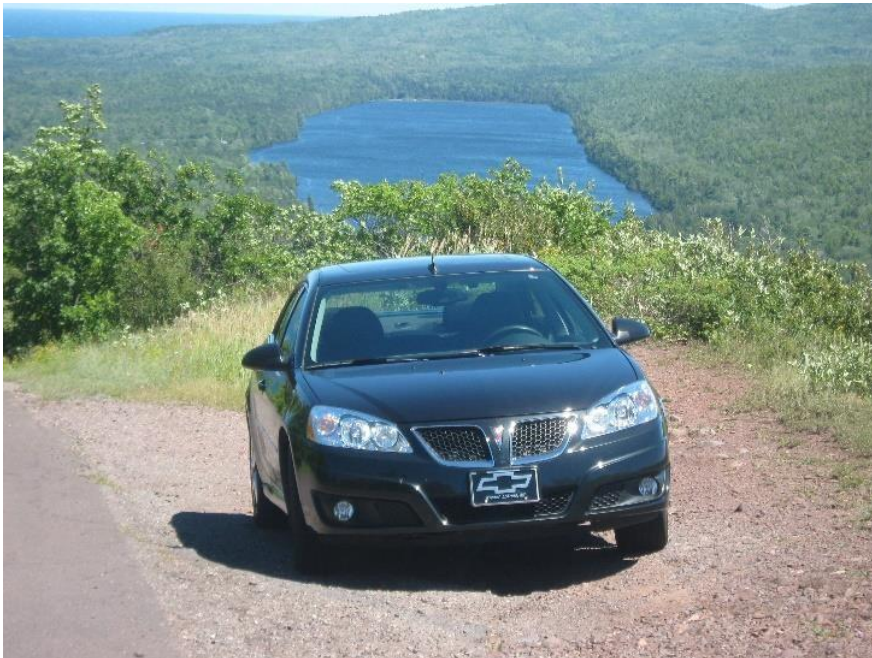
Be professionally pleasant to them, kill them with kindness, you don't deal with them, consider the prisoner as a manipulator, so just say no thanks and walk away, calmly and strongly, firm fair and consistent, be a jerk back.

Please note that the above answers came from students who did not have agency training on dealing with difficult people. Still, the answers are interesting.

In the end, when dealing with prisoners, the advice firm, fair and consistent is ideal. Of course, even though it is professional to treat all offenders the same, prisoners that display creepy behavior tend to evoke stricter discipline. During your professional duties, it is best to assess what sort of prisoner you are dealing with and the best way to gain compliance. All of this points to the goal of protecting staff, offenders, and the public.

## Why we secure our vehicles

Corrections professionals sometimes forget that others do not think in terms of security. Once one realizes this, it is usually fun to test safety principles on pre-professionals. *Why we secure our vehicles* is a great way to do this.



1. Break class into teams
2. One person in team will volunteer to unlock her/his car
3. One person will act as the recorder and write down what is reported in 4.
4. Remaining team members will search car (with owner's permission) and report any non-factory items in vehicle
5. Facilitator asks each group to share list of items verbally
6. Facilitator asks which item is most dangerous to the general public

7. Facilitator explains the “chain of 7 IF’s” Imagine this:

If the items are in a car and

If the car is unlocked and

If a prisoner in a minimum-security facility leaves the institution and

If the prisoner reaches the car undetected and

If prisoner takes item and

If prisoner returns inside undetected

If the prisoner uses the items as contraband.

8. Facilitators show a list of facility prohibited items.

9. Facilitator asks these questions:

1. Are there enough safeguards to not lock our cars in prison parking lots?

2. How can the presence of these items hurt the operations of a facility?

One day while on lunch break at work, I took inventory of the non-factory items in my truck. These are the items that I had in my vehicle when I first conducted this exercise.

1. School books

2. Lunch



3. Plastic ice cube
4. Camera
5. 60 dollars
6. Coffee in a steel mug
7. Big foot costume (to loan to someone at school after work)
8. GPS
9. 2 six-foot-tall hiking sticks
10. Jack and crow bar-nut driver
11. One pair of snow shoes
12. 2 snow shoe poles made of aluminum
13. Cardboard cutout of bigfoot – 7.5 feet tall unfolded (for a charity event)
14. Chewing gum
15. Cell phone
16. Cd and case
17. Detachable car stereo
18. book bag
19. name tag
20. wallet w/ credit cards



Remind the students of the chain of 7 Ifs:

If the items are in a car and

If the car is unlocked and

If a prisoner in a level one leaves prison and

If the prisoner reaches the car undetected and

If prisoner takes item and

If prisoner returns inside undetected

If the prisoner uses the items as contraband.

These are all unlikely, but possible. In corrections we must consider these things. The safety of staff, prisoners and the public depend on this sort of thinking.

## Investigating the great electronic navigation conspiracy

Some things are clear:

The sun will always rise in the East

Tax time will always arrive sooner than one thinks

You will have 200 plus channels and there will be absolutely nothing on TV.



Not everything, however, is clear or guaranteed. In corrections, evidence is important. However, one has to theorize at times. In addition, there will likely finger pointing when the blame is not clear.

Facilitator will tell the tale of how a person who was given a 6-month trial basis of a commercial navigation system for his vehicle and experienced a terrible product.

Facts:

- Consumer in question purchased a new vehicle
- 6 months free electronic navigation system included
- At 3 months XM and Wi-Fi features expired
- At 1 month or so of ownership, consumer noticed spotty reception of navigation
- At 3 months, navigation feature SEEMED less reliable
- At 3.5 months, consumer contacted navigation service and the automobile dealership
- It is currently 3.5 months since the new vehicle was acquired

Break students into groups to answer the following questions:

Who is at fault?

What should the consumer do?

What sort of information do we need to make valid assumptions?

Like kids caught in a corn maze, often we are mired in the details. Still, sometimes we need the whole story, complete with all theories in order to navigate our way to the truth.

## Yes, you CAN icebreaker

Sometimes opportunity knocks with a quiet persistence. Once you answer, you realize that it is with no regrets.

You see, this was a request from a quiet, but not totally silent student. When he spoke in class, it was always a good insight. He was a man of few words, but they were worth the wait. This student was Bradley Brandenburg.

He asked to speak with me away from the other students. When we were alone, he showed me what appeared to be an ordinary can of pop, or soda can, if you prefer.

Smoothly, he unscrewed the can top, revealing a faux can – a contraband vessel. He explained that someone at his workplace showed this to him.

I asked if we could use the can to test the search prowess of his fellow students. He agreed, stating that it was his hope that we could do so. He even volunteered to sweeten the pot with a dollar as a prize. Anyone who discovered the contraband can would win the one-spot portrait of our first president.

I instructed him to write “simulated contraband” on a small slip of paper, place it in the can, tighten the lid, and place it in front of him in the classroom. I did not need to tell him to employ a poker face: Before this, I had observed that he could effectively conceal his emotions.

He and I entered the class and I talked of a few other things first. Then, I held the legal tender aloft and told them that the prize for finding the contraband in this room is the dollar. I offered only a few guides:

1. The contraband was in the room.
2. I removed my coat and folder. I stated that the contraband would not be found there.
3. “Do not tear the place up!”, I said.
4. There will be no other hints. As in a correctional setting, an informant might say that there is a weapon or other contraband, but would say no more. Hints exist in different forms and levels. This happened to be a hint of the existence of contraband – nothing more.

I left the room and the students got busy. I gave the students about five minutes to search. After all, there were about ten of them and it was a small conference room. Some curious things happened:

1. Students performed a covert search. They blinded me to their progress by drawing the curtains. I could not see in the windows.
2. The door was locked. I could not get in. I actually ended the exercise by “threatening” to issue lower grades for non-compliance to my demand of an open door.
3. One student told me that one person tried to rally the troops and put together an organized search.

When I entered the room, I found that no one had found the contraband or discovered the real nature of the can. Recriminations flew back and forth. The class recounted the other students to whom I spoke earlier, not just the initial antagonist in this story. In addition, the student with whom I commute was labeled as a person of interest, someone who may have been part of hiding the contraband.

I concluded the exercise by stating, “It is the quiet ones you need to watch”. I thanked Mr. Brandenburg and displayed the can/vessel. He reclaimed the dollar and we deconstructed the exercise.

Weeks earlier, I had planted contraband in this class and initiated a search. Still, this was the first instance that it was initiated by a student. It truly demonstrated the dynamics of a search. More important, the questions that they posed prior to the search were very interesting and helpful.

In the end, contraband control is not always the successful act of finding the shank in the hollowed book and saving Western Civilization from perpetual darkness and chaos. Real corrections does not work that way. The successful completion of a search is not the norm. Contraband control is tedious and does not traditionally yield instant rewards.

However, students who think outside the box will be better able to detect contraband. The ultimate goal of this exercise is to get students in a frame of mind to walk around the problem and solve it. In the field, the ultimate end is to remove dangerous and saleable items from circulation in order to keep safe staff, prisoners and the public.



## TV Time

Many times, we tell our students, “Put your electronic devices away!” It is as though we are staff on commercial airline. Still, there are times where we learn from our electronic pals. For interest, fact checking is a breeze with smart phones and reputable websites.

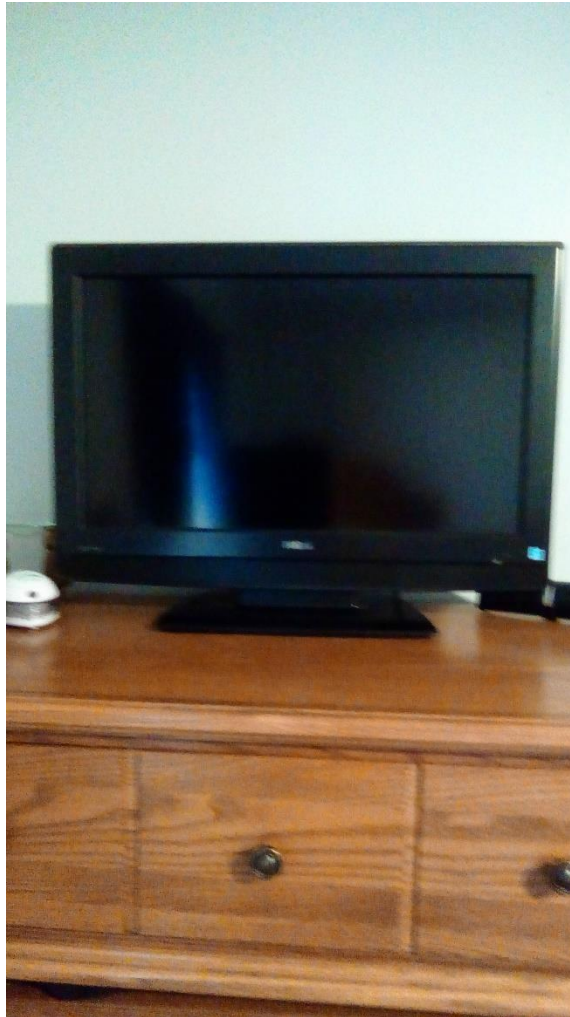
TV Time is a great way to use the wizardry of electronics and learn corrections lessons. The real prize in this is that students select their own topic.

1. Students will watch television, YouTube a movie or anything on a screen that pertains to corrections. It does not have to be an entire show. In fact, a two-minute snippet is best.
2. Student will prepare a coversheet with the following elements:
  - Student name and course
  - Date
  - Title of item watched
  - What it was watched on
  - Was it believable overall (according to their experience)
  - What parts seemed like corrections and what did not
3. Student turns this in to instructor and delivers a report orally.
4. Students may either show the clip or describe it.

Be prepared, instructors! You may get a 30-minute, comprehensive presentation with a lengthy deconstruction. You may get a five-minute cartoon that is not connected to corrections by any stretch of



the imagination and with no explanation for the student but a blank stare. Believe me, I have seen both. And in almost all cases, parts of the students' personalities show through.



TV Time is a great way for pre-professionals to give their opinion of corrections operations as portrayed in the media.

## ‘AGREE TO DISAGREE?’

This can be a tag-team exercise. One instructor can go over the concepts of the article “Contraband – art or science?” (Please see below) and talk both sides of the issue. For example: Can the intuition of an EMS and bartender and teacher be fairly balanced against the methods of science?

Another instructor or a volunteer from the classroom in the meantime will write on the board the following headings and get ready to tally:

ART

SCIENCE

UNSURE/BOTH

COMMENTS

The person tallying the vote will ask: “What do you think? Is finding contraband art or a science?” The other instructor will help to stimulate discussion.

Then, distribute the article.

### ***The contraband search: Art or Science?***

*Whenever a contraband item is removed from a corrections setting, security will be enhanced. This is true whether a weapon or a simple betting slip is taken out of circulation. Of course, the weapon is a more obvious threat than the betting slip. However, small things can be traced to larger, seriously dangerous enterprises. It remains that all contraband has the potential to present peril to staff and prisoners.*

*Without question, security is the paramount goal of corrections. This is true regardless of the size or location of the worksite. From the smallest local lockup in Alaska to the largest maximum-security facility in Florida, contraband's ubiquity remains a dangerous truth.*

*The primacy of security is reflected in so many agencies. One can execute a random search of mission statements in our profession and discover the presence of the words "safety" and "security". For example, one Midwestern corrections agency with which I am familiar lists its goal as an agent of safety for staff, offenders, and the public.*

*If someone were to ask a large number of staff how to best eliminate contraband, there would be a variety of answers. Tactics and styles are quite individual. However, from that broad store of suggestions, one could compose a fairly good check list. It is simply up to the discretion of each practitioner to adapt the list to their particular needs. It is a matter of pragmatism.*

*Then there arises a philosophical question. Is contraband control an art or a science? Let's see what one can learn for both extremes.*

*Contraband control is an art. Ask any health care professional, bartender, or corrections staff about intuition. A large number of each will readily acknowledge that they have experienced intuition. This can come in the form of an "X Factor", the feeling that something is not really as it should be. There are many in the corrections profession that seem to know that something significant will happen within the facility, even though there are no obvious indications. This sixth sense can also be applied to contraband finds. Intuitive staff seem to know exactly where to search and are often successful.*

*Contraband control artists are also adept at feeling the vibe of the institution and the inmate population. The hunches that they act on should not be dismissed.*

*Overlooked suggestions can lead to disenfranchisement of a valuable resource. Don't reject the intuitive.*

*Those who consider the approach of the contraband control artist as flawed tend to label intuition as pattern analysis, a keen sense of personal dynamics, astute observation, and solid corrections experience. Whatever the full truth, contraband control artists enhance safety for all, including the skeptical scientist.*

*Contraband control is a science. To the contraband control scientist, there is no such thing as luck. Agents of fortune do not exist in their world. Successful contraband control is predicated on a structured and thorough search.*

*At their purest, contraband control scientists are methodical practitioners who employ a process. Some of the stations on the contraband control process are shared observations, vigilance, the search (both covert and overt), and documentation. The successful contraband control scientist knows the lay of the land and is realistic about the elusive nature of the goal. They will continually (and methodically) tweak their system in order to uncover more bootleg.*

*The contraband control artist may consider the scientist as a cold technician who refuses to listen to the informed inner voice. Never the less, contraband found by the scientist is a safety win for all, including a dismissive artist.*

*So, who is more valuable? Is it the artist or the scientist? As with all apples and oranges questions, no single answer is right all of the time. Scientists are capable of failure and intuition will not always be on target.*

*Therefore, it is easy to conclude that both methods have their merits. It is more important to recognize the personality types and any feelings attached to the methods. These two search philosophies can coexist. Optimally, they should complement one another.*

*Sometimes, we are so fixed on the means that the ends are lost. The very worthy goal of security for all is more important than the tactics of the scientist or the intuition of the artist. Whatever the search philosophy, it is the public, offenders, and staff who ultimately benefit from the removal of contraband from our facilities.*



## Wax on, wax off...

**Thanks to students in the spring 2016 Gogebic Community College Client Relations class. Your hard work made this an instant classic!**

Is it manipulation, persuasion, or a tale of self-defense? Every time you walk into a facility, some lesson from the past may reemerge as a life-saving reminder. It is a fact: someone inside a facility will test one's meddle. "Wax on, wax off..." is a great way to review manipulation and persuasion. It is a great icebreaker to introduce this very important corrections topic.

To bring this home to students, we can look at a clip from a movie from the 1980's featuring actor Pat Morita. What does Pat Morita have to do with persuasion/manipulation? He was the mentor of an aspiring martial arts student (as portrayed by Ralph Machio) in the movie "The Karate Kid".

If you wipe away all of the '80's cheesiness (and for those of you who did not experience this, you have to believe the veracity of my tale – the 80's were cheesy), there is a lesson in how the teacher assigned menial tasks to the student. These later served as exercises in muscle memory and built a foundation for understanding the martial arts. In an iconic part of the movie (or, at least it is often quoted), Teacher Miyagi has the student polish old cars in a very deliberate motion. "Wax on, wax off", was the instruction.

For this exercise, the facilitator should find that clip on YouTube, but ask students about the movie prior to showing it. I test drove this exercise shortly before writing this and was very surprised at how

many students who were born after the movie debuted knew of the scene. Still, for those who had never seen it, the scene can be described, or it can be shown.

Then the facilitator launches into introductory comments about manipulation. This can be wrapped into a brainstorming exercise. After delivering the concept of wax on wax off and talking about manipulation, I split the class into three teams. I told them that they had to think in a persuasive manner. These were the instructions:

1. The instructor has no time to wash his vehicle and it is very dirty.
2. He wonders how he can convince a group of students that washing his car is a beneficial lesson for future students.
3. The instructor says, “Can you list three ways to convince the class next semester to wash my car and that it is part of a valuable corrections lesson?” I believe that the students in the current class working toward making future classes busy spurred the creativity.
4. Let the students brainstorm then present their ideas.
5. It will then be revealed that there will not necessarily be a car washing in next semester’s class. Still, this is a time to report to the class that they were used to come up with ideas. Then discuss if this was persuasion to brainstorm or manipulation to come up with parts of an icebreaker.



What ideas did students create to persuade the merits of washing the instructor's car? Here are some of the ideas gathered in the fledgling flight of *Wax on, wax off*:

- It will instill discipline that you will need in the future for corrections
- You can get on the instructor's 'good side'
- Doing a dirty job well the first time will help show your integrity
- This is actually a bribe for the professor for a better grade
- Conversely, if you do not wash his car, the semester will be 'hell'
- You will be exempt from taking the mid-term
- The professor will respect your hard work



- Pizza is a (possible) reward for your efforts
- Professor may allow class to leave early, allowing for you to enjoy your home, family, friends, etc.
- Getting outside during class time to enjoy fresh air and a little work can be invigorating
- There is satisfaction in the interaction of classmates while completing a tangible goal
- There is an opportunity for teambuilding. For example, how can we best wash the vehicle quickly and effectively?

I disclaim that no vehicle was washed in the making of this icebreaker. I wash my own vehicle and would never adjust a student's grade for washing my car. Some of the suggestions are on the wrong side of instruction. But all suggestions can later be discussed and run through an ethical filter. After all, corrections staff are tested by enterprising inmates and will face similar handling.

Ah, the genius of movies from the 1980's! Even the cheesy, yet irresistible montage song of *The Karate Kid* is eclipsed by the lasting wisdom of Mr. Miyagi. More importantly, ethics, persuasion and manipulation are topics that will always come up in corrections. It is of no consequence that a car wash will not be done by students. The discussion is the important thing.

And remember, *you're the best around...*

## Protecting Bouch

You are a student in a corrections community college class. Professor Bouchard (aka Bouch) seems long winded tonight and will go on for the full three hours, if he is not persuaded otherwise. You know how loquacious he is!

GOOD NEWS! There is a winter weather advisory in effect for your area and this may be advantageous to leaving early: Bouchard lives over 30 miles from the college. But you need to find the right words to say to make him stop lecturing. What persuasive phrases will you use to persuade Bouchard to dismiss class?



Will you be able to persuade Bouch to wind down the lecture? More importantly, will you be able to distinguish between help and self-serving suggestions when you are staff in corrections? Perhaps Protecting Bouch will serve as a means to do so.

## *Protecting Bouch Worksheet*

Team Name \_\_\_\_\_

Team Members:

1

2

3

4

5

6

Persuasive phrases

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

The group with the winning suggestion can leave 10 minutes early.

**Some answers suggested from the maiden voyage of “Protecting Bouch”:**

Extreme danger

Your specific vehicle is not rated to hold road well

We will give you candy

Dollar bribe

We will brush of your car and start it for you

I have to shovel Grandma’s walk or she may fall

I am a first responder and have to report

I have to plow out poor little old ladies

Dog ran away and might die in snow storm

I saw multiple people in the ditch on way here.

You only have 30 minutes to find your drive shaft (we removed)  
before sun goes down

Your wife just pulled your favorite meal out of the oven

Only have a 30 minutes recall

I have to snow blow my driveway

## **So, kid, what did you learn?**

Here is a simple exercise designed for criminal justice students for the end of a semester. Very little is needed for this.

1. Break class into three groups.
2. Give them ten minutes to write down at least five corrections lessons learned during the semester
3. Have each group report out. Here are some that came from the fledgling flight of this icebreaker:

Back against the wall mentality

Officers, not guards, do not degrade the profession

Look before you feel

Know your surroundings, plan ahead

Know where your back up is located

Listen and observe for more information

Do not use the names of others in stories in order to protect yourself and them

Do not be someone you are not in any circumstances

Work together well, be professional and respectful

Communicate

Don't underestimate people

Distress

Contraband is power and can destabilize operations.

4. Have class rank the top three
5. Distribute an open letter to corrections students

*Think back to your days as a “fish”*

*Although it was many years ago for me, I remember my first days in corrections with the same detail as though it were my latest meal. First impressions are lasting, after all.*

*Do you remember when you were a brand new employee or a “fish”? Can you recall the discomfort, trepidation, and uncertainty of your first days in the corrections profession? For most of us, it was like carrying the weight of the world. Despite initial training, careful contemplation, and help from colleagues, you felt like a stranger in a strange land.*

*Working in a prison is something one has to experience to fully appreciate. Certainly, training and research help new professionals adjust. But no amount of instruction, reading, and reflection can match the value of actual time on the job. I believe that I learned many valuable lessons in my first six months of employment. Here are a just few of them:*

***Every second can be a test.***

*Many offenders test us from all angles to see our vocational worth and general malleability. This can range from simple questions to subtle ruse to blatant confrontation.*

***All staff eyes are watching.***

*Veteran colleagues will scrutinize their new colleagues very closely. They simply need to test the mettle and reliability for the sake of overall safety.*

***There are so many policies to learn.***

*One cannot believe the voluminous literature that new staff have to become accustomed with in order to become effective at their job.*

***Keep things in perspective.***

*Initially, new staff may fail to keep things in perspective. They often become frozen in fear of litigation and physical attack. Typically, personal worries hinder the view of the greater, interconnected picture.*

***Balance is key.***

*Obsessive fear of failure can paralyze. Complacency can make one a target. Cool vigilance is the best moderation.*

***Things will improve if you keep working at it.***

*The stress and anxiety from each day may lead to a daily desire to quit the job. Many of us dreaded going into work each day when we are new. However, time and experience lessen the challenges.*

*Eventually, new staff discover that, as a staff member, they can exercise considerable control of their area and of their career. New staff can become the architects of their own vocational fate. They merely have to apply those lessons.*

*For example, I eventually realized that it is no big deal that I am tested from all sides. I simply had to pass the tests with the plain application of policy and procedure in a firm but fair manner. Also, moderation helped temper the fear and change it to respect for my environment. I learned to think ahead, yet not tire myself out on*

*contingency plans. With all of this, the stress declined. I actually grew to like my job very much.*

*We learned that those and other lessons are fundamental for success in corrections. I am certain that I am not the only one who has ever felt “the six-month jitters”. It is a common occurrence.*

### ***Motivation to stay***

*Pride, they say, goes before the fall. But balanced pride is often healthy. It is not over-weaned pride that keeps dedicated professionals in corrections. It is simply a matter of demonstrating to ourselves that we can adapt to the new paradigm in our vocational life. Often, many of our first motivations are internal.*

*Another motivating factor is the challenge of learning new things. Undeniably, working in a prison can be mentally stimulating, as it offers many new educational opportunities. The learning curve is very steep.*

*The custody and security aspect of the job sometimes prompts non-custody novices to continue. These new professionals can assist all areas of the facility by helping piece together the complex puzzle of contraband trade and prisoner dynamics. Prior to taking the job, many are unaware that they have to satisfy a need solve mysteries. Working in corrections continues to scratch that itch.*

*Before the new fish knows it, things just get easier. Small successes breed confidence. By the end of the first year on the job, most will start evolving from a fish to a correction professional. An important*



*factor for this change is that the new staff became very interested in the job.*

*It is crucial that seasoned staff help new staff in their first days. In effect, that is a pay back to those who helped the current veterans find their way in what is, after all, a very distinctive and important sort of vocation. And it is simply a measure of increased safety.*



## Shopping cart icebreaker

Choices...

Responsibilities...

Principles...

These are single words with deep meanings. Yet these can be explored with a single image. Read the following story to class and ask the questions afterwards. This should generate some discussion about duties and inattention to obligations.

*“I was at the grocery store the other day. I unloaded five bags from the cart. I needed to return the cart.*

*The cart did not have to go in the store. In the middle of the parking lot is a cart caddy – a long metal cage with one open end. This is where people deposit their carts once they have removed the groceries that they purchased.*



*As I approached the cart holding area, I noticed a cart that was near, but not in the holding area. I placed my cart inside and thought that the person who did not replace the other cart was lazy. Perhaps there was more to the story. Then I thought of the choices that I had. I did not have to do anything with the cart. I could have returned it inside or left it in the middle of the exit to the street.”*

Now, we are left with these questions:

1. What would you have done with the cart you used?
2. What could you have done with the cart near, but not in the holding area?
3. Would you have verbally reprimanded the person of you witnessed them not replacing the cart?

Let's apply this to corrections. What if you were working in a jail or prison and someone left their office door open:

1. Do you secure it?
2. Do you call central control?
3. Do you ignore it?
4. Do you contact the person who is normally in the office?
5. Do you search the area for foul play?

How about if a critical tool were involved? What if a colleague left keys on the desk of an open office?

1. Do you secure the keys?
2. Do you call central control?

3. Do you ignore it?
4. Do you contact the person who is normally in the office?
5. Do you search the area for foul play?

Not all decisions are easy and ordinary. Some have deeper implications if not done. Some things that we should not have to do because others were lazy or negligent need to be taken care of in the name of security.

It is important that corrections staff understand choices, responsibilities and principles. Not everyone defines these the same way. How we execute tasks which are not clearly designated can impact operations.



## The number 23 and other paranoia

Do things happen a certain way or are there forces out there pushing us to do their bidding? Are we living life with no guide or is an invisible hand pulling our marionette strings?

Every veteran corrections professional knows that there are different personalities with which we deal on a daily basis. One of these personalities is the paranoid type. And this type can cause many problems inside. Paranoid people can write unwarranted complaints, become extremely defensive, and make preemptive strikes on events he or she perceives will transpire.

“23”

Because of this, it behooves us to look at the concept of paranoia. Let us assess this through a simple economic exercise.

Deliver these two facts to the class:

- 1. At the time of writing, 81 laundry detergent pods in plastic container cost \$ 17.97
- 2. 35 laundry detergent pods in replacement bag cost @ 8.95

Ask the class the following questions:

1. Is manufacturer trying to get more money from what appears to be a sensible replacement scheme?
2. Is someone just addressing a market niche that knows that both versions will sell according to the demand from consumers?
3. Are you paying for convenience?
4. Is this line of questions normal or paranoid?
5. Do you know someone who would believe this is a conspiracy?

The veteran corrections staff also know that some prisoners are attracted to numerology. To strict adherents, numbers mean something deeper than representing an amount. Do these three unrelated facts mean anything?

3 facts:

1. My Great grandfather owned a trunk. I now own this trunk. This trunk has a date stamp on it of October 23, 1877
2. My Great grandfather, the same person who brought the trunk to the United States, applied for his homestead in Wisconsin on October 23, 1895
3. My wife and I married on October 23.



What could this mean?

Is the number 23 important in my life?

Are there such things as lucky numbers?

Is this as creepy as the Jim Carrey movie *The Number 23*?

Have students list paranoid preoccupations. Here are a few:

- Inoculations are really government tracking devices
- Compulsions on checking doors repeatedly
- Natural Resources Department drop lady bugs to harass people
- Government puts water in plastic bottles to get cancer so big drug companies can make money

This is a list of paranoid theories that students produced in September of 2015:

1. Bush was behind 9/11
2. The moon landing was fake
3. JFK was assassinated with a second sniper
4. Coke classic is not the same as the old original formula
5. Area 51 exists
6. Aliens with anal probes also exist
7. Illuminati
8. Bill Clinton is a murderer
9. Tupac is alive, as well as Hitler and FDR
10. Government is tracking us
11. Mayan calendar predicts our future

Ask students if they actually know anyone like this.

Ask class how staff can deal with paranoia in order to keep order.





## Enjoy the apocalypse!

There is no doubt that what we want and what we need are two different things. Circumstances will dictate our comfort. For example, you may want a large and new SUV, but financial considerations may be such that you actually own an older truck. You may want something but make do with something else.

Think of extreme circumstances. If the world fell into chaos, we would likely have less than we do now. In worst case scenarios, the survivors are those who will have to do without.

Grim stuff, certainly. But isn't this an interesting way to talk about survival, prison operations and behavior? And *Enjoy the Apocalypse* is a way to do this.

1. Ask the class if they ever considered the many ways the world could end
2. Solicit examples
3. Write these on a white board or projected list.
4. List what skills would be needed to cope, survive
5. Compare to how prisoners have to cope and survive in a world where they are deprived (by law and/or circumstances) of certain things.
6. Ask the class what necessities the prisoner body must have in order to maintain an acceptable existence
7. Distribute "Enjoy the apocalypse" article

*Potent plagues, widening war, rampaging nature, marauding meteors, alien attacks - And you thought that corrections had enough to contend with.*

*Despite our many challenges, we must acknowledge that we do not operate in a vacuum. Events from the outside will impact our operations, even if they never come to pass. Forecasts of the end of the world seem to prove this point.*

*Many of us are preoccupied with the apocalypse. Yet, the end of the world never seems to come. The year 1,000 featured widespread fear of the end. There are other notable examples of 'the wrong date.' In the 19th century religious leaders in America forecasted doom; May 1986, and November 1999, according to some Nostradamus scholars, and Y2K, to name a few end dates. And remember that Mayan calendars suggested that 2012 marked the end.*

*Is the future of the apocalypse empty? February 13, 2029, and April 13, 2036, mark two separate dates that the asteroid Apophis (a 25-million-ton space rock) will rendezvous with earth.*

*The grim speculation can be entertaining, in a macabre way. But, what does it have to do with corrections? When we look at the psychology of the end of things, we can apply many lessons to our vocation.*

*Very few of us (staff and offenders, alike) are totally immune from considering the end of the world. It is very common to*

*think in those terms. And just because you don't believe that it will come to pass, it doesn't mean that others believe any less. For some, their beliefs may be extremely strong.*

*Perceptions of the Apocalypse are varied. An influential staff person or prisoner may engage in certain behaviors to take advantage of the chaos found in the fear. Their actions, especially if they are regarded as leaders, could impact the actions of others. After all, if a large group of people believe the end is near, the time to 'settle a score' may be imminent.*

*If you order someone to stop what you view as a pre-apocalyptic ritual, you may place others in danger. The ritualist may take offense (and unwanted action) if the order is not issued in a tactful, respectful manner.*

*Alarmists stir the pot. Some people simply will panic well in advance of a potential catastrophe. Doomsayers predict the worst-case scenario regardless of low likelihood of danger. Their very vocal concern could arouse terror among the inmate and staff populations.*

*Malevolent types may further provoke those who are alarmed. As a matter of principle, some will spread fear about a possible catastrophe even if they do not believe it will actually occur. Their specific tactics will vary. But the actions are based in a mean-spirited philosophy. The panic may be more widespread than that initiated by the alarmists.*

*New religions and groups may pop up. The possible end of civilization as we know it is not merely fodder for science fiction. Very real human emotions come into play.*

*We need only to reflect on events surrounding the Y2K scare and the circumstances surrounding the Hale-Bopp comet for examples of this. End-of-times groups could have a profound impact on corrections operations.*

*It is always wise to get an action plan in place. I concede that our daily professional obligations may not give us time to develop action plans for every doomsday scenario. Yet, even if future catastrophes are very unlikely to happen, it is still wise to have a general plan.*

*The beauty of crafting such a plan is that operational procedures can be derived from existing plans. One need not reinvent the wheel for each scenario. An occasional “What if...” session with key staff may provide ample ideas in case the unthinkable occurs.*

*It is not only a matter of preparation for the end of life as we know it. We absolutely have to be aware of how to act when some people proclaim the end of all things is nigh. In corrections, even in the face of calamity, vigilance and planning always win.*

*So, have a nice apocalypse.*

This may not be a cheerful icebreaker. It may even be unrealistic. But it is compelling. This is a short icebreaker, but it can yield big results.

## Contraband cards

What do Mother's Day, Christmas and birthdays have to do with prison? If you think of opportunities for prisoners to make illicit money, you are near the mark.

We can concede that those incarcerated want to send greeting cards home to loved ones. In many institutions, the Chaplain or other staff fill this need by obtaining greeting cards in bulk. Still, there is an opportunity for unofficial profit to be had in filling this demand.

And with that is consideration of the underground economy. Prisoners who have talents, goods, and services to barter can maneuver others into improving their lot. For staff, this is distressing, because the goal of keeping everyone safe is thwarted with contraband and unauthorized activities. And, believe it or not, selling prison-made cards is an unauthorized activity.



(Special thanks to student Kelly Ruonavaara for creating the cards)

To understand this better, the facilitator can ask a series of questions. They may also be presented as a worksheet to groups for discussion (See Contraband Cards worksheet at the end of this exercise). Below are questions with possible answers in bold print:

1. What material is needed for making a contraband card?

**Pens, markers, markers, manila folders, and paper. Artistic talent is also needed.**

2. Where can one obtain the materials?

**From inattentive staff in schools, the library and housing units. Some items can be purchased from the commissary. Items can also be traded.**

3. Can a good tattoo artist also be a good paper artist?

**Yes, without question.**

4. What do you think a quality card could be traded for?

**The sky is the limit. It is interesting to hear what students say for this question.**

5. Do you believe the price for the card will rise in a prison setting as the occasion to be celebrated approaches?

**Yes. That is a constant in economic law.**

6. Are some prisoners willing to risk sanctions of theft and contraband charges in order to sell cards they made?

**Many will risk sanctions to make a profit.**

7. How important to prisoners is connection to family matters?

**It is very important to many prisoners. That is why this unofficial activity is lucrative to good artists.**

8. Is there an official way for prisoners to contact family on special occasions?

**Yes. Cards can be obtained from staff who obtained them in bulk for free. Also, the prisoner may make his or her own card from legitimate stock without the paid assistance of another prisoner.**

Even with the advent of technology, greeting cards are still a big part of our lives. Granted, this has diminished due to texting, Facebook, and e-cards. Still, there are segments of the population who buoy the greeting card industry. The time has not yet come for a total electronic-driven (though monitored) communication from prisoners to those on the outside. Until then, we can count on seeing prison-made greeting cards in circulation.



## Contraband Cards worksheet

1. What material is needed for making a contraband card?
2. Where can one obtain the materials?
3. Can a good tattoo artist also be a good paper artist?
4. What do you think a quality card could be traded for?
5. Do you believe the price for the card will rise in a prison setting as the occasion to be celebrated approaches?
6. Are some prisoners willing to risk sanctions of theft and contraband charges in order to sell cards they made?
7. How important to prisoners is connection to family manners?
8. Is there an official way for prisoners to contact family on special occasions?



## Why do you holler? It is only a dollar!

Are you teaching students of corrections on a budget? Do you wish to impart the safety lessons of the contraband search for under three dollars? If you answered 'yes' to these questions, *Why do you holler? It is only a dollar?* (A.k.a. *Hidden Partners*) is the icebreaker for you.



1. Before students arrive to class, the instructor will hide a single one dollar bill.
2. Instruct the first two students that arrive to hide a dollar each in the classroom.
3. Make certain that other students do not witness where they are hidden.
4. Have those two students serve as observers for #5.

5. When all students arrive and class begins, tell them of the money making opportunity. The person who finds a dollar can keep the dollar.
6. Students are asked if they want to search independently or in teams. If the latter, it is interesting to watch the dynamics while they decide to whom the recovered dollar will go.
7. Let the students know that if one person or team finds a dollar, they may also find the others.
8. The two students designated as observers chart the progress and tactics and dynamics of the search team.
9. The observers, with help from the instructor, deconstruct the exercise.

After the exercise ends, the instructor segues into a contraband control lecture. Such topics in question form are useful to introduce the topic:

- How much are things worth in a jail or prison setting?
- Where are things best hidden?
- What precautions against infection should corrections professionals take while searching?
- Where would you have hidden the dollars?

Contraband control is the foundation of safety in our correctional institutions. It behooves instructors to introduce these concepts to pre-professionals as early as possible. The safety benefits of finding bootleg and taking it out of the system are too important to ignore.



## Shopping for Joe

I have a distinct advantage at one college at which I work. Not too many colleges can claim this distinction. The campus is located in a once prosperous but now largely empty mall. The economic situation of the city is not the point. Rather, there are still some stores inside that can help me deliver valuable lessons on contraband control.

The close proximity of the classroom to a chain clothing store offers a perfect diversion. In fact, one does not have to walk outside to reach the store from the classroom.

Straight out of left field is one way that I prefer to start classroom exercises. That feeds into the notion that manipulation and other lessons in corrections do not come directly. Often, they are introduced with a diversion or a seemingly unrelated context.



This is where the clothing store near the classroom fits in. In *Shopping for Joe*, the instructor can state that he or she is giving a presentation out of state and that new clothes are necessary. The instructor may take one or two students to help choose an outfit.

(The instructor may or may not actually purchase the items. If so, it is a matter of trust that the students will choose something of the instructor's liking. If not, then some dress clothes from a discount store can be used as the props for the exercise.)

Once back with the clothes, show the class what was purchased.

1. Examine all areas of the collar, taking care to look at center
2. Look for smaller pockets within pockets
3. Check out the belt area
4. If a tie was purchased, look for hiding niches
5. Group dissection with topics such as:
  - a. Where could unscrupulous visitors hide things in a winter coat?
  - b. Have you ever seen a glove with a zippered pocket?
  - c. Are there inner pockets in the trousers?
  - d. What small items could be hidden in these clothes?
  - e. Do airport security (in your experience) check for these items?
6. Like many other icebreakers in this book, this exercise is a great segue into contraband control. In particular, the personal search fits well with this.

Every day, personal and professional visitors in our corrections facilities try to dupe staff. They do so by smuggling small items in their clothing. This vocational fact is not an indictment on the human race. Rather, it illustrates alternate places to look in order to keep our facilities safe for staff, prisoners and the public.



## Assessing your bovine-scatometers

“I read it online. It must be true!”

Yeah, sure it is! Perhaps you would be interested in buying a share in my unicorn farm. It is a unique investment opportunity and I can get you in on the ground floor.

As we all know, the internet is not uniformly checked for accuracy. There are .org’s, .edu’s and .com’s. Each have different standards. Therefore, when reading anything online, one’s bovine-scatometer (our mental fact checker) is even more necessary. One has to ask: If something is in a formal format, does it mean that it is true?

An easy way to fine-tune one’s assessment of the truth is to present something in a serious, straight-faced manner, even though the item presented is fallacious. For pre-professionals in corrections, this develops critical thinking skills.

To assess the bovine-scatometer, the instructor pulls a parody article (preferably about corrections) from a faux news website.

Alternatively, the instructor can devise one of her or his own. Here is an example.

## ***Canadian Prisons Serve only Orange Jell-O***

***By Jacques Merde, Canadian Press Reporter***

***The Quebec Prison Minister, Andre Le Monde, enacted a Director's Memorandum late Thursday decreeing that only orange Jell-O will be served when Jell-O is on the menu.***

***"Orange is not a common gang color. When we served in our facilities red or blue Jell-O, certain groups acted out according to their gang affiliation," Stated Le Monde.***

***"Furthermore, orange is a color that subliminally suggests that a person should eat more. That is why many dining rooms are painted in this color. We in Quebec want inmates to consume the policy driven calorie recommendations. Orange food helps in this. A well-fed inmate is a compliant inmate"***

***Corrections officials in neighboring Ontario see the logic in this and intend to follow suit. "The science of this make sense," Said Ontario Corrections Division Director Chet McKenzie. "This is a practical, cost-effective measure that can save lives."***

***At time of press, Alberta and British Columbia have launched committees of inquiry into these measures.***

1. It is best to present this faux news report with two other true reports. Do not give any hint that the article is fictitious.
2. Give the two real and one false article to students to read.
3. Ask what they think.
4. Ask anyone if there was something not right.

5. Once the ‘cat is out of the bag’, either by student discovery or instructor admission, look at what seemed real about the article and what is false.
6. If not pointed out by students, inform them of the believability of a lie told in an authoritative, formal manner.

The intention of the exercise is not to humiliate the student. Again, it is designed to hone the critical thinking skills so necessary in the corrections profession.

Bluffing is a way of life in poker games, in international politics, in sales, and in corrections. In all of these endeavors, some will forward their ideas in an authoritative manner. It does not necessarily matter if the speaker is completely wrong. The delivery is important.





## Best wishes

The Genie is out of the bottle. What would you ask for if you had one wish? This is a game that many of us play. Can this be applied to corrections and first day introductions?

This is a formula icebreaker. With these, three elements are the same for all icebreakers. It is the fourth element that differs.

The instructor states, “Since we will be spending sixteen weeks together, I thought it best to learn a bit about you.” Then the instructor introduces herself or himself by stating the four items below.

1. Name
2. Interest in class
3. Time in program
4. Your wish granted: What is it that you truly want?

In my case, it would be:

1. My name is Joe Bouchard
2. I am interested in this class because I teach it and it is a valuable part of your professional success.
3. I have been in corrections for 23 years and an instructor for 17 years.
4. My wish granted, I want a mansion in the mountains with a hot tub and a great view.

As you see, I do not ask for much.

Students one at a time answer these questions. Once they are done, to mix it up, the instructor will direct the student to “pick a victim”.

That forces the student to pass the buck to another. The randomness

of this keeps students on their toes, as they do not know who will be next.

As each student introduces their version of themselves and their wish granted, inside jokes can develop. Also, students will get to know one another, and camaraderie will likely develop.

This formula icebreaker can segue nicely into stories of manipulation. You can ask, how what you wish for can be used against you? This icebreaker also works well as a platform for a discussion on work persona and positive realism.

Sometimes the thing that saves one's sanity in a career in corrections is a positive attitude. Students cannot learn this lesson too early. In fact, this can be delivered on the first day of the first day of your first semester is corrections class.



## I heart you!!!

Valentine's Day comes and goes. But whether we are lonely hearts or in a relationship, all of us can enjoy the annual treat of candy hearts. These are sugary hearts with little messages imprinted upon them.



Also called conversation hearts, these candies are delicious icebreakers. Some of these start relationships and friendships. In short, they are a fun way to communicate.

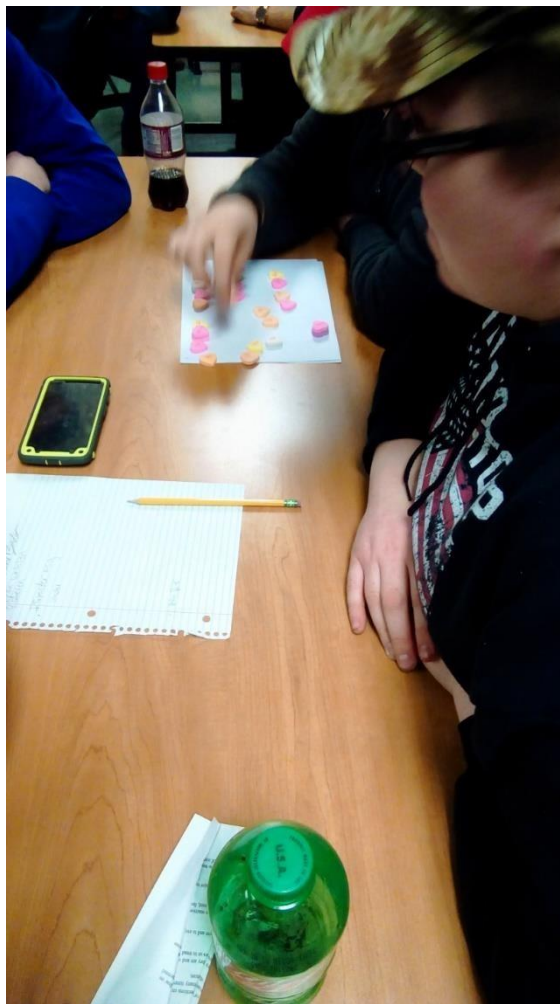
Can these be used by prisoners to communicate? Perhaps so. And even if this is not a practical way for incarcerated entrepreneurs to convey messages, it is a worthy way for students to contemplate coded messages.



This is how it works

1. Split into teams.
2. Distribute candy message hearts. Each team should get the same number of hearts.
3. Have each team spell out sinister messages found in a prison with only valentine hearts

4. If this is not possible, each team may alter one heart word with a pen
5. Each team may make up a code by substituting a message on one heart for one new meaning. For example, BE MINE can be designated to mean “you are my next victim”
6. Team with most sinister message wins.



This is a great segue into the many ways prisoners conceal messages with various codes. By the way: I heart you all!!!

## Pizza persuasion

Sometimes the cards are stacked against the instructor. Consider the following:

1. You conduct a class at the end of the day
2. It is three hours long
3. It sometimes contains dry material
4. The class starts during the dinner hour
5. The average adult mind has an attention span of only sixteen minutes (so I am told – you may verify with independent sources)

With these factors, how does one maintain interest and control? Perhaps a bribe will work.

One evening, I pondered this and introduced pizza, manipulation, justification, rationalization and other factors into the equation.

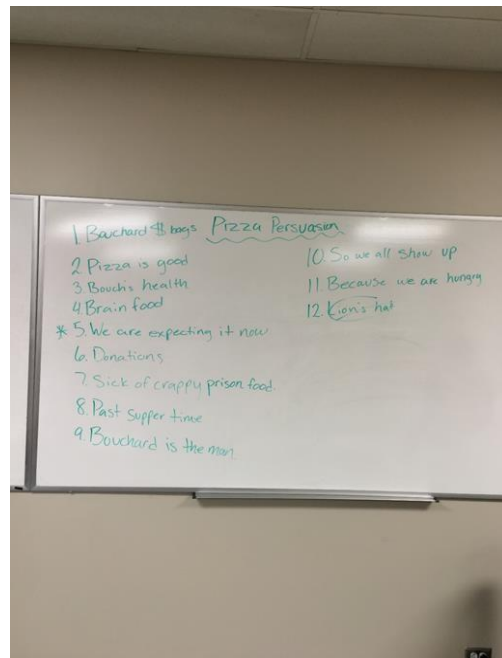
I told class that I would buy a pizza for the next week if they came up with compelling reasons for me to do so. “Persuade me!” is what I said. Here are some of the things that they suggested:

1. Bouchard is “Money bags”. He can afford it!
2. Pizza is good.
3. It is brain food and will help students study and learn the lesson.
4. It is supertime
5. Bouchard is “the man”!

6. So all of us will show up.
7. Because we are hungry.

And more!

Did the kids get pizza during the next class? Of course! How could I not deliver when they helped me build this icebreaker? Besides, there were so many compelling reasons. In any event, I wanted pizza!



Prisoners will use many tactics to manipulate staff. Among them are flattery, intimidation, and a sense of urgency. As students are introduced to these, they begin to recognize the ruses. Recognition of these will go a long way in preserving professionalism.

## **Please take me back!**

In corrections, there are two constants:

1. Trust, once broken, is hard to regain.
2. Manipulative people with a certain determination will utilize a large variety of tactics to get their way.

This also applies to life outside of the bars and in personal relationships in particular. Recently, I listened to the sad breakup story of a friend of mine and her boyfriend. She told me that her boyfriend cheated on her. Once she found out about it and confronted him, the treacherous one utilized a variety of ways to restart the relationship. (A big shout out to “Trottier” for the inspiration.)

In the phrases below, imagine our scenario of a caught cheater whose strategy is to get his former girlfriend to forgive his transgressions and get back together with him. What tactics does he use? How would one repel that tactic?

For example:

1. I miss you so much! My life is not the same without you!

What tactics does he use?

**Appeal to ego, romance card**

How would one repel that tactic?

**Bring up the past – recall record of treacherous behavior**

2. My mom said that she is going to block your number. She is hurt that you would quit going out with me.

What tactics does he use?



How would one repel that tactic?

3. Look at me. I am skin and bones. I lost thirty pounds since you left me!

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

4. You were texting other guys!

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

5. I did it because you spent so much time with your family. I never felt like I mattered in the relationship.

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

6. How come you always hang out with your friends and leave me at home. I got bored and made a big mistake.

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

7. I was kidding. I did not cheat. It just looked that way because I wanted to test your loyalty to this relationship.

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

8. I am going to kill myself if you don't take me back.

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

9. Constant crying and incomprehensible babbling...

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

10. If you ever loved me, you will take me back and forgive me.  
Just give me a chance.

What tactics does he use?

How would one repel that tactic?

*Ever distrustful are the treacherous*, as Gandalf remarked of his fallen colleague, the traitor Saruman. It is up to each person to consider a cheater or liar as a cornered rat or a poor repentant. In the spirit of not getting fooled again, we in corrections owe it to ourselves to identify and combat the many styles of manipulation. Those are skills that level the playing field and enhance safety.

## Not allowed per policy

Policies and procedures are in place in order to enhance safety for staff, offenders, and the public. Yet, as is common knowledge, many prisoners will have alternate uses for items to make their circumstances a little more comfortable.

For example, dental floss is not allowed in many segregation units. Yet, those who have it smuggled in can make an efficient ‘fish line’ and move items from other cells. Despite the rules against passing, many prisoners will risk punishment sanctions in order to receive illegal items from others on the wing. And forbidden dental floss makes this possible.

1. Break the class into groups of four or five
2. Present a list of things forbidden in segregation units. Obtain one online from the policy directives of any correctional agency. The list can include any of these twenty-five:
  - a. Belts
  - b. Hangers
  - c. Extension cords
  - d. Cups
  - e. Bowls
  - f. Pens over three inches long
  - g. Pencil sharpeners
  - h. Athletic supporters
  - i. Batteries
  - j. Pad locks
  - k. Paper bags
  - l. Dental floss
  - m. Squirt bottles
  - n. Tweezers
  - o. Typewriters

- p. Cassette tapes
  - q. Hard sole shoes
  - r. Thumb tacks
  - s. Sunglasses
  - t. Rubber bands
  - u. Band-Aids
  - v. Staples
  - w. Paper clips
  - x. Envelopes with metal clasps
  - y. Needles or pins
3. Have each group list why these items might be dangerous to staff and prisoners
  4. List top 3 dangerous items by group consensus
  5. List questionable items that are not forbidden, things that are not on the list but should be
  6. Have each group report their findings to the class
  7. Take the 'big three' from number 4 of this list and compare among groups
  8. Construct a class consensus on the three most dangerous items.

Everything has a use. Also, most things have many potential uses. This icebreaker and the twenty-four that accompany it in this book are designed to get students to think about the many dangers inherent in simple things. If we think about that, we can help keep our facilities safe for staff, offenders, and the general public.



ICEBREAKER 101 – HELLO, MY NAME IS PROBLEM

2017



## **“Go ahead! Make my sandwich!”**

*Note: This icebreaker was created for the Department of Corrections EPIC committee. This group not only solved problems, it was fun.*

An important part of this icebreaker is the concept of teamwork. Regarding teams, many will immediately concentrate on leadership. However, followership is infrequently assessed. Yet, considering this overlooked element of any team starts with assessing oneself.

I believe that knowing oneself is important in working well in a team. Those who do not recognize their strengths and weaknesses are less able to work optimally in a team setting. The components could bring down the whole if there is no self-familiarity.

Now ask yourself this: Is anyone hungry? Let’s talk about the universal topic – food.

Food is necessary. Food is love. Food is community. Food is the backdrop to conversation. Most of all, food is an identifiable element in all groups. Everyone can relate to food. Therefore, food is fodder for this exercise. Dare I say, this departure is food for thought.

This icebreaker’s purpose is to get people to personify a sandwich that they invent. Participants will use their own traits, good and bad, in the form of food to create this sandwich. This allows participants to look at how they may present themselves to others. This exercise works well just before lunch at a day-long meeting in anticipation of lunch.

I found it useful to solicit a volunteer for a judge. This person will grant the prize and/or bragging rights to the winning team.

The facilitator announces that participants have five minutes to come up with the following: Describe what a sandwich that bears your name would contain and why it fits your personality or your group’s personality.

Note: When creating your signature sandwich, the sandwich does not necessarily have to be delicious or even palatable. It simply must be a representation of the creators.

For me I would answer:

The Joe Bouchard sandwich, a.k.a. the ‘Problem Child’ would feature:

- Whole wheat bread lightly toasted (a classic, hearty foundation);
- Canadian bacon (a nod towards my heritage and perhaps my hammy presentation style);
- Brie cheese in moderation (a little salty, somewhat cheesy, but not too much);
- Thousand Island dressing on the side (as to some my alleged sense of humor could be described as a little dry);
- Sprinkle with a few chocolate-covered coffee beans (a caffeinated jolt with a bit of sweetness to drive it and to include an out-of-left field element of surprise).

This is an odd but non-offensive sandwich that you will remember.

The class is broken up into teams to design a signature sandwich that is just right for their team members. If there is one particularly strong personality, the team sandwich can be built on that individual’s qualities. When five minutes of brainstorming has passed, the facilitator asks for a volunteer to describe their creation with justification of the ingredients tied to the attributes of team members. The volunteer delivers the information then is told to select the next “volunteer” to reveal their signature sandwich. Repeat until lunch comes or everyone is rendered immobile and crabby due to hunger. At this time, the judge can render her or his decision.

Consider the beauty of the sandwich. The importance of the combination cannot be overstated. Alone, each part of a sandwich is all but ordinary. Its combined components can be a meal as well as a tasty statement.

\*\*\*\*\*

Postscript:

On 11/22/2016, I conducted this icebreaker for the first time in Mount Pleasant, Michigan at an EPIC meeting for the Michigan Department of Corrections. It was an excellent fledgling flight and I anticipate running this icebreaker for many years. Below you will find photos of this event and the three finished concept sandwiches. These entries were sent to a local sandwich shop for possible inclusion in their menu. Bon appetite, my friends!

And from left to right our two hosts and **THE JUDGE** (Kathy, Duncan and Robert). I note without reservation but with bona fide respect that our JUDGE is a veritable tower of integrity, channeling the judicial talents of King Solomon, and Judges Judy and Ito.





And now the three sandwich making teams...

The “All Inclusive” team is comprised of Wil, Pam, Brad, Brenda and Deb.



- Everything bagel (This is an all-inclusive bagel – it includes everything)
- Peanut butter (brings everything together – sticking together)
- Peach habaneros (Exciting, unique, sassy, never boring).

The “Fire Starter” team is comprised of Shane, Bob, Chris and Matt.



Team member Bob inspired the “Below Zero”

- Focaccia (Strong base – Heavy, sturdy, great foundation for a strong sandwich)
- Roast beef, corned beef, bacon (Be it hot, cold or almost frozen, you can always get it to provide energy for all)
- Sauerkraut (Adds a lively spirit to the sandwich)
- Red hot cherry peppers (It starts to build your fire)
- Spicy cream cheese /pepper cheese (Keeps the fire going on cold days and nights)
- Provolone (Not too sharp, sturdy texture, levels out the flames).

The “Melting Pot” team is comprised of Quenton, Peter, Lorenzo, Stephanie, and Dianne.



- Marbled rye (marks the diversity of the group)
- Applewood smoked bacon (good bacon takes time and this group takes time to get things right)
- Turkey burger (an interesting alternative)
- Pepper jack cheese (for spice in life, zip, pizzazz)
- Garlic infused Aioli (Classy while outside the box)
- This goes well with Dr. Pepper.

And the winner is...Team Melting Pot

Thanks to all of those from the 2016/2017 MDOC EPIC team. May all your sandwich making endeavors be rewarding and delicious!

## **But I need that phone!**

Instructors today face an attention-grabbing peril. In earlier years, it really did not exist. Yet, as time marches forward and technology inexorably pushes on, this compelling force saps students' focus from the front of the room.

No matter how interesting the instructor or subject matter may be, students are invariably dragged to this hand-held window to the world. It is the cell phone and its handiness and ubiquity make it a challenge to all instructors.



I am not calling for a total moratorium on cell phone usage in class. There are times such as emergencies that warrant their use. In addition, while lecturing and if challenged by a student on particulars or opinions, I will on occasion allow the use of a smart phone to fact-check. Of course, the student must cite the source.

Otherwise, *bye-bye, phones* while I am teaching.

DO NOT USE YOUR PHONES DURING CLASS is the new mantra. Rather than softly implore students to “please put away the cell phones”, I take this more direct approach. And, at the risk of sounding unapproachable, dictatorial or downright unfriendly, I wrap it in the form of an icebreaker. It is a four-part formula icebreaker, perfect for the first day of class.

It goes like this:

1. The instructor writes the following on the board:
  - a. Name,
  - b. Time at college/corrections agency,
  - c. Goal for this class,
  - d. and your excuse why you need your cellphone in class
2. I would go first:
  - a. Hi, my name is Joe Bouchard
  - b. I have been at this college for 17 years and 23 years with the Department of Corrections
  - c. My goal is to teach you fundamentals of corrections in an interesting manner
  - d. I need my phone in class so I can check AccuWeather to prepare for the ride home
3. Each student does the same thing in turn.
4. After the first volunteer delivers the four introductory points, encourage that student to pick a “volunteer” to do the same.

5. Compile a list as students give information. Keep the reasons they want to use a cell phone in class in different columns. Some may be in the serious column – I am awaiting news of my Dad’s status in the hospital. Or, the answer could be less-than-serious. – I am in the middle of a snap chat streak that I cannot break.

This lets students know each other better and the instructor can take the pulse of the class, looking for introverts and extroverts.

In the unlikely event that you try this and all refuse to answer question 4, here are a few possible answers (serious and not so serious)

- My friend is going through a horrible breakup
- I have to pick up my uncle from the airport and need to wait for a call
- I am a volunteer fire fighter
- I might have a work emergency
- I like Facebook – I am an addict!
- There is a baby on the way in my family and I must monitor the phone for information
- I can play candy crush *and* listen to you. It is called multitasking.

For corrections and criminal justice classes, this is a nice segue into the dangers of powerful smart phones in the hands of offenders. This can also be used to start sessions on persuasion or manipulation.

Label me as unswerving, if you will. I simply will not try to compete with phones and I shut them down. Still, I look forward to the creativity that some will employ to keep their cell phone on their desk.

## Take Note: I Love You to Pieces

What does the note say?

Is it a love note?

Does it have escape plans?

Is it written in code?

Information is power. And contraband can come in the form of what seems to be a simple note passed from one prisoner to the next. However, the note that you intercept may be a matter of life or death.

Prisoners know that information is power, too. In fact, the task of relaying written information to other prisoners under the collective nose of staff is not easy. That is why offenders utilize codes, misdirection and camouflage. Whatever their motivation to relay information, it is likely that the more important the message, the more likely it will be hidden.

In Take Note: I Love You to Pieces, the facilitator follows these steps:

1. Read the following scenario – As an officer in the education building, you see a prisoner who leaves the classroom and goes to the restroom. The next prisoner to use the bathroom is from the library. Then the same prisoner from the classroom appears again in the restroom. You know that these prisoners are from different units and are unlikely to intermingle otherwise. You believe that the bathroom is a drop and pass location. When the restroom is empty, you don a pair of gloves and commence a search.

2. The instructor had created a note prior to the exercise and ripped it up into a dozen pieces or so. See below for sample notes.
3. Instruct one gloved student to retrieve the fragments of a note (or notes) in the waste paper basket in the classroom.
4. The instructor selects a team of three and give that team a roll of clear tape.
5. The instructor says, "Put together that puzzle and send it to the inspector."
6. The instructor appoints an inspector. The inspector judges the merit of the information delivered.

Some sample letters to print:

Sample 1 –

*Dear Sherlock:*

*Elusive! Sometimes you look for something and it is not there. Just because a note is torn up and is placed in a trash receptacle does not mean that there is anything of consequence on the note. It could be a ruse. It could be a test. It could be a note written out of boredom.*

*While you are wasting valuable staff time and frustrating yourself reconstructing this, another message, this time an important one, is being passed to another's hands. The crucial message that spells chaos for staff is now in the hands of a mover and shaker who will get the nefarious deed done.*

*So, Colombo, finish your puzzle and pat yourself on the back for finding nothing. (Where's your crown, King Nothing?) You can look everywhere at once, but you will not see everything well. It is like you went duck hunting and shot the decoy.*



*Subterfuge! Misdirection! Made you look! Must a note always contain a crucial piece of information?*

*Love and kisses! Your nemesis, Chaos*

Sample 2-

*Congratulations!*

*You discovered information that prisoners did not want you to find. You went the extra mile and with gloved hands pulled out this note. Sure, it was in the bathroom trash. Certainly, no one knows what sort of infection it may harbor. Yet, you diligently reconstructed this missive with tape, patience, and logic. The bad deed that was intended can now be thwarted. Because of this, staff, prisoners, and the public will be safer.*

Instructors may use some advanced tactics to make the letters more challenging to reconstruct or understand.

- Mix two letters in the same batch
- Use different font
- Use different ink colors
- Remove pieces
- Create notes that have code
- Make realistic prisoner-speak notes

After the Inspector looks at the reassembled letters and makes a determination, ask students how this should occur in a real corrections setting:

Here are some possibilities. See if your class comes up with these:

Show the letter to the inspector;

Show the letter to staff who may know different handwriting;

Record this with time, date, and prisoners;

Write a misconduct report if there is evidence;

Keep vigilant.

Bear in mind that you will not always find something significant. But when you do, it pays off.



## Irritants

I often find myself giving a certain guideline to students who are unsure of a topic on which to select for a speaking or writing assignment. “Pick something that you truly like or something that irritates you. In that way, you will be interested in the topic and deliver passionately,” I advise.

I facilitated a first day introductory icebreaker in formula form. There are three elements that are common in classroom introductions and one that is an odd or different sort of question. The formula looked like this (“From the exercise But I need that Phone”):

1. Name
2. Job
3. Reason for taking this class
4. Why do you need your smart phone in class?

That went well on its fledgling flight. I asked students what they might do differently. Student Amy Sundblad suggested that the fourth element could be “What irritates you?”

This was a beautiful idea. It was simple and to the point. After all, what easier way to get someone out of their shell than to get them talking about an issue that gets under the skin? I, for example, can talk volumes on how Dr. Phil McGraw irritates me. Granted, if he knew me, chances are that he might feel the same way about me. But that is not the subject.

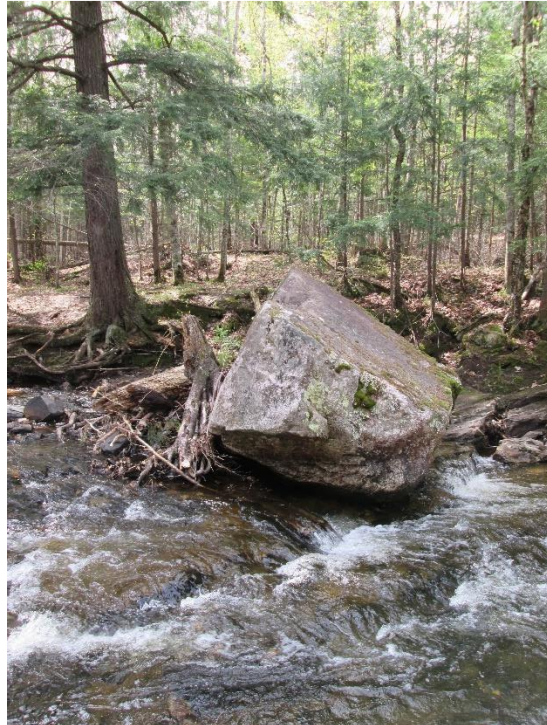
The next time that you might detect a little frost on a first night class, you could melt it away with the directed ire of those in class. Plus, it is a challenging way for instructors to re-channel students into lecture mode afterward.

So, thanks to Amy for thinking and creating on the spot. She even field tested this icebreaker almost as soon as she created the idea. It went well. If you try this icebreaker, please let me know of the results. I might just ask you in a Dr. Phil manner, “How is that workin’ out for you?”



## What should corrections students know before entering the profession?

Corrections staff are a special type. Like a resolute stone in the stream, they stand impervious to the constant pressures that try to erode the position of stability. This raises a question. How does one make a normal student into a rock?



Many corrections jurisdictions require that new employees obtain some college coursework prior to entering the field. In my agency, for example, fifteen college credits in corrections and criminal justice are required.

Some may wonder if this is necessary. If there is an academy, why should there be any college? I think that the broad background is a necessary part of the preparation that makes non-corrections people into effective staff. Without it, the new recruit has to start from square one. That is, everything one knows about

corrections is derived from the sometimes-misleading media. *Orange is the New Black* may be entertaining, but it isn't likely to be authentic for all work places.

In my opinion, the onus of education does not fall solely on the academy. I believe that those who teach these pre-professionals in colleges have a responsibility to deliver information to keep the students safe in their future. College courses in corrections and criminal justice will naturally cover history, current issues, larger systems, smaller components, and criminal justice theories.

Perhaps the most important element of this learning is the reality of working inside a correctional institution. I am not saying that only those who work inside can teach these classes. But those who do not have experience inside the walls should utilize guest speakers to bring practice in line with theory and text learning. Students should know the entire spectrum – from the horrible blasts of adrenaline to the long stretches of routine boredom.

At the end of the lectures, instructors (be they adjuncts or full professors) wonder what their students will take with them into the field. At the end of sixteen weeks, there should be a list of maxims that each student can use later.

During a recent semester, I field tested an icebreaker called, “So, what did you learn?” It is very simple and requires nothing but pen and paper. The three steps are:

1. Break class into smaller groups;
2. Allow them ten minutes to write down at least five corrections lessons learned during the semester;
3. Have each group report what they chose as memorable corrections lessons.

Below is a list of some of the lessons learned in a recent semester. The important point is that the following is what students chose as the important lessons.

1. Understand the 'back against the wall' mentality. Many staff acquire the dislike of people standing behind them.
2. Officer is the term to use. Do not call corrections professionals *guards*, as it degrades the profession.
3. Look before you feel. A contraband search done with the hands rather than the eyes can lead to infection.
4. Know your surroundings. Plan ahead.
5. Know where your back up is located.
6. Listen and observe for more information whenever possible.
7. Do not use the names of others in stories to protect yourself and them.
8. Do not be someone you are not in any circumstances. Be yourself.
9. Work together well. Be professional and respectful.
10. Communicate.
11. Don't underestimate people
12. De-stress with positive means whenever possible.
13. Contraband is a pervasive and persistent challenge to the corrections profession.

Once groups report what they have learned, I will distribute a short list of what I believe are the important lessons. These are lessons that are rarely found in text books. They come from years of experience and reflection on my early days in corrections.

It is important the instructors reflect on the lessons that students found important enough to list in this exercise. That which is listed are the lessons that were

emphasized. Still, the instructor might reflect on why some lessons were not listed.

What do you think students should know before entering the profession? No two lists are the same. But, I believe that all should point toward the safety of staff, prisoners, and the public.





## Telephone exercise

Do we always understand fully what is said to us? Are second-hand accounts diluted and unreliable? Will safety be compromised in your facility if you are neither thorough nor clear? If you are uncertain, try this spin on a classic icebreaker.

This is like the old-school rendering of the telephone game. If we are not directly absorbing the information, like one might do with a telephone conversation, one might not get all the nuances.



1. Give a participant two minutes to read one of the following paragraphs to herself/himself;
2. Let the person give back the paper to the instructor;
3. Let the participant tell the class what was read;
4. Give a copy of the paragraph to all in class;
5. Have class report what was missing from the oral rendering.

**Scene one:**

John was watching his favorite show on a Thursday night. It is called the Odd Couple. In the show, two roommates in Manhattan verbally spar because they are so different. Oscar is messy and sarcastic. Felix is pushy, overly neat, and opinionated. Oscar owns the apartment and lives alone, but invited his friend Felix to move in when Felix and his wife divorced. Oscar is also divorced. In this episode, Felix is allergic to Oscar's golden retriever puppy and declares, "It is the dog or me!" Oscar chooses the dog and kicks out Felix.

**Scene two:**

Willy started a new job at a factory on midnights. It is a tool and die shop and he has no experience in the field. This new job is working as general helper and as a die maker apprentice. Willy wants to do well, but does not know who to trust. Jim Alexander, the guy who is training Willy, believes that Willy can beat Jim Simpson at arm wrestling. Jim Alexander places five dollars on the table as a bet. Jim Simpson calls Willy a wimp and lays five dollars on the table to counter Jim Alexander's wager. Both Jims nod at each other when the money is placed on the table and Willy sees this as a conspiracy to make him look bad.

**Scene three:**

Debbie is a waitress who does not like personal interaction. Still, for the goal of getting more tips, she tries to be nice. Debbie, though in her early twenties, detests children. "I hate people who bring their obnoxious kids in to eat", is one

of her common sayings. One Sunday afternoon just before closing time at 5 p.m., Debbie was given a table with two parents and three children. All kids appear to be under five years old. The two boys are quiet, but the little girl is full of questions. The girl keeps asking Debbie how old she is.

Information makes the corrections world go around. And there are times that we give too much or too little information to colleagues. Every now and again, we need to calibrate how we deliver what is necessary and what is not. Remember: This is not just a modified version of telephone. This is an exercise to help us relay facts to keep safe staff, offenders, and the public.



## What's in the ego bag?

Part of the problem we have as professionals is that we are often blind to our own shortcomings. In fact, what is glaringly evident to a manipulative prisoner is completely invisible to the perpetrator of negative behaviors. In corrections, this myopia allows large targets to be placed on our individual backs.

We ignore our less-than-social behaviors like bossiness or secretiveness for many reasons. But, who among us is perfect? It does strengthen staff teamwork (and the corrections profession) when we can honestly admit to something that we need to improve upon when interacting with colleagues at work.

- I. Instructor tells a story – I tell of when I was on a committee many years ago, and I observed any types: the well-meaning bulldozer, the loud activist, and the intellectual who valued words more than respecting the process. I realized that at some time during my career, I was each of these. People can change and it is important to honestly assess oneself.
- II. Have class suggest ten negative behaviors to get the creative juices going. These are to be listed on the board by the instructor or an assistant.
- III. Have class list on paper an honest problem they have when dealing with others in the workplace.
- IV. Do not put your name on the fault that you write
- V. These are placed in the bag
- VI. One is selected and read aloud
- VII. Do not volunteer when yours is randomly selected
- VIII. Ask class how to improve this behavior
- IX. Emphasize to the class that it is important for corrections staff to know their strengths and weaknesses

- X. Add that it is equally important for staff to change a negative behavior
- XI. Have class list how mitigating these behaviors makes a safer work environment
- XII. Distribute the following article and open for discussion

### *Climbers and Professionals*

*There are so many challenges for anyone employed as a corrections professional. But staff division is a very interesting issue in corrections. This is because of the impact of its bad and good potential. On the negative side, it can be the root of security problems. On the other side of that coin is the notion that the solutions are largely in our collective hands.*

*In general, there are two sorts of deeds done in corrections. One variety can be performed with the idea of earning some sort of credit. The other is done for the sake of doing the job right. In other words, there are climbers and there are true professionals.*

*A climber can be defined as someone who orchestrates their duties only when others are looking. They do a good job, but it is masked in insincerity and is often self-serving. There is a world of positive messages of their deeds for those in de jure and de facto power. The climber will generally not perform a less-than-desirable task unless it is observed by someone who can advance his or her career.*

*The true professional does not need an audience or Kudos to do a job well. It is certain that no one can act with truly altruistic motives at all times. However, the true professional does not need the credit as much as the climber.*

*There are plenty of each kind. And each of us can range between these two poles. One small, self-serving deed does not necessarily taint an otherwise professional record. Unfortunately, most of us remember the negative rather than the positive. If you are honest with yourself, it is probably easier to name more climbers that you know than true vocational heroes.*

*Climbers, through a long chain of possible events, pose a hazard to operations. They may, in the spirit of subtle self-promotion, spread malicious rumors about non-competing professionals. Tarnished reputations cause disillusion and lower productivity. Formerly committed staff become less security conscious. Those who see through the climber's activities can become jaded if the climber promotes. The administration may lose authority and credibility if a climber rises in the ranks.*

*All of this diminishes security. Every little distraction from the main goal of safety for all chips away at the foundation of security. This may not be evident, but it is true.*

*Just like the prevalent issue of staff division, this problem is easy to identify. The hard part is to realize the solutions. Here are some thoughts about climbers and true professionals that may put the solutions within reach.*

*Corrections staff can see through ruses. Climbers, no matter how cleverly they manipulate opinions, will eventually be discovered by colleagues. Climbers cannot hide in the long term.*

*The true professional does not consciously seek to be visible.*

*It is very easy to deride the overt climber. However, climber bashing exacerbates the balance of harmony in an institution.*

*Self-scrutiny is essential in this and all issues that surround staff relations.*

*Humility is a key ingredient.*

*Many aspirations are also beneficial to the mission. It is the negative examples that sometimes taint the image of promoting.*

*Some climbers are effective leaders and should get the promotion based on skills rather than popularity.*

*There is such a thing as too much pride in being altruistic – it is elitist. At the risk of defending the stance of the climber, anti-climbing sentiment can be so potent that it detracts from the mission.*

*Each of us is a work in progress. No one adheres to the same role at all times.*

*Climbers and true professionals are just two of the many interesting archetypes we find in our challenging profession. We cannot all be model citizens all the time. We are human. However, the lofty ideal is just a reach from the real. Solutions are within reach.*

Without introspection, we are bumbling egoists in a sea of manipulative danger. Take time to assess your faults and share in a group setting. The career you save may be your own!



## Most Sunny with a 100% chance of death

*Thank you, Robyn, for the question that served as catalyst for this icebreaker.*

The sun was so glorious that day. It gave a sense of hope in what would normally be a cold, dreary day in Northern latitudes. Still, too much of anything can be fatal. How different it would be if the pleasant and moderate blanket of solar energy were a horrible and rapidly increasing blast of radiation!

Recently, my wife posed this question to me: “Suppose that the world learns that the earth will crash into the sun in 72 hours, rendering all life null. What do you do with those last three days?”

The discussion flowed into different strategies, morality, mortality, and mass psychology. The probable whimper of the human race, one whose tone had hitherto been braggadocio, was ironically amusing.

While we are on such a track, let us think smaller and more personally. Your 401k and survival bunker are without use. All your plans are scrapped and soon to be cinder in the face of our heliocentric demise. So, how about you? What would you do if the sun were to consume the earth and all would be dead in three days?

Ask one person in the class, “What would you do if the sun were to consume the earth and all would be dead in three days?” When they answer, have them choose a ‘victim’ and go around the class in this manner. Have a recorder write the answers on the board.

Then pose this question: What do you do in the event of the following tragic events?

1. There is a fatal stabbing on the yard.
2. An officer collapses after drinking coffee laced with cleaning fluid.



3. A prisoner escapes from the visiting room.
4. There is a fire in the kitchen.

The point is, there are some things that we cannot control. A fatal dive into the sun is one of these things. However, while tragic on their own scale, most events in corrections have solutions and protocols. This exercise segues nicely into policy-driven scenarios.



## **BONUS EXERCISE**

### **Contraband Card Game**

**By Brooke Mleko**

*As a rule, instructors should not have favorite students. However, Brooke Mleko is a strong case against this. A former student of mine at Gogebic Community College, she displayed great intellectual energy, creativity, and enthusiasm for learning. In addition to this, Mleko has a wonderful sense of humor. Another positive attribute is that she writes icebreakers. Brooke developed the following icebreaker and agreed to its inclusion in this collection.*

**Number of players:** 2-3

**Objective:** Rid yourself of your contraband (the cards) before the time is up. Higher cards mean more years in prison, so you want to get rid of those first (Refer to KEY below).



**Time limit:** 3 minutes.

Each player gets dealt 7 cards. (Dealer can be determined by players [flip a coin, lowest card drawn, etc.]).

Remaining cards go face down in a pile in the middle of all players.

Dealer takes one card from the deck in the middle and places to the right of the deck. This is the discard pile, and this card begins the game.

Person to the left of dealer starts by trying to beat the card on top of the discard pile.

To beat the card on top of the discard pile, it must be the same suit AND/OR the same number as the card on top of the discard pile.

**Example:** If the beginning card is Ace of Spades, you can play an Ace of any suit or any card that is a Spade. If the beginning card is 3 of Diamonds, you can play a 3 of any suit or any card that is a Diamond.

Remember, you want to get rid of the most incriminating contraband (highest cards) first.

Example: If the beginning card is 6 of Hearts and the eligible cards in your hand to be played are Ace of hearts, 6 of clubs, and 9 of hearts, you want to play the Ace of hearts because that is the contraband that would give you the most time added to your sentence.

If a player does not have any eligible cards to be played on their turn, they must draw from the deck in the middle, which will be counted as their turn.

Only one card can be played per player per turn.

Turns are played clockwise from that point.

If a person rids themselves of all cards before time runs out, they receive no additional prison time (and win), as they would have disposed of all of their contraband.

Whoever has the most prison time added to their sentence at the end of the 3-minute time limit loses.

Prison time determined by KEY.

Truly, the cards that you are dealt impact your circumstances. How well you play those card is important in how you will spend your time.



## Contraband Card Game Key

| <b>Card number</b> | <b>Item</b>     | <b>Time added to sentence</b> |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 2                  | Rope            | 6 months                      |
| 3                  | Hoarded item    | 8 months                      |
| 4                  | Alcohol         | 1 year                        |
| 5                  | Money           | 2 year                        |
| 6                  | Phone           | 3 year                        |
| 7                  | Marijuana       | 5 years                       |
| 8                  | Knife           | 7 years                       |
| 9                  | Ammunition      | 10 years                      |
| 10                 | Gun             | 11 years                      |
| J                  | Grenade         | 13 years                      |
| Q                  | Bomb            | 15 years                      |
| K                  | Cocaine         | 17 years                      |
| A                  | Methamphetamine | 20 years                      |

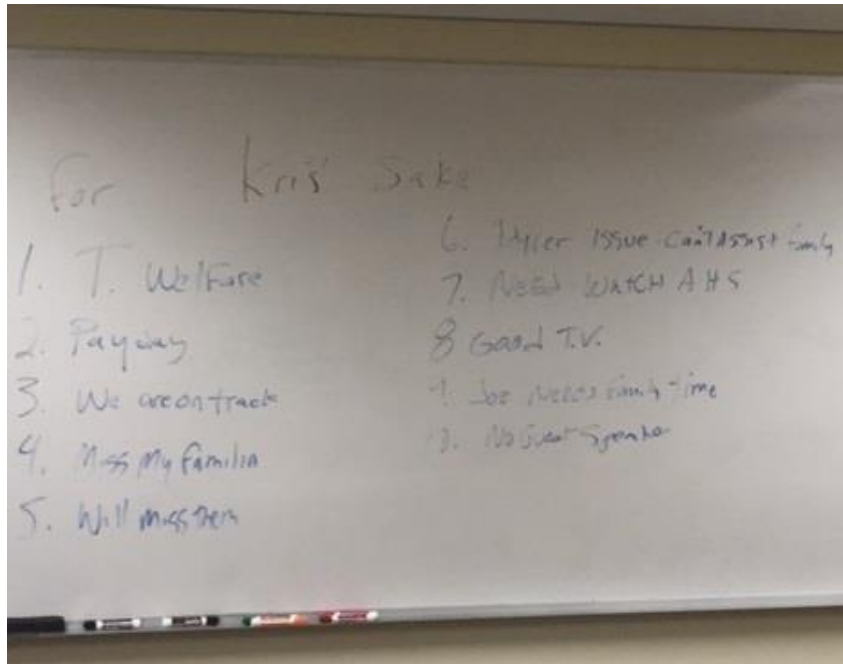
## For Kris' Sake

This icebreaker works as a nice companion to modules on manipulation by offenders.

Kris is a serious student who completes her work in a timely manner. Her dedication and integrity cannot be questioned. Still, being human, Kris on occasion steps out of the serious mode and becomes a bit playful. Even so, usually when she asks a question, she keeps a straight face that can bring a seasoned poker player to tears of frustration.

I walked into the class recently while a classmate was conversing with Kris. He admitted how tired he was due to long hours at work. I tried to remain unobtrusive and prepared for the lecture. Kris set sights on me with an inscrutable expression of no expression. She said to me that we should have a very short class tonight.

We verbally sparred a little, in a joking manner, naturally. I recognized that though she looked serious, she was not completely so. One could not tell by her face, as it was impervious to interpretation. But her pattern had been the straight-faced joke.



She persisted coolly that class should run shorter than usual. So, I said, “How would you persuade me if you were manipulative?”

Right out of the gate, students offered suggestions to me. They seemed driven by the incentive of leaving a bit early:

1. It is payday. You should go buy something nice.
2. The instructor failed to provide a guest speaker and should let students go early as a concession.
3. I need to go home to wait for the repair person for my dryer.
4. I miss my family.
5. There are good shows on tonight.

I wrote these on the board and many others that they offered. Then I asked what tactics these could be. For example, “I miss my family” was described as trying to find common ground on a topic with great emotional ties – the family.

Then we discussed why a prisoner would manipulate staff. Some answers they had were:

- For power
- For comfort
- To embarrass staff

- For psychological satisfaction
- To gain something other prisoners did not have

Class actually ran longer than usual that night. It was not ‘revenge’ at all. We just had a lot to cover.

Still, it is important for students of corrections to be exposed to manipulation tactics to react in a professional manner.

So, with a stony stare and a calm voice asserting that the class should end earlier, Kris provided inspiration for this on-the-fly icebreaker. And not just for Kris’ sake, but for everyone, these lessons keep up professional and effective.





## You have 'snoo' in your hair!

In corrections, we are faced with a grim job. Simply put, there is less positivity in it than in most vocations. A sense of humor is essential for the survival of those who work on the most dangerous beat. But do we ever assess what is funny and what is not?

Humor is subjective. What is funny to some is completely unamusing to others. And jokes run the gamut. Some are sophisticated, and some are silly. With that in mind, take the following into consideration:

Q: What did the mushroom say at the party?

A: You'll be glad you invited me. They call me Mr. Fungi!

My brother Scott is an interesting juxtaposition to me. He laughs easily while I am rather stoic, even when I am inwardly amused. He is pictured below.



Scott enjoys jokes at many retellings, where I generally do not. This just reflects different tastes in humor. However, Scott has a store of groaners, or jokes that are so horrible that one might groan at the punchline and maybe laugh.

Here is an example:

Scott: (While pointing at someone's head) You have 'snoo' in your hair!

Person: What's 'snoo'?

Scott: Nothing! What is new with you?

This exercise begins with solicitation a judge. Without explanation, the facilitator asks for a volunteer to judge the teams. This person must be the pinnacle of integrity and unimpacted by friends or acquaintances in the audience. This is because the winning team will win a prize.



(Bouchard and Bonnie, the Judge during the first run of “snoo”.)

I have found, as have many other trainers, that a gift bag filled with dubious prizes is best. Since the sense of humor is the center of this exercise, inexpensive novelty gifts are fitting. Chattering teeth, artificial vomit, squirting flowers and the like may work here. A tight-lipped facilitator may even sell the gift bag as a valuable, unbelievable selection for the winning team. The cautious instructor will secure the gift bag from prying eyes and curious corrections professionals.

With the Judge in place and the giftbag properly touted to raise a friendly competition, the facilitator reads part of the code of ethics of the agency. Then, the facilitator asks what kinds of jokes are technically in the column of conduct unbecoming of an employee. You might compile a list that includes, sexual, ethnic, racial, insensitive, and violent jokes.

- Then the facilitator informs that room will be split into small teams.
- Each team is given a worksheet that has instructions and a few samples of truly bad jokes of the groaner variety.
- Each team is tasked with writing five groaner jokes on the worksheet.
- Jokes can be created on the spot or selected from memory.
- If there is a slow start, the facilitator may allow an internet search for each team that is inclined to do so.
- The team that has the worst joke wins the prize bag. The appointed Judge has final say on the winner.

A corrections sense of humor may contain elements of gallows humor or even sick humor. While not all professionals have the same list of favorite comedians, many of the things that are funny to corrections professionals might raise an eyebrow to the general public. Perhaps this is a way to cope with a serious and dangerous job.

This exercise is perfect to get groups acquainted. What else to bond people than humor, even if it is low grade? Also, some interesting group dynamics can be observed and reported by the Judge. Lastly this is a great exercise to segue into a module that deals with proper conduct.

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Post script: On 12/7/2016 I conducted this exercise for the first time. Below are the combined teams for the maiden voyage of this exercise from my Introduction to Corrections class at Gogebic Community College.



Here are some of the bad jokes that they brought to the table. I write ‘some’ because I could not publish all of them.

- A neutron walks in a bar and asks for a drink. The barkeep said, ‘no charge!’
- Officer pulls over a speeder and says, “How high are you?” The Speeder says, “No, it is ‘Hi, how are you?’
- What do you call a kid that does not believe in Santa? A rebel without a Claus.
- What is brown and sticky? A stick

In a word, GROAN!



**You have 'snoo' in your hair!**  
**WORKSHEET**

List five groaners (jokes that are so bad, they are actually pretty good).

Example:

Q: What time is it when you should go to the dentist?

A: Tooth hurt-y

Team name:

Team members:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## Hello, my name is problem: an icebreaker

Goldie Locks is a lesson for us all. Solving problems is a matter of finesse. The right amount of pressure must be applied to optimally conclude any difficulty. Sometimes we are too hard and sometimes we are too soft. Perhaps we can apply the 'just right' amount of pressure by looking at the extremes.



There are some who will employ a machete and others who will utilize a scalpel when a pair of scissors is the only implement necessary. It is in the extremes that one sees the distressing solutions.

For example, it is probably just as ineffective to kill a fly with a sledge hammer as it is with a feather. The former is an unwieldy tool that will be too slow to kill a fly. The latter is simply too soft. A just right solution is to use a fly swatter or a rolled-up newspaper.

Split the class into two teams. One team will be called Sledge Hammer and the other team will be called Feather. Each team will do the same thing as the other – solve the ten problems listed below. However, team Sledge Hammer will conceive of the solution that exerts the most force. Team Feather will use the least amount of effort to solve a problem, but still while doing something. Team Feather cannot resort to doing nothing in this game, though virtually nothing is permissible.

Everyone on each team is a contributor to the extreme ways we solve problems. Each team will also have a scribe and someone who reports out. Once all ten problems have been ‘solved’ in the prescribed style of each team, they are read in pairs, each reporter rendering their team answer.

For example:

Team Sledge Hammer: We were tasked with killing a fly. We burned down the house in which the fly was located.

Team Feather: We were tasked with killing a fly. We asked the fly to lay down and give up its life.

Then all in class try to solve the problem on the spot. Some moderate, sensible solutions to the fly problem are fly strips, newspapers and insect spray.

Some problems for Sledge hammer and Feather teams to solve are:

1. Someone parks in your normal parking spot.
2. You receive a past due notice on a bill that you know you mailed on time.
3. Your neighbor’s dog continues to defecate on your lawn and your neighbor never picks it up or even apologizes for the multitude of malodorous mounds.
4. The transmission in your truck malfunctions five hundred miles after the warranty has expired.



5. Despite your unimpeachable reputation, a coworker is spreading the rumor that you are engaging in marital infidelity. Incidentally, that co-worker is up for the same promotion as you.
6. You make all arrangements for vacation, including the purchase of non-refundable tickets. You were given permission from your supervisor to do so, yet she is now rescinding this.
7. You are pulled over by the police because a prankster at work wired a mannequin under your car and it looks like you are dragging a cadaver. Bonus: there are two problems, the ticket and the prank.
8. Your three friends want to eat at an Italian restaurant and you want Mexican food.
9. Someone darts ahead of you to buy the last window air conditioner unit. Record temperatures are predicted tomorrow.
10. A prisoner keeps asking you the same question about policy and appears to be holding out for a different answer. You supplied the same policy driven answer for five weeks straight.

After these problems have been discussed, distribute the following article.



## Hello, my name is problem.

*Have we met before? My name is problem. You seem familiar. In fact, I remember you from just about every difficult time in your career. How should we deal with each other in this round?*

*Corrections offers, even heaps, many challenges upon all who enter the profession. For many of these we cannot really do anything but react. We are largely helpless to fiscal strategies, political appointments, influx of new offenders and societal trends.*

*Certainly, this is not a sunny forecast. That does not mean that we are necessarily helpless. There are simply many variables.*

*Just as rain will fall on us, so too, will problems of all sorts. Here are five general sets of questions to apply to all varieties of that which vexes our profession:*

***Know the history*** – *Has the problem occurred before? How was it handled? Was the resolution successful? Might the method work again?*

***Know the players*** – *Who are the players in the open? Are there any behind-the-scenes agents of fortune? Do they work in competition or in complement? What sort of leadership (if any) may be needed to assist the players?*

***Know the ripples*** – *When you throw a large stone in a pond, ripples flow outward from the point of impact. But what is the pond like in this scenario? What are the ramifications of a hard and quick strike versus one subtle? In other words, are you using a sledge hammer to kill a fly? Do you know the possibilities and*

*probabilities of your actions? Will addressing the problem in a certain way be worth the consequences?*

***Know the aftermath*** – *What are the contingency plans when the solution is implemented but is not effective? Can you truly know when the problem is solved when you do not have a definition of success? What are the preventative measures for the next round of problems?*

***Know yourself*** – *How are you looking at the problem? Is it in line with those on your team? Are you a solo artist at heart or a team player as needed? When you look at all of the questions posed above, do you dive in head first or hesitate?*

*So please remember my name. I am problem. You will never know when I will return or how often I will manifest. Despite those unknowns, **I will definitely return.** What you choose to do about me is up to you.*



## What Would Godzilla Do?

What do Matthew Broderick, Raymond Burr and Bryan Cranston have in common? All three of these American actors have appeared in a Godzilla movie in different decades.

Godzilla is an international icon, a mega monster who appeared in dozens of movies and is even the subject of a classic hard rock song. Godzilla has a star on the Hollywood walk of fame. The fame of the monster is based on its overwhelming power. In short, Godzilla can do almost anything.



Can you use a quirky icebreaker that can segue into use of force module? This is also a useful icebreaker that addresses professionalism. The premise for this is “We have to be professional, prisoners do not.”

It is as easy as delivering four questions in the formula form. These are answered in turn by each student. The questions are:

1. What is your name?
2. What is your position
3. How many years have you been in the field?
4. What would you do if you were Godzilla?

As an example, the facilitator would provide answers. If it were me, the answers would be:

1. My name is Joe Bouchard.
2. I am a prison librarian.
3. I have 23 years in the corrections profession.
4. If I were Godzilla, I would walk through Chernobyl, not missing a single building.

Answers, of course, will vary. Perhaps some do not have the need to commit closure for a Cold War event. Maybe there are other cities to vanquish or more specific topics to tackle. That is the beauty of this exercise. There will be a variety of answers. Each of which have the potential to illustrate a want or need of a participant. Groups that share have the potential to grow as a group and push the limits of training in a positive manner.

Per the lyrics of Blue Oyster Cult's 1977 song "Godzilla",

"History shows again and again  
that nature points up the folly of  
men..."

With that in mind, just because we have the force does not mean that we must follow folly. In other words, unlike the reptilian colossus, we simply cannot do what we want when we want to do it. However, we have many choices in how to handle the less-than-professional encounters we have with offenders who wish to push the envelope. Clearly in our vocation, there are policies and procedures to follow. This exercise is useful to demonstrate that there is a vast chasm between what we could do and what we will do.



## Would You Rather be a Shark or a Dolphin?

Let's break some ice! Let us not use a sharp ice chipping instrument. Instead, we can utilize the perceived personality traits of two animals.



If you really think about it, there are no bad animals. All creatures fit into their own niches. Carnivores eat flesh, herbivores do not, and omnivores eat just about anything. We cannot fault a wolf for eating a sheep any more than we can fault the sheep for grazing on vegetation.

Peter Benchley, Author of “Jaws” adapted that book into the ‘70’s blockbuster movie of the same name. In the movie and sequels, the shark was sometimes viewed as malevolent, calculating and vengeful. In mass media, dolphins are almost always seen as benevolent and friends of humans.

What we do to enhance a story amounts to anthropomorphizing. Or, we tend to add human motives and characteristics to animals. And while it can be supposed that there are no jealous spiders or ambitious badgers, the concept remains.

This is a very simple icebreaker built on animals assigned with human emotions.

1. Split the class into two teams.
2. Designate one team as Team Shark and the other as Team Dolphin.
3. Have team shark define aggression and list ten behaviors and/or interesting facts about sharks. Computers and or phones may be used. These should be recorded on paper.
4. Have team dolphin define assertion and list ten behaviors and/or interesting facts about dolphins. Computers and or phones may be used. These should be recorded on paper.
5. Team Shark will report to the class with one spokesperson.
6. Team Dolphin will report to the class with one spokesperson.
7. The facilitator will ask the whole class for ten aggressive human behaviors. In soliciting these, participants are cautioned to not name names if the behavior reflects badly on the individual in the department or if the person is easily identified.
8. The facilitator will ask the whole class for ten assertive human behaviors.
9. This exercise can segue easily into modules on how we deal with aggressive co-workers, prisoners or customers.
10. After the discussion, distribute the following article to class for their consideration and information.

Maybe actual sharks are the wolves of the sea. They will do what they were wired to do, and they do not have the dictates of human mores and societal limits to temper their behaviors. Human sharks exist and make many lives difficult with their aggression. How we handle the human sharks will determine if they continue to select us as prey or move on to other targets.



## Would You Rather be a Shark or a Dolphin? How We Treat Each Other

*In 1994, the movie “Swimming with Sharks” was released. Far from being a discovery channel type documentary on marine life, “Swimming with Sharks” was the story of a sadistic Hollywood executive who abused co-workers.*

*Played by Kevin Spacey, the lead character used verbal and physical abuse when dealing with his coworkers. His ways of managing others included intimidation, use of degrading profanity, and irrational shifts of expectations.*

*We can say that it is only a movie. But we can also point to those negative attributes and recall a true work story. And when this is superimposed on corrections, the ramifications of this personality type is dangerous. This sort of behavior breeds resentment, revenge and manipulation.*

*This leads to a mis-focus, as we are too busy watching ourselves rather than our job duties and the actions of prisoners. When we are distracted from our primary job, we provide conditions for danger in many forms.*

*As we swim through the waters of work, we encounter many sharks. Yet, there are also dolphins, too. Let’s look at some of the personalities.*

*Sharks are rather obvious to most of us. They show aggressive behavior as they prowl what they consider to be their territory.*

*The same is true of their human counterparts. They are, above all, predators, preying on weaker co-workers in order to show that they are dominant. Their chief goal is to destroy others so that they many continue to flourish.*

*Dolphins are never seen as villains. They are calm and peace-loving creatures. But that does not mean that they are helpless. Intelligence is the prominent quality of the dolphin. In nature, dolphins can defend themselves against predators. In some cases, dolphins have banded together to chase sharks out of an area. In a sort of natural bully control, they have even been known to head-butt would-be predators.*

*In human terms, dolphins are assertive, rather than aggressive. They defend themselves and attack only when necessary. Also, just because a dolphin does not display aggression does not mean that this is an ineffective staff person. Their chief goal is to exist well in their environment.*

*There is a variation on the shark theme. That is the shark in dolphin's clothing. In other words, this is a predator that appears to be safe and gentle. Their mannerisms and behavior indicate that they are benevolent and trustworthy colleagues. However, that is not their true nature. As office predators, they use that camouflage to cover their sneak attacks on others. They are calculating and manipulative.*

*As we swim in the waters of corrections, there are perils. But shark repellants are available. Some of them are professionalism, knowledge, and experience. And since most sharks call attention to themselves, they are easy to detect.*

*Human interaction is always complex. But those basic models serve to remind us of how things can be. Just as in nature, there are many sharks in the waters of the work world. It is fortunate that the dolphins balance against the predators. And it is possible for human sharks to change their nature. At work, where do you fit in? Are you more like a shark or a dolphin?*

## Building the perfect villain

Some dangers are very easy to spot. For example, when you see an out of control truck careening towards you on an icy highway, that is an obvious hazard. Also, the chilling appearance of a shank sends chills through corrections professionals in all circumstances.



Sometimes, the unseen and unlikely perils are the most dangerous because they were unexpected.

Staff division in corrections is dangerous. When staff are pitted against staff, prisoners have an opportunity to leverage favors and initiate manipulation schemes. Focused on an imagined enemy or bona fide villain co-worker, staff are less likely to keep as professional as necessary to fulfill the mission of the agency. And that mission is to protect staff, offenders and the public.

A villain will not necessarily announce herself or himself. They are not heralded by a black hat, a villain badge or a sinister goatee. In fact, many antagonists have camouflage skills. It is often through the negative actions that villains commit that they eventually are unmasked.

Still, corrections staff are an observant group. And this is a simple exercise. It is built on discussion and requires only a white board and a marker. Walk the participants through these steps.

1. Define villain.
2. Make list of 10 villainous behaviors.
3. How do we counter these behaviors?
4. Distribute article below for consideration.

This is a great segue into staff relations modules. Here are some points the facilitator should express:

- When you list villainous behaviors, do not name names if the person works in the agency.
- Be introspective. Look at this as a way to avoid certain behaviors.
- Review some of the stories of staff division and prisoner manipulation. “The Art of the Con” by Gary Cornelius is a great source for this.

We do not have to like each other. We just have to work together. But, at times, we need to walk around the problem of contentious staff and true villains in our midst.



How to manufacture a nemesis

*Have you ever seen the Saturday Night Live sketch that featured Sean Connery in Celebrity Jeopardy? Connery, as portrayed by Darryl Hammond, takes delight in harassing a straight-faced Will Ferrell in the Role of Jeopardy's host Alex Trebek. The funny, subtle part of this is that Connery treats Trebek as a bitter enemy and there is no apparent reason for that.*

*That is just a skit. However, in any setting, there is a serious side to the nemesis issue. Sometimes, we see colleagues who serve as their own worst enemy. You may know a colleague who has to have at least one staff nemesis at a time. They seem to create their own problem in a person.*

*It is not merely distasteful and immature. And it is not without collateral damage, Staff on the side lines will detect how the person who seeks a scapegoat treats colleagues. This will lead to a widespread distrust of that person. While that person labors to create a pariah, he or she may become one due to those actions. The inevitable loss of credibility hard to rebuild. In addition, supervisors become confused and may issue misplaced discipline.*

*Lest we forget, most offenders watch all staff moves and analyze them. The first product of the invented nemesis is prisoners laughing over this and losing respect for staff. It may be just an entertaining diversion for them. However, this could lead to staff division and various schemes and perils that come from it.*

*This adds to the inherent tension of our jobs. Cumulative stress chips away at positive attitudes and buttresses our ability to commit errors, lowering the life expectancy of our careers.*

*If you see any of these behaviors in a colleague or yourself, you may wish to intervene within the level of comfort that the professional relationship affords. Did the nemesis maker do the following?*

- 1. Select a target employee and talk to others about alleged wrong-doings;*
- 2. Ask others about this person's past;*
- 3. Focus open suspicion on the target on three fronts:*
  - a. Complain to prisoners about this person;*
  - b. Grouse to supervisors;*
  - c. Ambush this person in a meeting – put on Front Street.*

*Every job on the face of the planet has some difficult or uncomfortable part to it. Tour guides in tropical climes may have a beautiful backdrop, but they have the weighty responsibility of accounting for the safety of their guests. A cupcake maker, while inspiring smiles, is at the mercy of the market. Nothing, in other words, is perfect.*

*Let's not forget corrections, our chosen vocation. Like most jobs, there is oversight from many directions. In addition, corrections features some of the most dangerous and difficult clients to deal with. And while we know of the many problems that exist, we sometimes add fuel to the fire by creating our own challenging issues.*

*It is difficult enough to deal with our many real problems in corrections. It is a tragedy when paranoia takes over and allows for phantom problems to cause anxiety. Certainly, we should be vigilant, but not to the point of 'detecting' sinister figures around every corner. Those who need to adopt a nemesis do not create a small, two-person problem. In fact, it can spread to a dangerous, facility-wide grudge. Corrections has no place for manufactured nemeses.*

## E.V.I.L. Origins

As members of the corrections profession, we are a part of a largely unseen group that battles the forces of disorder and lawlessness. Our goal is to protect staff, offenders, and the public. At times, it may seem that we are battling evil, but that may be an impression rather than the absolute truth.

Evil can be defined as a malevolent and wicked entity. While some prisoner actions may seem shocking, anti-social and certainly against norms, they are not necessarily evil in the classic, 20th Century dictator sense.

Still, one of the challenges corrections staff must address is the pervasive problem of contraband. In E.V.I.L. Origins, we look at the how contraband enters the facility.

1. Ask the class for a definition of contraband control and display it on the board, screen, or flip chart. Some of the elements you may hear are: forbidden, not allowed per policy, weapons, excessive property, altered goods, tradeable items.
2. Continue gathering information by asking for a list of common contraband items. You may hear: shank, lock in sock, tobacco, spud juice, altered identification card, rubber band ball.
3. Now ask the class, “How do these items get in a facility?”
4. Distribute the E.V.I.L. Origins test (see below).
5. Once the tests are complete (either by individuals or in teams) discuss the answers.

6. Distribute the article below for a fuller explanation of the concept.

Whether we consider contraband trade as evil or as a common way that prisoners evade the rules to make their incarcerated life more comfortable, it remains a problem to be solved. And when corrections staff understand the many entry points of the menace, safety can be enhanced.

### *E.V.I.L. Origins Test Thirteen Contraband Questions*

In general, contraband enters any institution by way of one of four ways. Bootleg comes in through:

1. **E**mployees
2. **V**isitors
3. **I**nside (made from materials already in the facility)
4. **L**et in (items that escape detection in the mailroom, shipping, or over the secure perimeter via drones or other mechanical means)

As you see, the categories are broad. Also of note, employees and visitors may knowingly or unwitting introduce contraband. For each description below, please indicate how the contraband was likely to have been introduced into the facility by using the letter E, V, I, or L. More than one category may apply.



1. You witness a prisoner licking a page in a coloring book that had been colored. He seems to be under the influence of a controlled substance. How did this get in the facility?
2. A clear barrel pen has been fashioned into a bow and arrow. The bow sting is a rubber band, the bow is the flexible pen shaft, the arrow is the writing part of the pen. How did this get in the facility?
3. A prisoner is discovered making purchases for a third party of items from a big box store. He is using someone's credit card information. How did this get in the facility?
4. There is an unofficial New Year's Eve party. At least three prisoners are 'bombed out of their gourdes" or inebriated on prison-made wine. How did this get in the facility?
5. In another type of New Year's Eve party, there are three intoxicated offenders. Five empty bottles of a cheap brand of vodka are discovered in the snowbank. How did this get in the facility?
6. An offender offers you a stick of chewing gum. How did this get in the facility?
7. You are presented with a one-foot tall sculpture of you. It is a soap carving. How did this get in the facility?
8. A plastic tip arrow with a camouflage pattern on the shaft is found on the yard. It is filled with narcotics. How did this get in the facility?

9. A prisoner takes an envelope out of the binding of a general library book. It is filled with crushed pills that are later discovered to be opiates. How did this get in the facility?
10. A prisoner is terrorizing those in neighboring cells with his 'pet' corn snake. How did this get in the facility?
11. You notice an empty condom in the trash in a housing unit. A test reveals that there are traces of narcotics in the condom. How did this get in the facility?
12. Maps of the local area are found in the area of control of a prisoner who happens to be on a work release program. How did this get in the facility?
13. During a routine search, you discover a thumb drive in a prisoner's laundry. It contains facility schematics, names of staff's family members, and a security threat group roster with articles of incorporation. How did this get in the facility?

### E.V.I.L. origins

*What could be more evocative than thoughts of an infestation? Imagine that you are battling vermin. You are determined to rid the area of unwanted pests. In this sense, it's easy claim victory if you catch the mouse or other pests. But does that*

*go to the heart of the problem? Is that true elimination or merely short-term management?*

*When we eliminate the nest or the avenues and inside, we have found a more thorough solution to the problem. Likewise, every bit of contraband that we remove from the system represents a win against the collective of dangerous elements that we face on the job every day. For example, discovering a cache of tobacco in a smoke free and chew free institution eliminates some illegal trade in possible violence. But we must wonder how the tobacco got inside the facility in the first place.*

*No matter the custody level, age, or physical layout of your facility, it is safe to say that contraband filters do not catch all bootleg. In a way, contraband management is like pulling weeds. One can temporarily halt the weed (or contraband problem) with one quick yank. It is as simple as pulling the item out of circulation and ensuring proper disposition. However, we can further delay the return of contraband by digging deep at the root.*

*Really, there are four basic ways that contraband enters our jails and prisons. It is something I call E.V.I.L. origins – a mnemonic that means Employee, Visitor, Inside, and Let in.*

***Employee*** – *As corrections professionals, we wish that staff corruption did not exist.*

*Unfortunately, a small percentage of our colleagues dabble in the illegal trade. Whether bought, maneuvered, or coerced, employee mules in the service of offenders deal a grievous blow to the structure of security.*

***Visitor*** – *Most people who have do not quite grasp the reason for so many rules in the operation of a correctional facility. Despite this, many visitors each day comply with instruction from staff. However, as with employees, there are a small*

*number of visitors who circumvent the rules and introduce contraband into the facility.*

***Inside*** – *The origin of some contraband items is completely within the fences. Some things are created with ordinary, on-hand items. They include papier-mâché clubs, plans on the yard with medicinal qualities, or even spud juice. Something of value need not necessarily have come from outside the walls.*

***Let in*** – *This is a large category. Contraband that is let in is hidden from detection as it enters the facility from the outside. This can be as nefariously clever as small bits of narcotic laced crayons used to create a drawing that is sent through the mail. The hollowed legal brief is a popular vessel as well. Camouflage arrows filled with drugs and shot into the yard is a strange but documented occurrence. Let us not forget the cell phone that escapes detection in a new commitment's anatomy.*

*What does all this mean? With the knowledge of contraband sources, we can better predict where the next nest of bootleg may lie. However, this should be tempered with patience and realism. In other words, it takes time and will not always uncover all dangerous and tradable goods.*

*Concept of evil origins helps us consider sources bootleg. Realistically we cannot stop all sources of contraband. But every bit removed from the system means a win for security.*

## Now, that is Using Your Noodle!

Consider the genius of Ramen noodles. They are inexpensive, hearty, delicious, and simple. Ask any college kid who is trying to stretch a food buck on the utilities of the noodles on the many ways these can be used.

Some prisoners, as all corrections professionals know, will use simple thing for dangerous ends. Is the simple Ramen noodle pack exempt from this? Certainly not! Enterprising offenders will use anything at their disposal to hide contraband.

Let us look at the components. There is the plastic wrap, the noodle block and the flavor pack.



“Now, that is Using Your Noodle!” is a great, hands on exercise that segues nicely into any contraband control module. At under fifty cents a brick, this is also a very inexpensive icebreaker.

Here is how it works:

1. Divide the class into teams
2. Appoint a Judge
3. Give each team three Ramen bricks
4. Teams will be permitted to use tape, water, a knife, and a lighter
5. Teams may use anything on their person to hide in the Ramen brick. The item could be a battery, cell phone, SD card, thumb drive, aspirin, dollar bill, etc. In the absence of that, a slip of paper with the word contraband written on it could be substituted.
6. Tell them that they have five minutes to plan on how to hide contraband inside the brick
7. On paper, the teams will write each plan of concealment
8. The winning team will have the best hidden contraband as determined by the judge
9. Teams will be given ten minutes after the discussion to execute the plan
10. Teams report out of the methods, rationales, triumphs and challenges.
11. The Judge renders a decision on the best hidden contraband.

Here are some examples:

Below, a mini thumb drive was hidden.



Below a five-dollar bill was hidden in the Ramen brick.



Step 4 above is crucial in this. That offers the tools for students to understand how enterprising offenders could manipulate the hard, dry noodles for a nefarious purpose.

The exercise concludes with a discussion. Here are some questions to facilitate this:

1. Which two ways can the plastic package be resealed?
2. Is there any other way to reseat the manufacture's package?

3. Would hot water make the job of hollowing out the brick any easier?
4. Can the brick be easily sliced laterally?
5. What should staff look for when examining these goods?
6. What could be hidden in the Ramen bricks?
7. Just because the Ramen came from a manufacturer, should we assume that they are not 'pre-loaded'?
8. How many Ramen packages do you believe a prisoner should be allowed to possess?
9. Would that number vary in your mind according to security level?
10. What can be made from the flavor packet?

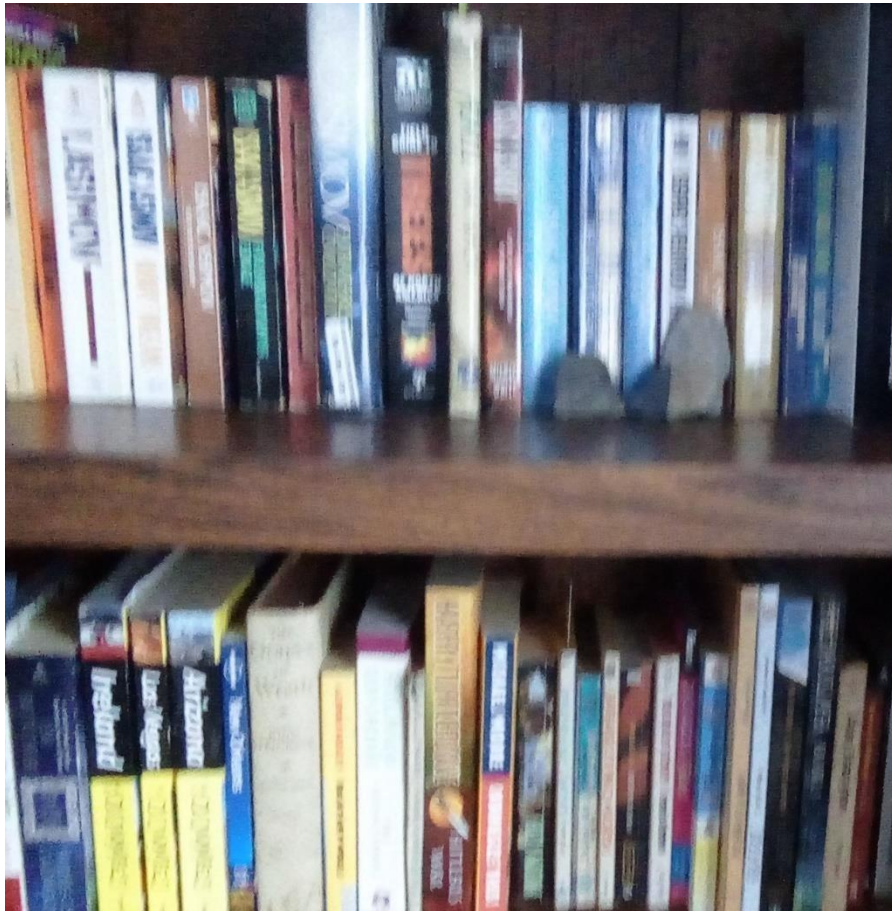
Necessity, it is said, is the mother of invention. Certainly, prisoners have ample time at their disposal to concoct ways to hide forbidden items. How we teach staff to search may help tip the balance of safety into our favor. After all, even though they are just noodles, a Ramen brick is fair game in the contraband control game.





## Captain Obvious and the Restricted Publications List

Part of how we keep safe in corrections is to limit sensitive information to offenders. Some of the reasons that corrections agencies ban publications is because of violence, advocacy or racial/ethnic supremacy, or danger to the security of an institution.



Not all titles will reveal the content. Gerald's Game, for example, would not draw much attention to those who did not know the plot. However, this book has

elements of bondage in the sexual sense. The Lord of the Rings could be banned because the appendices contain a code in the form of Durin's alphabet.

So, in order to get a feel for what each agency might ban, we bring in Captain Obvious.

1. Break the class into teams
2. Read the criteria for your agency in banning publications
3. Give the example of a Captain Obvious title that could be banned and the reason why. The title of the book need not be real. In fact, in the spirit of Captain Obvious, it is best to make up something that is blatantly against safety codes. For this, an obvious example is "Tunnel Digging and Maintenance for the Incarcerated". This book would be banned because it describes how prisoners can escape from a correctional facility. Another example is "Common Plants that Can get you High". It is banned because it describes narcotics from common sources. Neither of these books exist, to my knowledge. If they did and their titles matched their content, they should surely be placed on the Restricted Publications List.
4. Give the teams ten minutes to compile as many Captain Obvious titles as possible.
5. Have each team read their titles and why they were suggested to be banned in correctional facilities.
6. Have each team pick its two favorite books for the list they compiled.
7. Allow the team to do a subject search on Amazon books or some other data base to see if these books exist in some form.
8. Distribute the article below as food for thought for the class.

Knowledge is power.

## To ban or not to ban

*No decision is made in a vacuum. Rare is the occasion that there is a definitive answer to anything. Ambiguities abound, and certain restrictions apply. This is certainly true when a book, article, or publication is considered as a possible restricted item in a correctional facility.*

*When a publication is banned in a correctional facility or by an entire agency, many words come to mind from all sides. Security, censorship, practical measure, intellectual freedom, safety, and litigation are just a few of these. Never the less, whether you are a librarian, an officer, a teacher, or an administrator, here are a few questions to consider:*

- *Does your facility or agency have a restricted publications list? If so, what is the process to add a book/publication to that list?*
- *Does the book pose an immediate threat to the good order of the institution?*
- *Is there a criteria list for denial of the publication such as violence, advocacy or racial/ethnic supremacy, or danger to the security of an institution?*
- *Is there a centralized office in your agency that affirms or denies requests for inclusion of a publication on the restricted list?*
- *Do your facility and agency policy directives on mail and prisoner discipline outline the procedure for a notice of intent or any other administrative actions?*
- *What process of appeal does an offender have to contest a restricted publication decision?*

*In the end, it may not be as easy as a denial. We must be conscious of the fact that any decision to restrict a book can go beyond the agency level. No matter how seemingly routine a restriction may be, the aftermath may be lengthy and mired in*

*details. Individuals and outside entities may become deeply involved. Here are some awareness points:*

- *Follow policy and procedure.*
- *As necessary, request a second opinion from an authority that is higher in the chain of command.*
- *Document the process.*
- *Retain all documentation in consideration of possible offender grievances and litigation.*
- *Despite any personal feelings about a particular restriction, it behooves the professional to adhere to all operating procedures.*
- *Provide professional responses to all inquiries, no matter how provocative or heated they may seem.*
- *Remember the overall goal of the mission statement.*

*Corrections decisions are made with the bounds of our policies and procedures and with society's expectations in mind. Therefore, a specific book ban depends on so many factors. It is almost never as easy as issuing a categorical "no". Outside forces may question the decision. And all of that has to be weighed against the common corrections mission statement of safety for staff, the offender, and the public. To ban or not to ban is not as simple as judging a book by its cover.*



## By the book

Technology marches on and seems to eliminate problems. Just look at libraries in any correctional facility. In many, thousands of law books are replaced with computers with quicker retrieval and larger capacity. General books in the library are destined to be succeeded by a collection on a tablet.

This revolution frees up so much space. To the security-minded, this eliminates so many contraband hiding spots. Safety will increase, and staff will be freed up to attend other contraband hot spots.

But, just like the coming of the year 2000 did not propel all of us into a bright and uniform future, an innovation will not be everywhere once it is introduced. So, there are still many hard copy books in circulation. Therefore, contraband awareness in the library is still important in the fight to maintain safety.

### **Part one: What can one do with books**

Ask the class what prisoners can do with books. Make a list on the board or screen. Naturally, you will hear “read them” by one of the participants. You may hear many of the following:

- Put many in a pillow case to lift weights
- Throw at staff
- Stand on a stack of books to appear larger and more intimidating
- Stand on a stack of them to be sexually demonstrative

- Underline certain letters on predetermined page to send message
- Use as a transportation vessel in a contraband scheme

### **Part two: What are the best ways they will smuggle?**

The class is asked to determine where and how prisoners would hide cigarettes in a book. The list that you compile may have the following elements:

- In the binding
- In a hollowing
- Between pages

### **Part three: testing the cliché**

The hollowed book is a truism as old as books. Some treasures are hidden in personal libraries in commercially manufactured hollowed books. Prisoners, of course, have ingenious ways to hide contraband in books.

Security-minded staff recognize this and search diligently to slow the dangerous flow of illegal trade. They realize that not all hollowed out books are the same. For students to learn this, a hands-on, old school approach is warranted.

For this exercise, the instructor shall provide the following for each team of three or four:

1. Pen
2. Tape

3. Two old books for each team (these can be obtained for little or no money from a thrift shop or a library book sale)
4. Simulated or real contraband of many varieties

For item four, the sky is the limit. One could simply use a scribbled note that represents a coded message. A thumb drive could be used. Instructors could provide dollar bills, aspirin (to represent unauthorized medications), or even a pen knife.

My new favorite simulated contraband to use in this exercise comes from candy canes. Simply use three inches of the straight part of the candy cane as a cigarette. If it comes in a plastic wrap, it can remain there for the exercise.

Let students carve a niche in the pages to accommodate the candy cane cigarettes. They will likely use the pen to do so. This is to be done with the simple instruction, "Hide these 'cigarettes' in this book with the tools provided. Once they are done, have them report out. Focus on the successes and how well the contraband was concealed.

Give the second book to the students. Tell them:

- They have a five-minute planning time
- The goal is concealment
- Demonstrate how staff quickly shake down a book
- Demonstrate a thorough shake down
- Tell of the principle of plenty – *when there are plenty of places to look and you have little time, the search will be less thorough*
- Let them carve the pages and conceal the contraband

- As they report out, prompt them to compare the first attempt to the second.

Because of the principle of plenty, better hidden items will likely escape detection. Ask students where the niche is best placed to hinder detection in a cursory search. A good answer is next to the binding and in the middle part of the page numbers. The niche should not be too deep, just enough to contain the payload.

Extra credit and contraband control distinction goes to the student who suggests a false front of white paper taped over the hollowed area.

Contraband control will continue to be necessary even after the passing of hard print books. Still, in consideration of our mission to protect staff, offenders, and the public, it behooves us to learn old manners of concealment. This hands-on method gives staff and students the framework to detect bootleg.





## To Alien-ate

Did you ever wish that you had a super power? Do you wonder what it would be like to be an alien? Do you ever think of ways that you could gain an edge on the job? If so, consider this icebreaker is a great introduction to any safety module. It is out of left field, certainly, But it harnesses the universal notion of safety as the most important part of the corrections profession.

To those who think that life is not diverse, consider the duck-billed platypus. It looks as though it was pasted together from different animals. Though less exotic, the moose looks like it was constructed from spare parts. Perhaps it is true that anything that could happen in nature will eventually happen.

Taking this concept to another level, we can speculate about the many different forms aliens might take. For those who do not believe in extraterrestrial life, please suspend disbelief. Popular culture commonly has aliens appearing as human – reptiles, short grays with large eyes and large heads, and tall, empathetic pale beings. What other features could they possess?

### **Part 1:**

What could extraterrestrials look like?

1. Give the example of animals that live in a dry environment develop secondary eyelids
2. Ask the class what extraterrestrials look like in popular literature
3. List the ideas the class offers

## **Part 2:**

What special, superhuman powers should staff possess in order to be effective corrections staff?

1. The class designs perfect staff to increase safety
2. Give examples such as mind reading, eyes on back of head or integrated body armor.

## **Part 3:**

What value are these attributes?

1. Have participants list how the attributes from Part 2 can be used every day on the job
2. For example, if staff could read offender minds, they would be able to anticipate specific circumstances to thwart plans in order to enhance safety

## **Part 4:**

How can staff have attributes somewhat like this?

1. State that staff cannot really read minds. However, data collection, observations and pattern analysis can help predict behavior of offenders
2. Ask class what tools are at our disposal to enhance safety.

Clearly, we are neither platypi, moose, nor aliens. We are mere mortal human beings. But with special tools and training, corrections staff can perform a job in super-human fashion. And safety is what it is all about.

## It's the little things

Nothing chills the blood of corrections professional quite like the discovery of a twelve-inch shank. Yet, the vocational reality of dangerous weapons comes in many forms. Sometimes we forget that the little thing can also bring pain and disorder.



*(For example, look at how many little weapons can be made from a small measuring tape.)*

This is a fast-moving excursive that needs little prompting for participants who have worked inside correctional facilities.

1. Split the class into teams of three or four members each
2. Issue a safety warning. “Be cautious! Be careful with the materials provided.”
3. Give one team a box of paper clips and a bag of rubber bands.
4. Give the next team pens and tape and paper.
5. Give the next team staples and three manila folders.
6. Give the next team a tin of mints and a sock.
7. Tell the teams that they have to make a weapon with the materials provided.
8. Give fifteen minutes and let each team report their creations to the rest of the class.
9. Distribute the article below.
10. This icebreaker is a great segue into contraband control modules.

This exercise takes staff into a mindset that small components can be fashioned into dangerous weapons. For example, paper clips and rubber bands can be made into a mini mace with a flexible whip-like handle with metal spikes.



## The big deal about a little contraband

*Speeding, in the eyes of the law, is speeding. If the 55 miles per hour speed limit is exceeded, it is against the law. Someone who travels at 56 mph is technically in the same category as those who violate at a much higher speed. They are just as guilty of breaking the law.*

*So, does 56 mph really equal 70 mph? The answer is “yes” and “no.” An officer’s discretion more readily allows for a warning to the former but a ticket for the latter. Conditions may also warrant flexibility in enforcement, and fines may vary per the intensity of the infraction.*

*Often, we judge posted speed limits as wrong. Many times, we justify that conditions permit us to push beyond the maximum. We can, after all, control speed with safety, despite the posted limit. But, should our own perception of safety be the last word in enforcement of any kind?*

*Unfortunately, this mentality comes into play in our correctional facilities. Some professionals believe that contraband control is conditional. Not all contraband is equal, they reason. Little things that seem innocuous do not represent a threat or warrant punishment. What harm, they would ask, is a stick of gum or a staple? However, both items can disable a lock, serve as fasteners of notes with instructions for mayhem from one prisoner to another, or represent the beginning of an illicit trade empire inside the walls. All contraband items, no matter how seemingly insignificant, represent a potential danger to the facility.*

*To understand this, let’s look at a definition of contraband.*

*“Contraband is any illegal good. It is something that is not permitted in the facility. It is anything prohibited by law, rule, or policy. It is someone else’s*

*property, purloined or borrowed or authorized property in excessive amounts. Contraband can be permitted items that have been altered without permission.” – From “Wake up and Smell the Contraband” 2nd edition, by Joe Bouchard, LRP Publications 2005.*

*Perhaps the key to all of this is in the second sentence - something that is not permitted in the facility. If it is not permitted, it is forbidden. Just like a posted speed limit, the line is drawn at a certain place. It is neither conditional nor graduated. There is no interpretation necessary. “Is not permitted in the facility” quite simply means that the item is not permitted. Unfortunately, some staff will justify their actions as they redefine the rules. They may reason that little things do not mean much.*

*Imagine that a staff member is compromised by a prisoner who was successful in a game of manipulation. The origin of this power play could come from one of a number of sources: overfamiliarity, naïveté, filling a void in the life of the staff member, or as a reaction to staff division. Thus, that staff person may feel compelled to break the contraband introduction rule for an inmate. The compromised staff member would face discipline or lose his job if he performs the favor of introducing contraband into the facility.*

*For example, imagine that your facility recently forbade staff to bring in pens that do not have a clear barrel. Some staff will cling tenaciously to a favorite pen, even if it becomes a forbidden item inside the walls, asking ‘what threat could that type of pen represent?’ A pen with a dark barrel can conceal many things. Large denominations of money, for example, or notes, instructions, small maps, and correspondence can all be hidden inside a pen. Narcotics too can be bootlegged in a pen. All of that is less possible with a clear pen. Entry control staff can very simply look at the clear pen for bootleg and permit staff to enter if all is ordinary and legitimate.*

*But suppose this staff member brings narcotics into the facility using a non-clear pen barrel. This one incident can produce many possible dangerous outcomes, since contraband equals power. Now the prisoner with the narcotics supply will be able to purchase a reputation of power and wealth through commerce. That inmate will be able to hire protection and place hits on staff and prisoners at will. Contraband also creates a powerful rallying point for security threat groups because they are strengthened by illegal commerce. Staff and prisoners will be less safe and the overall safety of the facility might be in jeopardy. All of this is due to one staff person refusing to follow a clear pen barrel rule.*

*Staff vigilance and enforcement of contraband rules bring security to a facility. However, it is not just the responsibility of the front gate officer. All of us have a stake in maintaining a facility clear of illicit goods. The administration can facilitate safety. For example, new changes to rules should be posted. If they are simply read at line-up, not everyone will be aware of the changes. Posting a list of permitted items near entry control allows all those entering know which items are acceptable and forbidden.*

*The administration also has a responsibility to enforce these rules in an even manner. Uniformity is key. Staff will know the likely sanctions of introducing contraband into their facility if punishment remains consistent. Uneven rule enforcement sends mixed messages. Staff should never interpret a facility's contraband guidelines in light of their own needs. Rather, it is best to think in terms of the worst possible punishment for the smallest item, which will help reinforce the idea of dissuasion.*

*It is everyone's responsibility to report any contraband. Each incident should be written and include the nature of the contraband, time, place, persons involved (both staff and prisoners) and any document that officially removes the contraband from circulation. All of this makes it easier to add the incident to a crime mapping scheme to ascertain patterns.*

*In contraband control, little things do mean a lot. The least significant item can actually be the gateway to instability, staff and prisoner injury, pandemonium, and even death. Unfortunately, some staff smuggle in an item that is the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back. Yet, the inexorable flow of contraband can be slowed by corrections professionals. Each illicit item out of circulation contributes to a safer facility.*





## Piñata Regatta

Are there many things more fun than busting a piñata and scrambling for the candy and small toys? This is a delight not only for children but also for adults. Perhaps it is the wonder of what is inside, that wonderful anticipation that makes this a favorite of almost everyone.

For this exercise, the facilitator needs:

- One piñata;
- A stick to break the piñata (rules of caution apply);
- A blindfold;
- Candy and little toys to fill the piñata;
- Small envelopes. The facilitator puts one slip of paper in each envelope. Before the exercise, the facilitator writes on the slip of paper a certain type of contraband with number value (gum – 10 points, cell phone – 20 points, narcotics – 30 points, machete – 100 points, and so on). The facilitator places these in the piñata;
- A contraband control quiz. (see below)

The facilitator displays the piñata and fills it and asks, “What is typically in a piñata?”

Once those answers are recorded, the facilitator asks, “What could one hide in a piñata?” This is where the corrections knowledge comes into the discussion.

Next the facilitator asks, “How can we determine what is inside the piñata without opening it?”

Then the instructor tells a tale of ingenious hidden contraband. These stories are easily located through the internet or by asking seasoned corrections staff. The story I would tell concerns a talented prisoner who made realistic and comical soap sculptures. However, they were hollow. What did he hide in these?

Then the class is divided into teams. With a flip of the coin, the winning team gets a chance to answer a question from the contraband test. Each time a team answers correctly, that team gets one swing at piñata. The team may choose who gets the one swing, but that person must be blindfolded.

The first team to crack open the candy-filled piñata gets to scramble for goodies. When they pick up the envelopes with description of contraband, they are to be given no explanation. They are instructed, however, that they may not open the envelopes. Whoever has the greatest number of points has found the most valuable contraband and removed it from the system, making it safer. That person could be awarded prize by the facilitator.

Here is a true or false test with the answers. You may also create your own test.

- 1 Contraband is no longer a major problem in corrections F
- 2 Contraband exists only in maximum security facilities F
- 3 Contraband in a prison or jail setting can be almost anything T
- 4 Monitoring and observing patterns are good tools to hinder contraband  
T
- 5 It is realistic to assert that staff can stop all contraband F
- 6 It is realistic to assert that contraband is power T
- 7 Contraband has to be a solid, tangible item to be contraband F
- 8 Three groups that suffer from contraband wars are staff, offenders, and the public T

- 9 The contraband nerd has a deep focus in the study and mitigation of bootleg  
T
- 10 An advanced contraband nerd may have mechanical reasoning and  
economic sense T
- 11 You do not gain a thing if you find out who has the contraband: Finding the  
bootleg items is enough F
- 12 There are five categories of the illicit inmate economy T
- 13 The Chaotic is a patient, invisible contrabandist F
- 14 The monopolist is almost always flashy and impetuous F
- 15 Maintenance of the process is an important component for the total  
contraband control process T
- 16 Disgusting as it seems, some prisoners will use body fluids to adhere items  
to other things, like a note under a table T
- 17 Toothpaste can be an excellent fastener T
- 18 If a prisoner finds duct tape or Velcro, they have struck gold T
- 19 Velcroed pant seams have facilitated sexual incidents between rouge staff  
and inmates T
- 20 Medicine is supposed to help inmates, but it can be abused and sold to  
others T
- 21 Medicine is not dangerous contraband because it is not a weapon F
- 22 Staff often underestimate the lure of contraband power on inmates T
- 23 Writing tickets on contraband traders will always extinguish the  
entrepreneurial fire of the trader F
- 24 When an old trick has played out, staff should expect never to see it again F
- 25 A few small betting slips can be the tip of the contraband enterprise iceberg  
T
- 26 It is usually a buyer's market F
- 27 Hiding in plain sight is an obvious hiding space once one discovers it T

- 28 Sacrifice contraband occurs when a prisoner ‘gives up’ small contraband and continues to conceal more valuable wares T
- 29 Inside trader is a contrabandist in the form of a rouge staff member T
- 30 Supplying a prisoner with a weapon is a misdemeanor F (it is often a felony)
- 31 Conservative, quiet traders usually have a longer run of trading success T
- 32 A jealous prisoner will never snitch on another when contraband enterprises are concerned F
- 33 To prisoners, contraband equals comfort T
- 34 Cell phones, a coveted contraband item, keep getting bigger and bigger and dumber and dumber F
- 35 Foiling unauthorized commerce enhances safety T

The joys of piñatas should not be limited the youngest generation. In fact, corrections professionals of all ages can learn a great deal from this exercise. At the very least, the excitement of getting some unexpected candy is worthwhile. So, load up the piñata with toys, candy, and envelopes that contain one paper each with point values.



## Arise, Sir Loin of Beef!

Like an old chest, memories from childhood are stored away. Sometimes, there is something that opens that chest and tells you to look inside. This happened to me. While reading about Scottish royalty, an odd cartoon came to mind. I had not thought of that for years, yet now the tendrils of my mind were tickled. That odd occurrence bought the notion for this strange, word play icebreaker.



Many decades ago, Warner Brothers produced dozens of cartoons that played in theatres along with their motion pictures. The most famous character in their animated stable is Bugs Bunny, the rabbit with a Brooklyn accent who was easy-going until harassed into action. In one episode, the Sheriff of Nottingham pushed our hero around and went just a bit too far. Predictably, the antagonist received a not-so-gentle treatment.

Always the master of masquerade, Bugs tricked the Sheriff into thinking he was the King of England. Raising the scepter, Bugs knighted the unsuspecting villain, inflicting many knots on the noggin. He used a funny phrase with each bludgeoning: “Arise, Duke of Ellington!” (smash); “Arise, Sir Loin of Beef!”

(smash), etc. His impeccable accent during that ruse (as portrayed by voice genius Mel Blanc) was that of a British Aristocrat.

Facilitators who want an unusual way to start a module on monikers can explain this or, better still, show the clip. It is easy to find on YouTube. It is best, of course, for the clip to be previewed for obscenity or other post-market alterations that may have been added by a zealous fan.

1. Break the class into teams
2. Give a dictionary to each team
3. Have each team make five joke royalty titles like this:

Sir ----- of -----

Some examples are:

Sirloin of beef

Cirrhosis of the liver

Certificate of Authenticity

The dictionary will help students create these joke names. You could also use word play on count, baron, baroness, duchess, lady or duke.

After the students have reported out, have the class answer the questions below. Be sure to have a scribe place the answers on the board for consideration.

1. What self-imposed titles do some prisoners adopt?
2. What monikers have you heard in the prisoner population?
3. What is the reason for nicknames for prisoners?
4. How does prisoner slang relate to this?

5. Is there danger in not maintaining a prisoner moniker database?
6. Do certain groups appear to use monikers more than others?
7. How do we discover the monikers?

To some, a cartoon is not a good teaching tool. I disagree. I believe that this odd blast from the past in animated form allows participants to relax a bit and flex their minds in a strange, yet important way. Even if the method is odd, the subject is important. Staff and the public benefit with enhanced safety when we compile and study prisoner monikers.



## Master of Mixed Metaphors

We use gestures and body language to convey meaning. The written and spoken work take meaning to another level. Some expressions are very direct and literal. Others have a colorful flair.

While the flavorful expressions seem to entertain, they also tend to confuse. This is especially true if one is not familiar with the language or the variety of local colloquialism.

Give the class a grid and have them match the following:

| Expression  | Matching object |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>Draw a line from the expression to the matching object</b> |                 |
| As strong as an   | dog             |
| As light as a   | fox             |
| As sly as a   | kitten          |
| As slippery as an   | ox              |
| As stubborn as a  | owl             |
| As loyal as a   | mule            |
| As soft as a  | mouse           |
| As wise as an   | feather         |
| As crazy as a   | eel             |
| As quiet as a   | loon            |



Now construct horrible expressions that have no meaning. The object is to butcher the language and show how easy it is to convey an idea in the wrong way.

| Expression   | object |
|--|--------|
| <b>Create an expression that makes no sense- Example: As sly as a rock</b> |        |
| As strong as an  |        |
| As light as a  |        |
| As sly as a  |        |
| As slippery as an  |        |
| As stubborn as a   |        |
| As loyal as a  |        |
| As soft as a   |        |
| As wise as an  |        |
| As crazy as a  |        |
| As quiet as a  |        |

This is a good way to loosen inhibitions about the written and spoken word and serves as a great way to initiate a communications module.



## A Dubious Roll Model

Here is a good exercise to use to introduce contraband control modules. It is very simple and inexpensive. In addition, it may inspire bad puns and juvenile toilet humor. Still, that is a small price to pay for an interesting and memorable icebreaker.



In terms of props, what could be simpler than acquiring (nay, borrowing) a roll of toilet paper. Do not get bogged down in brand, ply, texture or strength. The idea is to have a visual for participants to focus on in this exercise inspired by contraband control.

This is how it works:

1. Break the class into teams of about five members each;
2. Give each team a roll of toilet paper;

3. Ask what can be done with this to derail/ hinder security;
4. Give five minutes of brainstorming;
5. Let each group report one use each;
6. Display master list on board.

You may have a list similar to this:

- Hide small things like a twenty-dollar bill
- Stop up toilets and sinks to “flood the rock”
- Create Papier Mache statues to hide contraband
- Make a club by moistening, adding toilet paper, drying and repeating

Ask the class how to hinder this abuse and how to limit the contraband.

We can wipe out crime and disorder by focusing on the little things. And this little ice breaker focuses on one of these tiny but persistent perils in corrections.



## You Will be Dead to Me

I will now engage in a little corrections soul baring. I have had hundreds of students over the years. Dozens of them have gone to work in our correctional facilities. I am very proud of them and realize that they help protect me as well as others.

I taught them how to enhance safety through contraband control. Of course, one has to learn contraband tricks in order to foil them. Unfortunately, it is a number's game – with many quiet successes comes a single, yet loud failure. One of my students used some of these tricks to help a prisoner escape. It is a matter of public record and the student turned corrections officer turned convict, actually served time for those actions.

I had a crisis of sorts until I realized that no one could have stopped this if the student truly wanted to traverse this illegal route. Since then, I have issued a caveat to all students to whom I teach contraband control:

*If you are on the right side of the law, I will help you find contraband and enhance safety;*

*If you are on the wrong side of the law, I will inform the inspector at each facility at which you are housed that you have special, dangerous knowledge. You will otherwise be dead to me.*

If that sounds a bit harsh, remember the notion of betrayal, selfish schemes and fellow staff and the public put in danger by a rule breaker. I simply have no sympathy for staff who have gone wrong.

How do we make this into an icebreaker?

1. Tell a few staff gone bad stories involving contraband
2. Gary Cornelius' "Art of the Con" is a good source for this
3. Consult the internet
4. Ask seasoned staff for stories
5. Have student conduct internet searches for the penalty for furnishing contraband to prisoners
6. Cover all fifty states and compare data.

There is altruism in teaching others how to effectively function and excel as corrections staff.

The grand goal of enhancing safety for staff, prisoner, and the public is weighty and worthy.



## ***BONUS EXERCISE***

### **Which way is North?**

By Shane Gray



Where am I? Where am I going? For all of us at one time or another, these are valid questions. When left unanswered, these can produce anxiety. All is not lost, though. To ease the trepidation, leadership and communication are handy tools. When used well, they will point the person in the right direction.

Leadership is not just about telling people what to do (e.g., point north). It involves giving people a sense of purpose, creating a picture or vision, and developing the confidence of others. This exercise starts with a simple demonstration:

- Tell everyone to close their eyes.

- Tell everyone to point to the direction north and to hold their arm/pointer finger in place.
- Tell everyone to leave their arm in place and open their eyes. What they will see are arms and fingers pointed in all kinds of directions. DEMONSTRATE which way is NORTH and then have the participants point in the direction of NORTH.

What were the effects?

Here are some discussion points:

- Point out that it is not enough just to tell people what to do. Leadership involves giving people a sense of purpose (why are we doing this), it involves creating a picture (often called vision) of the way that things can be, and it involves developing the confidence of others.
- Good communicators and leaders can fail if they do not meet the needs of their people
- Even when given great instruction, we still did not achieve 100% success. This is an opportunity to ask, “what went wrong?”
- The leadership and communication style must match the needs of the team to achieve 100% success.
- We must give proper instruction, with demonstration, and knowledge.  
TELL – SHOW – DO  
BE – KNOW – DO

Not all routes and destinations are the same. However, good communication and sound leadership are necessary for everyone’s success.

*This icebreaker is courtesy of **Shane Gray**, Human Resource Developer Specialist, Michigan Department of Corrections.*

*“I am a current employee of the MDOC with over 27 years of service. I began my career as a*

*Corrections Officer inside what was then known as the largest walled prison in the world, the*

*State Prison of Southern Michigan. I have held positions such as Sergeant, Lieutenant, Assistant Deputy Warden, Human Resource Developer, and currently, Human Resource Developer Specialist”.*





## ***BONUS EXERCISE***

### **Rule of 21**

**By Chris Schweikert**

As a trainer, you always must have a trick or two up your sleeve. And there is nothing like a little card trick to mesmerize your audience. Plus, with the ever-attentive classroom full of corrections professionals, this exercise allows the trainer to test his or her meddle.

Begin by taking 21 playing cards from a deck of 52; try to ensure that you do not have the same cards.

Have someone pick a card from the deck; make sure they do not show you, they may show anyone else observing. Once they have their card have them place it back in the deck of 21 and then have them shuffle the cards.



Once the cards are shuffled, from the top of the deck place them face up one at a time making three rows across. Continue with the same three rows going placing a card face up on top of the previous card until all rows are complete with seven cards down, three rows across.



Have them choose the row of their card, not telling you their card only the row.



Start with a row in which their card is in and from the top down slide the cards into a pile one over the other. Then take the row their card is in and repeat so that the row with their card is in the middle of the other two rows of cards.

Complete this process three times.

Once you have completed it three consecutive times. You then count out the cards and the 11th card in the deck should be the one that they chose in the beginning.



Communicating between employees the theme of this icebreaker. Much as you ask a magician how a trick is done think of common answers (I.E... It's magic, I can't share my secrets) With this you will not only show them how you accomplished your task, but you will tell them to give them the information of how the task was accomplished so they can also learn it.

Chris Schweikert

Has been with corrections since 1998. He started as an officer at the State Prison of Southern

Michigan (SMI) and promoted to Sergeant in 2006. Then in 2013, he was promoted to Human Resource Developer/ Institutional Training Officer.

Schweikert says, “The ability to have an effect on staff at all levels makes this the most rewarding job one may ever have asked.”





# ICEBREAKER 101 – Volume IX: UNDAMMING THE ICE

FOR THE  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CORRECTIONAL TRAINING PERSONNEL

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## **You can't say that in a classroom**

Chances are you will hear swearing every single day while you work in corrections. To most, it is not unusual. In fact, it is as normal part of the job as a burn is to a fry cook. But profanity can polarize staff and cause bigger problems than initially suspected.

Is it realistic to think that profanity will disappear from our worksites? That will never happen. But, we can control what comes out of our mouths. It is a simple matter of modifying habits and thinking before speaking.

Whatever your stance on 'swear words', it remains that corrections professionals are under intense scrutiny. And profanity can lead to time consuming endeavors. Sometimes investigations are launched over words that are construed as demeaning or of a sexual tone. What starts as a joke or a different sort of expression can become harassment.

This is not just a corrections phenomenon. Comedian George Carlin shocked the world in 1972. There were, in his estimation, seven words that you could never say on television. From that monologue, Carlin expanded it to 300 plus words over a decade later. With the rise of cable television, changing of standards, and pushing of envelopes, things changed.

Not too long before the writing of this icebreaker, a colleague and I were discussing a topic that (to the untrained professional) sounded less-than-professional. In fact, it was a mental exercise. We were trying to compile an a – z list of expletives. Oddly, one really must think hard to find twenty-six swear words (one for each letter). The project was placed on hold until we can fill in the last few elusive profanities.



This prompted the idea that this compilation is an example of an icebreaker one can never say in class. No matter how funny, engaging, or even how instructive that could be, “The Expletive ABC’s” is forbidden in an agency for which we worked. It is not that there is not foul language in our worksites. However, work rules and professionalism officially preclude use of those words by employees. Granted, there is the real and the ideal. But we know when we have to employ the latter and when the former may be acceptable.

Still, we can assess how we train corrections staff and criminal justice students by employing a few questions. List these on the board or on a projected word document to keep the ideas flowing.

1. What are some topic that we cannot officially talk about as corrections professionals while on the job?
2. Is the training room exempt from these rules?
3. Make a list of training topics you can never experience in an agency such as this. **DO NOT** develop the training. Rather, just list the topic. Here are a few examples:
  - a. Sexual positions – a poll



- b. Drinking 101 with actual alcohol on hand
  - c. Cigarette, drugs, and pills – a hands on sampler
  - d. Mean things to call convicts
4. Why are these things forbidden topics? Will discussion of the topics potentially harm the agency?

This is a great segue into modules that cover employee rules, discriminatory harassment and humane treatment of offenders.

So, give this icebreaker a whirl. You may even learn a bit about yourself and the participants. In fact, you might even have a (expletive deleted) time!





## Just shut up!

You have to break some eggs to make an omelet. But making this rather than scrambled eggs requires more skill. And there is even more finesse required when creating the perfect poached eggs. So, making eggs can be easy or may require a good deal of skill and patience. It depends on what you are going for.



The same could be said of communications.

A major part of success in the corrections profession is in how well we communicate with each other. The messages we wish to convey may be the same

point but delivered in different manners. Sometimes we have time for subtleties. Other times things are blurted out without regard to consequences. Words have an impact and what we say and how we say things will guide our success in our daily operations.

Perhaps the name of this icebreaker has the distinction of featuring the rudest title in the entire catalog. Fair enough! It certainly is an attention grabber. And it begs the question, “What is in the wording?”

Comedy superstar George Carlin, famous for cutting through the bovine scat, once said of euphemisms, “Shoot is shit with two 0’s.” When you speak, do you gravitate towards ‘shoot’ or the similar expletive?

### **Part 1: Reminder of the rule 8 about a quiet atmosphere**

Imagine that you are supervising the law library. Your agency’s policy directive mandates a quiet atmosphere conducive to legal research. In other words, you are authorized to maintain quiet. In fact, posted law library rule number 8 states that a quiet atmosphere conducive to legal research shall be maintained in the library.

This rule is approved of by the Warden’s signature. It is backed up by your agency’s policy directive. You must keep it quiet. How do you do this?

Select a scribe or volunteer to list the many alternatives to the phrase, “Just shut up!” Direct the scribe to list the words prominently for all in attendance to see.

Some phrases you might hear are:

- Can it!

- Keep the noise down, gentlemen.
- Shaddap, youse guys!
- Shhh.
- Rule number 8 states, “...”

Naturally, an active group will offer a rich variety of suggestions.

Before moving on, the tactic of saying nothing should be mentioned. With this, there are many alternatives. These include ignoring the noise, evicting the loud person(s), and issuing a written misconduct report.

## **Part 2: Consequences**

Certainly, circumstances will impact the utility of any phrase uttered. Some groups may be receptive to a feigned plea of “Come on, fellas. When you are loud, you make me sad.” Others might find that phrasing is clownish and without teeth. If circumstances show that a corrections professional used this phrase in the past and issued misconduct reports, the quiet may be secure. The reputation of the practitioner is part of the totality of circumstances.

One by one, the facilitator will review each phrase suggested in Part 1. Ask the likely outcomes of phrase. Would the corrections professional who uses a certain phrase to inspire quiet gain compliance?

### Part 3: Teachable moment

Which phrase is most likely to get one assaulted? Rank the phrases in order of likelihood of physical harm.

Is the use of “Just shut up!” necessary? There are many stops on the road to compliance. For further considerations on the topic of quiet and silence, distribute the following article to participants. How quietly you did this is up to you. After all, you are the facilitator.



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## **Silence is Suspicious: Dealing with the Uncomfortable Quiet in Corrections**

"Quiet is good in this business." I have heard this phrase stated in various terms from corrections professionals over the years. That is certainly true. We all want a quiet day. That usually translates into a safe day.

But, there is extreme quiet. That is the unnerving silence that we are faced with from time to time. It can be described in a Hollywood cliché. In many war, police, or western movies, the hero's sidekick notes that things seem quiet. The hero then offers the assertion, "It's almost too quiet."

How quiet is too quiet in corrections? What does the quiet mean? Are there ways that corrections staff should or should not react to the silence from the prisoner body?

Of course, you should judge the tranquility based on your own institution. What is normal-quiet for one institution may be loud for another. Generally speaking, when things are too quiet, they are abnormally silent. The prisoners that staff can always depend on to converse in loud voices are now non-verbal. There is no murmur. There are no vocalizations. The silence is normally reserved for the quiet loners and those who have adopted a vow of non-speaking for religious or personal reasons. It now has infected the other prisoners. Staff's institutional intuition is usually heightened as a result of the talking moratorium. A silent dining hall is as disturbing as a loud one.

What could silence mean? The dead silence periods can be described in one of the three T's. They are Tension, Test, and Threat.

**Tension.** If it is too quiet, it may be that prisoners are afraid for their own personal safety. Prisoners unwittingly act in concert in this instance. They collectively know that something terrible might happen soon. Usually, it can be supposed that there will be a major prisoner to prisoner grudge manifested in a fight or assault. The quieter it is and the longer the period of silence, the bigger the expectation of violence.

Generally, when people are preoccupied and tense with a foreshadowing of danger, they become reflective and watchful. Tension-silence is the institutional version of this human condition. Here, prisoners are not acting together to purposely rattle staff.

**Test.** This sort of silence is a feign. Sometimes, prisoners join forces to test staff. Inmate leaders typically ask questions in this situation. How effective is this group of staff? Can we intimidate the officers with silence? Will they try to break the silence with nervous conversation when prisoners as a group hush themselves?

One purpose of this test may be just to use the information later. For example, this test could point out which officers easily succumb to the stress of broken communications. This is typically done in a newly opened prison with rather green staff.

It may also be a test of personal persuasion. The instigator may spread the word to see if prisoners will follow the lead. Also, the initiator will probably note which prisoners follow the suggestion. Whether it is a test of staff, prisoners, or of personal charisma and leadership, it is still a test.

**Threat.** Silence in the prisoner body can actually mean a threat for imminent action against staff. It is much more serious than the test because action is forthcoming. The test is only a reaction and information gathering exercise. With the treat-silence, the quiet is the signal for some maneuver. This is where the phrase, "It's almost too quiet!" fits best.

Certainly, the tension driven silence is potentially dangerous. However, it is different from the threat silence. In the former, the prisoners are not necessarily in control. In the latter, prisoners are purposely trying to control the tone. Remember; in the tension silence prisoners only anticipate that there may be some excitement. For the threat silence, prisoners intend to hurt staff.

Vigilance, communications, and planning are major weapons in fighting any corrections battle. These work well against the three T's of silence. These are important habits of operation that corrections professionals use on a daily basis.

Vigilance is our primary function to perpetuate security. A forgotten part of watchfulness is documenting significant events. Unusual silence is an event to note. All staff feed information to the communications machine.

Communication should be between all areas of the facility. It is here that we brainstorm as to the cause of the silence. And, if there is a lingering silence in the prisoner body, other institutions should be informed. Perhaps the same phenomenon is occurring elsewhere simultaneously.

And, lastly, all facilities should have policies and procedures in place to deal with disturbances. Part of planning is reviewing and remembering what to do in case of emergencies.

So, silence may not necessarily be golden in corrections. However, silence in corrections can be significant.

## Breaking the Chain

The chain of command is important in corrections. It is a great way for question to filter from the ranks and for answers to disseminate. And many times, when there is confusion over a situation that has not yet happened before, a broken chain may be the blame.

Not long before I crafted this icebreaker, I had just one person show up for a class which I was teaching. It was an unusual occurrence, as attendance had been strong up until that point. Still, one had to wonder why. In fact, we two – the student and I, the instructor- pondered the reasons that just one person showed for class. The theories between me and the student were many:

- Mistake over extended spring break
- Spring fever
- Many could not contact me because of emergencies
- Bouchard made a mistake
- The semester is too long.

Still, much to the amazement of the lone student, I covered that which I had set out to do with a full class. When the full class reconvened the next week, I asked two questions.

**1. Given the circumstances, what would you do if they were in my shoes?**

They answered:

- a. Continue with class
- b. Call students
- c. Email
- d. Close class
- e. Go home

**2. If I, as a professor did not show up, but the students did, what should punishment they should be able to impose in me?**



- a. Nothing – probably an emergency
- b. All ‘A’s for everyone
- c. I would go back home
- d. Pick up where we let off next week
- e. Extra credit for final exam.

Propose that scenario in terms of your training program. Ask the participants both of the bolded questions above.

This segues nicely into a communicators or chain of command module. Our vocation runs on good communication and the chain command is a framework for this. A discussion of this is best achieved by issuing the guideline that real names and scenarios shall not be used as examples. It is best to make it generic and broad. Some discussion topics for this are:

1. Give an example of a chain of command that is too lax.
2. Give an example of a chain of command that is too rigid.
3. How would corrections run without the uniformity offered by the chain of command?



## Thumbs Up

Now it is time for horrible 'joke' related to this icebreaker:

Q. What has two thumbs and writes strange icebreakers?

A. This guy! (as I point two erect thumbs to my chest and beam with unapologetic pride while displaying a barely perceptible smirk)



Sorry...

Allow me to make a less cheesy approach.

Behold the anatomical wonder of the ages: the opposable thumb. Humans are the masters of the animal world because we can manipulate tools and, therefore, build civilizations. This is less likely to have occurred without this biological phenomenon. Naturally, the large brain and reasoning skills also play into this. Still, we are not at the mercy of, for example, organized, thumbed squirrels. And our respective thumb configurations play into this.

Not convinced? How can we demonstrate the utility of our thumbs? Why not try to live for a few minutes without them?

1. To start “Thumbs Up”, select four people from the class.
2. Render them thumb-less by duct taping their thumbs to a position parallel to their palm.
3. The four temporarily eight-digited participants will perform the task appointed to them. The object is to do increasingly difficult tasks without thumbs.
4. Appoint a judge, a pinnacle of integrity who can award points.
5. The person with the most points can select a small item from the box of dubious prizes as selected and compiled by any good instructor. This can be comprised of fake dog poo, plastic snakes, and the like.
6. Discuss which tasks were the hardest.
7. List alternatives taken during the exercise to compensate for the temporary thumblessness.

Here is a sample of tasks done while your thumb is taken out of the equation. along with suggested point values:

- 1 point – write your name
- 2 points – zip up your coat
- 3 points – button your shirt
- 4 points – tie your shoe
- 5 points – pick up a hand full of *thumb* tacks (note the irony of that)

6 points - untie a knot

7 points – make an origami swan

8 points – unfold a tightly folded piece of paper

9 points – Deal and play a hand of poker

10 points - shuffle a deck of cards

So, always appreciate your thumbs. Consider them part critical tools in daily success. This can segue into a module on critical tools. Two thumbs up for those who can list all critical tools they use every day.



## In This Room

Corrections practitioners have different concepts of the threshold of contraband. In other words, one may find a single piece of tape innocuous while another will view the same object as a possible component to a larger, more dangerous scheme. There are strong arguments for both sides and all points in between.

Still, it may be best to introduce pre-professionals to the concept of contraband while erring towards caution. Initial lessons in contraband control, arguably among the most important training for the novice, should have a blunt impact.

There are two items necessary for In This Room. They are:

A roll of duct tape

A rubber knife

1. Keep the rubber knife and duct tape out of view.
2. Seek two volunteers. They will be the contrabandists in this exercise. Do not announce what they are to do at this point. The element of surprise must be in place and the other students will learn the lesson better with fewer indications of what may transpire.
3. Appoint an observer. This person will note the hiding tactics and the progress made. The facilitator will also observe and comment later as necessary in order to support the observer.
4. Send the other students out of the room.
5. The facilitator tells the contrabandists that they use tape and hide the shank. The contrabandists are forbidden from disassembling or altering any part of the room or the furniture. I once conducted an exercise like this with no instructions like that and the students placed contraband inside a computer. True, it was not discovered, and I took solace in the fact that the computer was not harmed. Still, one never knows the price exacted by zealous contrabandists.

6. Contrabandists discuss where to hide the shank and list the possibilities.
7. The shank is hidden in the best place deemed by the contrabandists.
8. The observer takes notes.
9. Students are called back and told this: “There is a weapon hidden in this room. It is not on the person of the three students (contrabandists and observer). Find that weapon. Be careful. Do not damage anything in the room.”
10. The observer watches the search and take notes on the tactics and organization.
11. Once the weapon is found, unless it is not found in a reasonable time, the observer conducts a post mortem.
12. The searchers have a chance to give their observations.
13. The observer then conducts a post mortem on the methods of hiding.

Once discussion has ceased, distribute the following article and commence the module on basic contraband control.



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## What the hell is in that cell?

### Adhesives

Imagine your life without tape, shoelace, Velcro or staples. These items always seem to be around. In their absence, when need is great, one might think, “My kingdom for a staple!” These are useful and often overlooked inventions.

Scarcity of resources is a fact of life for prisoners. Quite simply, offenders are in circumstances that do not allow for their possession of many items. Things that adhere are often on the forbidden list. Staples, tape, and Velcro are contraband in most jurisdictions.

Agents of adhesion are not usually what comes to mind when one thinks of contraband. But, they are tools that help conceal forbidden items. A cell phone taped under a locker serves as an example. A shank or razor that is hidden on the underside of a table with adhesive bandages is another. Notes containing information about staff or escape plans “glued” between pages in a book is yet another example of the dangerous utility of stick substances in the hands of some offenders.

Staples, paperclips, and tape are generally forbidden in the hands of prisoners. Still, staff have these items in their desks and work stations. So, they are just a diversion away for the prisoner. Offenders assigned as a clerk in the library, office, or warehouse have access to these items, especially if staff are complacent.

Staff must monitor the many uncommon uses of other items not normally thought of as fastening agents. Here is a short list of adhesives at the fingertips of enterprising offenders:

- Adhesives can also come in the form of items that one can normally buy in the commissary. Toothpaste is a good sticky agent.
- Glue from envelope flaps also works well to join things.

- Things that are thrown away by staff are fair game in the mind of the contrabandist. Some prisoners will dive in the garbage in order to retrieve gum.
- Caulk from the windows can form an effective seal between pages.
- Naturally produced elements such as semen, mucus or blood can be used as fasteners. As sickening as it seems, necessity is the mother of invention in many cases. This is a reminder of the omnipresence of other potentially infectious materials in the corrections setting.

Contraband in the form of adhesives is often overlooked by staff. It is like the story of a person who smuggled wheelbarrows across a checkpoint in Berlin during the Cold War. The soldiers at the checkpoint diligently searched the dirt as the wheelbarrow was pushed one way. Returning the other way without the wheelbarrow was not questioned. The person was smuggling the wheelbarrows.

Sometimes the tool is another part of the contraband. Common fastening items are so ordinary that staff forget their utility. They are, in effect, hidden in plain sight. Staff must think like contrabandists in order to take these subtle and effective items out of circulation.

It behooves staff to check their agency's prisoner property policy directive and contraband control policy directive. This will surely help mitigate the peril in everyday, yet overlooked contraband like adhesives.





## Gross! Wash your hands!

Theories and concepts are important. They allow us to look at models in order to understand commonalities in circumstantial differences. For example, learning the basics of changing a flat tire can be adapted for all sorts of occurrences. The key is to use the right principles in all sorts of weather. However, we should caution on certain circumstances, like changing a tire on an incline. It may seem like stating the obvious. However, once stated, the cautionary tale for special circumstances is in the mind of the future practitioner.



We can also, for example, talk in broad terms about the benefits of contraband control. While it is important to see the many group impacted by good searches, what about the pitfalls? Is a talk about contraband control complete without addressing the ubiquity of potentially infectious materials?

1. Find three volunteers in the classroom. Ask if they are shy or easily embarrassed. If they answer ‘no’, then they should be useful volunteers for the purposes of this icebreaker.
2. Pair them each with one recorder.

3. Direct all initial volunteers to tell the recorders everything they did since waking up. It is important to be as detailed as possible.
4. In turn, each recorder writes the daily doings on the board.
5. The facilitator asks if anyone was wearing gloves during these acts.
6. With a red marker or something contrasting the text on the board, the instructor asks if each act is potentially infectious. For example, turning a door knob with a bare palm could be potentially infectious.
7. Now, distribute your agency's policy directive regarding infectious materials.
8. Using a mirror on a telescoping handle, demonstrate how to look for contraband under a table without touching the search area.
9. Note to students – Caution! It is best to look rather than feel when searching for contraband. Many experienced corrections staff know of someone who searched with hands rather than eyes and was poked with a sharp object.

And now that the special topic of infection is in the minds of students, an airborne/bloodborne pathogens module can commence. In the event the facilitator wishes to instill some broad considerations about the benefits of contraband control, the article that follows can be distributed.



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## **The many benefits of contraband control**

When a major contraband item is found, there is one less bargaining tool or weapon taken out of the loop. But, that is just one benefit of the process. There is a conceptual dimension. We don't usually look at the other gains that effective control of illicit barter produces.

They are not as obvious as removing a dangerous item from the playing field. They can be grouped into five categories. They are benefits to security, staff unity, prisoner rehabilitation, services, and to the taxpayer. All of the following are possible, often ignored effects of contraband control.

Security. Of course, effective contraband control keeps one group of prisoners from gaining primacy relative to others. Otherwise, they may be in an optimal position to terrorize staff and other prisoners. It also:

- Limits other inmate challenges to staff.
- Exposes other contraband trading areas.
- Disrupts staff complacency.
- Enhances the base of knowledge of contraband tricks.
- Unmasks large illicit trading schemes. What you find may lead to searches which may uncover more contraband.
- May stop 'dirty' staff from improper relations and gift exchanges.
- Dissuades potentially unscrupulous staff from participating in the illegal trading
- Produces a less stressful workplace. This compound, as less worried employees are more effective, and therefore, more vigilant.

**Staff Unity.** Contraband control between areas builds confidence and respect. This eliminates the ‘us versus them’ mentality between staff. Therefore, we are less likely to be our own worst enemy. It also functions as a sort of cross training. For example, programs staff become exposed to a daily custody concern, and custody staff may enhance a program by removing contraband from the area. It strengthens both sides of the equation and builds professional empathy. This may lead to a friendlier place to work, as less entrenched cliques tend to dissolve under these circumstances. The diminished interdepartmental strife that results lowers stress. And our pride of a well-run facility that proactively seeks contraband builds all areas. This newfound admiration may further strengthen, as the communications network becomes more potent. Unity is conducive for a fully activated intelligence-gathering network for the goods of the institution. Shared projects such as contraband control achieve these things. Progressively good staff relations result in a favorable domino effect.

**Prisoner rehabilitation.** How can elimination of bootleg help prisoners become better citizens? If you think that some prisoner behavior without contraband is not good, imagine if contraband squabbles are added to the formula. Contraband lords promote fear among other prisoners. Therefore, the more contraband struggles that are present, more prisoners will form counter-alliances and obtain weapons for protection. So, the elimination of bootleg removes some reason to misbehave. And marginal prisoners may not start down the path of illicit trade if the opportunities are not so easily seen. Perhaps some prisoners in a more controlled environment may not acquire even some vices. Above all, it fulfills part of many mission statements, safety to residents.

**Service enhancement.** Prisoner trade encumbers services. Elimination of this trade gives opportunity to improve all work areas. Areas that are swept clean of contraband will benefit from focus of their original function. Once the process becomes habit rather than the new mode of operation, progressive results will show. Examples of areas that can refine under less contraband pressure are education, food service, health service, prisoner store, vocational education, and other programs.

**Taxpayer.** We should never forget the taxpayer. We offer two gifts to our patrons when we successfully hunt for contraband. They are assurances and fiscal responsibility.

Under the category of assurances, we facilitate public trust toward the department and the profession. We are less likely to be viewed unfavorably if there are fewer stories of uncontrolled bootleg. With that is diminished staff corruption. The public wants us to control ourselves and the environment of the prison. Contraband control does those two things. No news is good news.

We also show our fiscal responsibility in this process. Because of high training and recruitment costs, staff retention is always expensive. Yet, in the safer and positive work environment that comes from successful contraband control, staff turnover is lessened. In a more conceptual sense, this also produces professionally satisfied staff. Generally, they become healthier, which save tax dollars. Our vigilance in the war against barter leads to a more fulfilled, healthy professional that is more vested in corrections.

Of course, not all of these benefits will necessarily be realized. But, that is reality. And, some of which is actually achieved will never be acknowledged. Not all staff will maintain optimism in the face of the daily task of controlling contraband. Further, some benefits are contingent on others happening. Yet, all of the above is possible. Consider all of the potential good that can be achieved by simple contraband control.



## The Most Important Job

There seems to be a natural inclination to overstate the importance of one's vocation. In doing this, we often undervalue the work that others do. Is this fair or is this just part of being human?

Of course, in corrections, sub-vocational division leads to squabbling and, in due time, manipulation from enterprising prisoners. One of the primary lessons in corrections is to offer prisoners no handles. Yet, staff who dispute the worth of the jobs of other colleagues inadvertently give manipulators leverage.

That is why we need to look at the various jobs in corrections within the system. In order to do this the idea that a prison is like a city is useful.

1. Break the class into teams of three.
2. Tell them to list functioning entities in a city. For example, restaurants, accounting offices, apartments.
3. Allow five minutes to let class fill in the list
4. Have a scribe write each list on the board
5. Compile to include all areas in one list and eliminate the overlap. For example, if two teams listed police station, just write it once in the master list.
6. Have class try to prioritize the items on the master list.
7. If, for example, the city accountant is listed as not very high on the priority list, advocate for that position.
8. Now have the class list functioning areas of a prison or jail.
9. Compare the list to the city list.
10. Remind students that some offenders look for missteps in operations and administer written complaints or law suits for what they deem are substandard services.
11. Ask students how all areas working together in a prison can increase safety.

The clear lesson should be that all parts of the prison are vital and should cooperate. For more on this topic, please distribute the following article “Wheel of Corrections”

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## Wheel of Corrections

I thought that I had heard all of the idioms and expressions that relate to one of our most common transportation tools. I speak, of course, of the wheel. Imagine how much less interesting our language would be without the following:

...the wheels of industry (or progress) ...

...let's not reinvent the wheel...

...let's roll...

How about the Wheel of Corrections?

Recently, my supervisor presented me with a metaphor worth repeating. It was so accurate and insightful, I am printing it here with his permission. What follows is The Wheel of Corrections.

“This is how I explain it”, he said. He prepared to draw a simple diagram on a piece of paper. In the center he produced a circle. In it he wrote the word housing. “The housing function is the hub”, he said. “It is where the offenders live. It is central to everything”.

From the edge of the housing unit hub he drew lines that radiated out like spokes. That is, of course, because these represented spokes. To each he assigned a function. There was the business office, programming, education, food services, maintenance, administration, healthcare, psychological services, and the administration. “All of these support the housing hub,” he said to me. And it was clear to me that spokes could be added or subtracted to fit the needs of different facilities.

All of the spokes have a part in touching or impacting the central part of the equation – the housing unit factor. If there is too much pressure or emphasis on any of the spokes, the hub would be stressed. In theory, all of these spokes should have equal worth. Health care, while very important, should be as important as food service, as important as the administration, as important as maintenance, etc in

their relation to housing. All had to support housing in a balanced harmony or risk warping the structural integrity of the hub.

I thought that I detected a glint in his eye that signaled the logical and fitting conclusion to his concept.

Drawing a circle around the spokes he said, “This is custody,” Then the light bulb in my skull completely illuminated. Custody represents the hard exterior that holds the many complimentary spokes in place on the crucial housing unit hub. Without custody, it would all fall apart. The cohesive factor provided here is security. Then, no matter how strong programming might be for example, it would be weakened by an overall lack of structure from the other systems on the hub. Custody provides the cohesion and keeps all in balance.

I believe that one can expand upon this excellent illustration. Think of the possibilities. The ball bearings could represent the staff who constantly move to keep operations rolling. When we gauge pressure on the tire, we are assessing the internal factors that may cause damage the systems if not checked. Perhaps the tread represents the tough shell of the system that can survive the various hazards that we may encounter as we roll ahead. And the overall quality of the wheel is made of experience, training, and professionalism.

There are rare and wonderful occasions that you hear an analogy from a colleague or another source that gives cause to pause. In other words, the parallel that is so apt that you admire the idea and think, “There is no better way to describe this.” And a metaphor is a useful way to bring an abstract concept into a more useful and concrete explanation. The Wheel of Corrections certainly gives us a clearer understanding of all of our interrelated subsystems.





## Sweet!

Look at this sweet roll. Sweet! Definitely, it is sweet! And it is a bakery item that is not only tasty, but also huge. Is it the largest sweet roll on the planet? Perhaps not. But a local business produces thousands of these tasty treats (meals, really) each year. The unusually large size draws the attention and the taste brings customers back.

This is an icebreaker that addresses communication and introduces the concept of contraband control.

### **Part one – How big is it?**

1. Split class into 5 groups
2. Appoint a judge (judicious, impartial, impervious to the pressures of special interests. This person will optimally be the embodiment of the truth)
3. Display the sweet roll in its large and decadent glory
4. With a measuring tape and a mail scale, describe the actual dimensions of the sweet roll. It is not uncommon to purchase a two-pound sweet roll that measures 4 inches by 4 inches by six inches
5. Have each list three creative ways to describe how large the sweet roll is. I do not mean by measurement. That has already been done. The description should evoke an image of a colossal sweet roll.
  - a. Big as a baby's head
  - b. Can choke a t-rex
  - c. A delicious cannonball
6. Judge decides on the most creative phrase
7. Sweet roll is given to winning team



### **Part two – Is it dangerous?**

Have you ever heard of the file baked into a cake story? In old movies, a prisoner's loved one or devotee smuggles in a file inside a cake to a lock up. Staff let it through with no questions asked and the prisoner uses the file to escape.

Certainly, this is an outdated notion. We have metal detectors and do not permit visitors to bring baked good when visiting offenders. But, we suppose the ridiculous in order to walk around the idea of contraband control.

1. The facilitator mentions the cliché of a file baked into a cake
2. Teams are appointed
3. Teams record how and what can be smuggled inside a large sweet roll.
4. Teams report out
5. Salient suggestions are examined and counter measures for introduction of contraband are discussed. Facilitator can steer the class towards:
  - basic vigilance
  - policy directives
  - metal detectors

- smell
- weight
- demeanor of visitor

This exercise is a great prelude to contraband control modules. It is also good to do this in anticipation of lunch. In sum, something can be pleasant and potentially dangerous at the same time. Bon appetite!



## I really need a cup of coffee

Years ago, I recall my father telling me about Mort. My father and Mort worked together in a factory for decades. My father spoke of how despite the long hours and hot conditions (it was a Steel Heat Treatment shop), people had different ways of rebounding. Mort, for example, could look as though he were on death's door. However, a quick shower in the changing room brought him from the state of carrion to rejuvenation.

My father's remedy was coffee, and I concur. Many brainstorming sessions, articles and long driving trips have featured a cup of coffee. And the gamut has been run in these instances. I have had coffee that could strip vanish (I miss my Dad's coffee) and I have savored excellent French Vanilla lattes. Both of these opposing poles and all cups in between have driven me through some sluggish times.

I will state here that my completion of tasks is not immutably bound by caffeine. But, it helps. Part of it is chemical and part of it is ritual. Whatever the balance, it works for me.

Admittedly, these are not exciting stories, but they are true. This is an icebreaker that could be tailored for a staff manipulation model. Also, this is a way to address substance abuse. Either way, the commonality of caffeine is a great way to start.

### **For the manipulation module:**

1. Facilitator belts out this first statement, “I really need a cup of coffee!”
2. Facilitator waits for reaction and asks if anyone is willing to buy him/her one.
3. If not (or even if so), ask students to on the spot tell him why they will not get him a cup of coffee

Some reasons include:

- No obligation
  - No money
  - I am not the trainer’s servant.
  - You should have come prepared.
  - There should be no food nor beverages in the classroom
  - Coffee is bad for you. It will stunt your growth!
4. Play the room dynamics as you will. My playful nature is such that I would feign indignance every five minutes or so if I did not get a cup of coffee.
  5. Emphasize that there is no obligation for any facilitator to be given a cup of coffee by a participant.
  6. Ask students to issue persuasive statements to get you to buy them a cup of coffee.
  7. Students in this exercise get to explore both sides of the manipulation coin.
  8. Launch into staff manipulation module

### **For the substance abuse mode:**

As I wrote this icebreaker, I took a little break. Walking around the hotel at which I was staying, I spotted a small, clear bottle with a label lying on its side. It was a bottle of Cinnamon Whiskey. It lay on its side empty and forlorn in a parking lot.

1. Use introduction at the start of this icebreaker.
2. Ask if coffee is a drug.
3. Go over agency prisoner discipline policy and emphasize the topic of substance abuse.
4. Look at employee discipline policy on the same topic.
5. Compare the two, including consequences.

For readers aware of the thrash metal band Anthrax's 1998 release, you may recognize the song about coffee called "Cup of Joe". Although the sentiments of the song are a few decades old at this writing, it does not diminish the message. Sometimes we really need a cup of coffee.



## Sweet! Part two

Having just penned a two-part icebreaker about coffee, I feel the need to return to baked goods. And, why not? They are universal. However, this is an icebreaker about negativity, but it starts with an item that is generally received in a positive manner.

In the town in which I live is a restaurant called Hilltop and they are famous for their large sweet rolls. These are baked colossuses and are undeniably delicious. In my first run of this, I acquired two fresh rolls. They were bigger than a puppy curled up. In fact, even the mega-hominid - the legendary Sasquatch – would be sated by such a large treat!



1. The sweet rolls, of course, are the props and the conversation piece. They can be tied into any corrections lesson. In this proposed introduction. We focus on negativity. With the following premises:
  - a. Corrections, like it or not, is an inherently negative vocation;
  - b. For many, it is easier to say something negative than positive

After this introduction, facilitators announce that participants have one minute to write a complement about any topic they choose. For me, in the maiden voyage of this icebreaker, the Upper Peninsula was the topic. It did not matter if the participants had never been to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. In fact, they only needed to imagine or rely upon what they had heard about the region. (please see below)

2. Participants will be instructed to, for the sake of fairness, keep personal identity information off the slip;
3. Sweet rolls are displayed and announced as incentive to write the best complement;
4. Two of the gathered complements will be selected as winners by an unbiased volunteer. Perhaps a sweet roll can be given to the judge right off the bat.
5. Alternately, the facilitator can judge.
6. Take note of any who believe their complement was better than others.
7. Take note if the person shares the mega-roll.
8. Report any interesting observations in the post mortem.

Granted, this is a very short icebreaker. But, the notion of using incentives (food as bait in this instance) is nothing new. This is a great segue into any module about emotional wellness.

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On August 22, 2017 in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, this icebreaker was tested. The participants were about 20 committee members from the Employee Engagement Team. Seventy-five percent of those present were Lower Peninsula natives, but all had visited the Upper Peninsula. For those who may not know, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is a large wooded area whose largest city has a population of a mere 25,000.

With a huge sweet roll at stake, these are the compliments harvested about the UP:



- Space – no people for miles 😊 (possible bears)
- Kind, rugged and welcoming. Generous and beautiful. Great pace
- The Upper Peninsula is an area that is pristine and fresh
- Gorgeous scenery
- In Marquette people were diverse and friendly
- It is a beautiful place set back in the '70's where people are friendly, drinks are cold, and you can disconnect easily because there is no cell service
- The Upper Peninsula contains 20% of Michigan's land and about 80% of the beauty. Love it!
- Prettiest and most unique landscape in all USA
- A calming place – gorgeous sunsets, lakes and land – the other Michigan
- The UP: It's beautiful! The lakes, rivers, falls – all of it. And the food!
- The clear air and quiet instantly lowers stress and makes you smile
- Scenic nature trails
- When in doubt, UP it out!
- Beautiful
- And the compliment deemed as the winner by our judge – A surreal piece of heaven that offers all the beauties of nature and opportunity for peace found nowhere else.

***Thank you, good colleague Dianne Koskinen, for the idea for this icebreaker.***



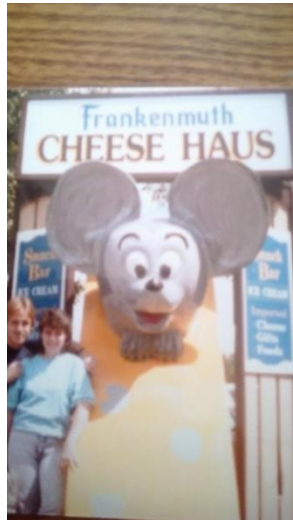
## How far is it to Frankenmuth?

For corrections staff, resourcefulness is a virtue and a curse.

It is a virtue when we need to innovative thinking and inventiveness to slow the forces that chip away at safety. With resourcefulness, we can sometimes excel when we are deprived of tools.

Resourcefulness is a curse to corrections staff when inmates possess and use it against us. Some examples of this inmate ingenuity are seen when prisoners trade TEAbacco or when they preserve cartons of milk in toilet tank in lieu of a refrigerator.

With that in mind, let us consider a time long past. Some of those who read this may not remember 1988 and the state of mobile communications at that time. Cell phones were as big as bricks and just as dumb. GPS was merely an idea and not a widely accessible function. So, this is a matter of different times and of different tools. Without tools, as mentioned earlier, resourcefulness is useful.



Let us suppose that a friend says she wants to travel from Lansing, Michigan to Frankenmuth, Michigan. (For those who do not know, Frankenmuth is on

Interstate 75 about 90 miles north of Detroit. It is a tourist town that has a theme of Bavaria and serves arguably the best chicken dinners on the planet.)

How resourceful will your class be?

1. Divide class into groups of three.
2. Tell class that it is 1988 and you have no cell phones or other technology from after that time
3. Tell the class that you want them to tell you four things:
  - a. How to get from Lansing, Michigan to Frankenmuth, Michigan
  - b. How many miles it is on the route they select
    - i. (Hint: numbers between dots on highways indicate distance between the dots. Add them up.)
    - ii. (Hint: Look at the scale [1 inch = 12 miles, for example] and add)
  - c. How long it will take? (Distance x rate = time)
  - d. Which specific turns will you take?
4. Give each group a map of Michigan, a highlighter, a calculator, ruler, paper and a pencil.
5. Have groups report out
6. Solicit a group consensus. Which is best way to get there?

When technology fails or is not yet invented, skills are needed. This exercise is a way to look at the dying art of map reading. It is also a way to use skills and resources in the absence of an easier way.



## Oh, bovine scat!

Hardly an accurate description of cow excrement, B.S. has crept into our language as an idiom that suggests disbelief. It is not used commonly as a warning to tread cautiously near the cow barn. As an exclamation, it says in a colorful (and organic) way the word “LIAR!”.

For example, a known liar declares that he won a huge lottery pot. You doubt the veracity of his tale due to experience with this prevaricator. Your first inward thought is Bovine Scat, or something rather close. Other times, a gut reaction can spur disbelief as a way to inspire caution.

Break the class into groups of four and have them discuss the most memorable and fantastic story that they have been told. Then they report out.

There are many examples. Among these are tales of bravado, fighting stories, yarns about how much money a person allegedly has, and accounts of sexual conquests.

There are many different sorts of liars and they are linked to the idea of persuasion. And to dissect this and apply this to or vocation, we can ask a series of questions. Following is a progression of discussion points to achieve this:

1. Have you ever lied?
2. Do all prisoners lie?
3. Should staff ever tell an untruth?
4. Is silence or omission a lie?
5. Why do some prisoners lie?
6. What is the most memorable bad lie that you have been told?
7. What are some of the ways you can react to lies outside the facility?

8. What is a way that you can react to an apparent lie?
9. Are there clues or signs that indicate untruth?

Corrections is a vocation that prompts us to think critically. In other words, just because we see or hear something, it does not mean that is what happened. I once heard a mentor state that if a person is talking, they are either telling the truth or not. That is actually deeper than it seems. But, the ability to say Bovine Scat in your head during a verbal interchange may prompt thinking that helps enhance safety.



## This is the end

What do you say to a person who has spent most of his or her vocational life in the tricky and cynical world of corrections? How well can one reflect on a career in an objective manner? When someone says, “this is the end” and refers to an imminent departure from the field, is there a way to temper the poignant feelings that come with such decompression?

# END

Aspirations and expectation – everyone has these. Did you ever consider that these can vary at different times or phases of an event? For example, regardless of political leanings, many are optimistic when a new president takes office. This euphoric sentiment often turns to disappointment up when the term ends. Perhaps more tangible is the feeling that one gets when a new semester starts and optimism pours out. This is often supplanted by a sinking feeling of despair by the time the midterm manifests.

Think back to all that you did to prepare for your first day in corrections. Do you remember all of the studying and physical fitness you endured just to reach your goal? And when you successfully completed academy, the culmination of your work and dreams, you could say that your aspirations had been achieved.

Then there is the matter of expectations. Corrections staff acquire a firm case of realism, even if they enter the profession with pie-in-the-sky hopefulness. My personal philosophy is of positive realism. It is one of hoping for the best and preparing for the worst. How did your philosophy evolve while in the profession?

This is an icebreaker for those with more than a few years in the profession. In fact, this icebreaker could be best conducted for a group that is within five years of retirement. It is a way to self-assess while looking at how others in the group feel about the job.

1. Gather various statistics about job satisfaction and present to the group
2. Break group into teams
3. **Question one** – what is your workday likely to be on your last day?
4. Get discussion
5. **Question two** – what would you like to do on your last day?
6. **Question three** - Look at legacies- what should the public expect from a corrections career?
7. Make the point that what you want to do and what you will eventually do are not necessarily the same thing.
8. Solicit group feedback about the pros and cons of retirement.

Naturally, the success of the exercise hinges on the willingness of participants to engage. A trustworthy facilitator who has been through the ringer, as it were, will contribute to this success. In the end, when someone ponders a career through objective lenses, the exercise can be described as useful.

Most people say that they cannot wait to leave the job. That is very natural, but few vocalize the idea of losing the role one has played in the vocation. For the healthiness of the corrections professional, these things must be considered.



## Name that dog

Legendary insult comic Don Rickles, according to some, had a way with words. For example, a friend of mine worked at a hotel at which Mr. Rickles had locked himself from his room. My friend, a very large man, unlocked the door for the notable guest. Rickles said to him, “Thanks, Tiny!” Later my friend beamed as he told me that he was insulted by the great comedian.

Granted, there have been occasions in which corrections has featured insults, even those of the juxtaposed variety as Rickles bestowed on my friend. This exercise is not about that, however. This is an icebreaker about appearances. And the focal point is the universally lovable canis familiaris or dog.



1. Display different pictures of dogs. Use a rich variety from Rottweilers to Pugs if possible. Ten different pictures should work well.



2. Break group into teams.
3. Have each team give a name to each dog by consensus.
4. Include other names considered.
5. List each on board as they come out.
6. Go through each and ask for rationale.
7. Segue into how names may impact perception.
8. List a few prisoner names that may not necessarily accurate.
9. Make the point that names do not matter in the end. Never underestimate any prisoner.

A dog may be your best friend, but you may not care for the humor of Don Rickles. But the importance of misperceptions based on names is crucial for the success of corrections professionals.



## Block party

Behold the simplicity of a wooden block! It has six sides and is of simple construction. Most of us played with these as children. With letters and numbers on the side, they are figuratively and literally a fundamental of early childhood education.

And some of these shapes follow us into adulthood, though in a modified form. Dice, a gift from Near East civilizations, are a cube of sorts. So, too, are the rectangular Jenga from the Hasbro company.



Here is some information from [Jenga.com](http://Jenga.com) accessed on September 12, 2017:

“Jenga is a game of physical and mental skill. Built on the simple premise of stacking blocks, Jenga engages players of all ages, across all cultures. Jenga's success rests on its solid play value. Players take turns to remove a block from a tower and balance it on top, creating a taller and increasingly unstable structure as the game progresses.”

There are 54 blocks that are rectangular in shape. The blocks are a few inches wide and made of wood. In playing this game, I have found that a spirit of friendly competition comes to the fore. More spirited games in which I have participated feature all parties playfully heckling others to topple the tower.

(Please note that this is not a commercial. Still, to give credit where credit is due, the game Jenga is a useful tool in training when employed the following way.)

Another element of competition comes in the form of answering questions. This is where the blocks come in.

1. Have 54 questions related to the training on hand.
  2. Number the blocks 1 – 54.
  3. Mix them up.
  4. Stack the blocks in three to a row with the widest part of the block in a horizontal orientation.
  5. Next, stack the next three more on top of those perpendicularly. In other words, they must be staggered.
  6. Continue staggering the rows and stack in this fashion until you run out of blocks. If you did this correctly, you should have a tower of blocks with 18 rows and three to a row.
  7. Have someone from the first team draw a block from the tower and read the number on the block.
  8. Have that person place it on top to the tower and answer the question corresponding with the number on the block selected. Remember that the number on the block corresponds to the question in the list.
  9. If the question is answered correctly, the other team must draw a block and repeat steps 7 – 8.
  10. Points can be assigned in whatever way the facilitator sees fit. One way is to assign a point for each correct answer. A wrong answer (or no answer) subtracts 2 points from the team.
  11. The first team to gain 10 points wins.
  12. A toppled tower is the ultimate game stopper, despite the points earned prior.
- “Block Party” has it all: tactile tests, stand and deliver quizzes, competition, and the possibility of a tower falling apart. Let this serve as the building blocks to your curriculum.

## What color is that shirt?

(Great appreciation to the Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College CJ 101 “Introduction to Corrections” class in the Fall of 2017 for helping me inaugurate this icebreaker.)

It is safe to say that almost all of us are guilty of rigid thinking. No matter how understanding and unbiased a person claims to be, there is certainly some hot topic button. Tolerance can be touted as a virtue, certainly, but in practice it can be fleeting.

Of course, a firm decision with no ambiguity is warranted at times. For example, an assault requires a reaction, not lengthy inquiry. Furthermore, if someone is scaling the fence, there is no time for indecision. The response is without question: Stop the escape!

To illustrate the differences between the absolute and nebulous truths, I arrived in my CJ 101 class in a winter grey camouflage shirt. I also projected the image of the fabric on the screen.

“What color is this shirt?” I asked the class. There were many answers. As they replied, I gave no sign nor sound of acceptance. Thus, the answers continued. Some said green. Some said grey. Some said white and others replied that the shirt is black.

I said that it is in the eyes of the beholder.



I told the students that this fabric is a representation of the truth. The truth never appears the same to everyone. For someone, it could be absolute – a black or white. Others see more subtlety in various shades of grey. Not everyone will always see various shades of grey. It all depends on the circumstances.

Here is an example: Years ago, while in Florida, I had a discussion about World War II with a veteran who served in the European theater. He fixed me with an unwavering glare and told me that he thinks Winston Churchill was the worst war criminal ever. I regarded Churchill as the key figure who stood alone against aggression from the Axis. The differences lay in our perspectives. I was born in post-World War II America. My conversation partner served in the Wehrmacht on the side of the Axis.

I gave the example of the strict rules of photocopying documents in the prison law library. Sometimes, prisoners who want photocopies look only to the line in policy that says the service will be available. Beyond that in policy are written the many

limitations of the services. In some cases, those who adhere to those well-spelled out rules are accused of rigid thinking and abuse of authority by those who insist they are guaranteed copies of anything they want and for free. Again, it is all in the perspective.

Students were asked some issues or examples of rigid thinking. They offered these:

- Nationalism
- Racism
- Disclosure of medical information
- Politics
- Religion
- Classism
- Ethnicism
- Sports affiliation
- Sexism

The camouflage grey shirt is more than a prop. It is a great way to introduce the many nuances of any issue. How fitting that something that is meant to conceal can actually illustrate hidden truths.



## Time for Change

It has been said many times in many different ways: nothing stays the same except that everything continues to change. Think of the changes in personal technology in the United States since the 1980's.

For example, in the 1980's, there were no small, smart cell phones. Mobile phones at that time were as big and heavy as a brick and just as dumb. Only a few people could afford them, so they were rare. One could basically make a call with the device and that was it. Incidentally, reception was dubious at best.

Today, smart phones are everywhere and capable of so many things. With smart phones, everyone has a calculator at hand. In fact, there is an application on how to figure out different percentages for the purpose of leaving a tip.



Let's reflect on changes from the simpler time of the 1980's by figuring out the amount of pocket change one would need in these simple math problems. Here are the rules:

- Break the class into two teams.
- Give one team 30 seconds to solve the story problem.
- If the team is correct, they get one point.
- If not, and the next team can solve the problem in 30 seconds, that team gets two points.

- This is done in an old school manner - teams will neither use smart phones nor calculators. All must be done by hand.
- Extra point is awarded if team can tell you the breakdown of change in actual coins.

You and your father enjoy breakfast at the Acropole restaurant. Since the year is 1986, your bill is \$ 12.00. You wish to leave a 15 % tip. How much change is this?

**(\$ 1.80 should be added to the bill. That is seven quarters and one nickel)**

Your sister wants to see Duran Duran at Pine Knob and is five dollars short. She wants to borrow that amount from you. From another transaction, you already owe her \$ 3.50. If you loan her the five dollars, who would owe the other what amount?

**(She would owe you \$ 1.50. That is six quarters)**

Your 1980 Pontiac Phoenix needs gasoline. In fact, it is on fumes, as they say. Gas is \$ 1.26. a gallon and you need to fill a 13-gallon tank. How much do you need to do this?

**(\$ 16.38 will fill the tank. That is 64 quarters, one dime, one nickel, and three pennies.)**

You and your date dine at Dimitri's Rendezvous. The bill for this excellent meal is \$32.00. (Again, it is the '80's. Fine dining was less expensive than it is now.) You wish to appear 'classy' and will leave a 20 % tip. How much change does the tip require?



**(\$6.40. That is 25 quarters, one dime and one nickel. Change at this point is not considered classy. You might want to leave bills rather than metal.)**

Bonus question: If your dinner bill at Dimitri's Rendezvous is \$32.00, how much is the total with a 20 % tip? Calculate the change, but never leave that much metal on a table if you can help it. It simply is not classy.

**(\$38.40. That is 152 quarters, one dime and one nickel.)**

Knowing about change in times and in operations is important for corrections staff. Ours is a routine vocation that is sometimes punctuated with the desperate need to quickly modify the way we do things. Also, with so many generations in the work place and as correctional clients, we need to be aware of our differences. Below is an article that can be distributed to the class to reinforce these concepts.

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### The parable of the forklift

There was once a high-low driver who enjoyed her job very much. She did her job well. On her forklift, she was an artist on the move. As she hauled heavy loads from tangled piles to precarious points, she and her high-low personified poetry in motion.

She manipulates the machine like a well-practiced violinist plays. The high-low was her instrument. Among her skills were her muscle memory and knowledge of the machine's capabilities. She knew its quirks and its power. Above all, she knew the layout of the shop floor. To say that she could navigate blindfolded on the shop floor was not an understatement.

Little did she know that the way she had operated for years was about the change. First, in an effort to economize, the layout of the shop was reconfigured. The

routes on which she effortlessly maneuvered her forklift were in no way like they had been.

Also, the older but comfortable forklift was replaced by a smaller one. She was rendered completely ham-handed because the controls were different than her well-seasoned forklift. The play on the steering wheel and brake pedal were so different from what she was used to, she wondered if she would ever adjust.

In anticipation of change, she was given some new driver training. At first, she thought that this would be beneficial. After all, she had a new machine to acclimate to. But the trainer was unsure and gave contradicting orders while monitoring the practicum. She found that because of the tight controls and nervousness of the trainer, there was too much overcorrection as she drove.

In a word, the training was nerve-racking. She was, in effect, unlearning the finesse and pathways that she developed employed for nearly 2 decades. Matters were made worse by the many subsequent changes to the layout of shop floor. It seems that once the new configuration was in place, no one could go without suggesting a change.

She learned that the only constant in her work life was change itself. The anxiety of the ever-morphing paradigms and are continually retooled skills led into her life home. She became irritable and unpleasant, contrary to her vivacious and gregarious attitude.

One day, she was moving an expensive load. It seemed rather well-balanced on the skids. However, her feeling of equilibrium was displaced by the trainer who yelled instructions contrary to her movements. Because of an over-correction that she made, the high-low lurched. Four things happened:

1. The load fell to the cement floor, breaking all the specialized, expensive parts.
2. During a second of panic, she collided with a support column. The shoddy, little new forklift, far from being the heavy metal model that she was still used to, was now out of commission.
3. She fell during the collision and landed wrong. Trying to brace her fall, she broke her left wrist. Adding insult to this injury, her left hand was her dominant hand.
4. She felt that she was suddenly useless at something which she did so well for so many years.

The high-low driver was hit with many changes from the different angles. Her old, familiar fork lift - her critical tool - was replaced by something unfamiliar and of a light duty design. It is almost like when staff are thrown blind into a new computer system with no instruction. Her training was not comfortable. The map of the workplace was literally transformed into something alien – sometimes changed twice a week.

Of course, in uncertain economic times, change is more likely to occur. There's no question that this causes stress, especially in an anxiety prone vocation such as corrections. How do we lower the stress and increase safety in the meantime? Here are some things for all of us to reflect on during tumultuous times.

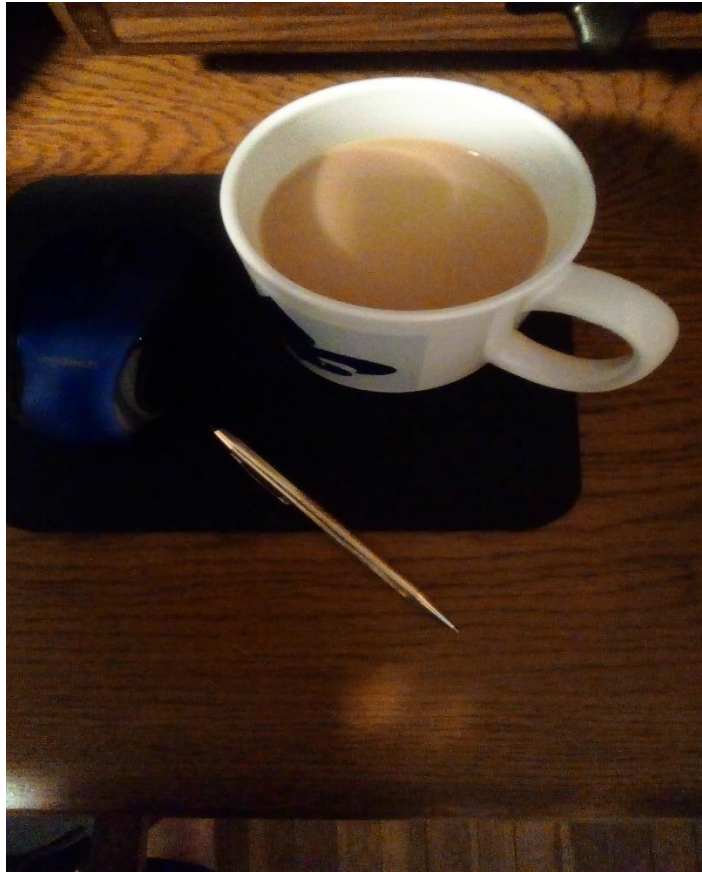
- Immediate change may be necessary. But it takes time for prisoners and staff to absorb these changes.
- Old habits die hard. Long-term, engraved task patterns are hard to undo.
- Shortcuts can make long delays.
- Patient and well-conceived training will go a long way in fostering the success of new changes.
- Safety is always the most important component in corrections.
- When suggestions for change are sought, some may forward ideas in order to make a mark on the process. The suggestion may be based on ego rather than the benefit of overall operations.
- Anxiety is common in times of uncertainty. It is up to the individual to refrain from adding to it.

There were so many dimensions to change. In the end, we are all small parts to large, interconnected whole programs and safety machine. Change is not comfortable – but it is inevitable. Because of this, we must cope in the best way possible.



## The issue with Goldie

My gold cross pen is very important to me. Goldie has been with me for over 30 years. It is a very stylish writing implement that always seems to feel perfect in my hand. I have penned some of my best ideas with Goldie and loath to be without it. In fact, I used Goldie to jot down some notes for this icebreaker.



Some tell me that the pen is dead, but that is not true. Granted the keyboard and the voice can record ideas. Still, Goldie is my pen of choice and often is what I use to stock my idea bank.

One day, there came a directive from the Warden. We were no longer to carry pens in the secure perimeter of the facility unless they were clear barreled. I understood this intellectually. After all, a correctional facility should question all people going inside and keep them to a high standard.

Emotionally, however, I felt a bit of a loss. It may seem silly, but a part of my comportment might had been tied to the pen. Goldie was a great prop when it was allowed inside. In fact, many offenders over the years asked to borrow the pen. Without exception, I said “no” and handed them a facility pen instead. The pen became a symbol of my resolution.

Still, rules are rules and discipline on the job did not seem wise all for the sake of me carrying my favorite pen into a restricted area.

Many of the icebreakers I pen deal with persuasion and manipulation. This is a common theme for corrections 101 classes because new staff need reminders of the many ways enterprising prisoners attempt to dissuade staff from following the rules.

A simple persuasion/manipulation icebreaker can be done in a few minutes:

1. The instructor tells the class that a certain pen is a prized possession of a staff member
2. That staff member never allows anyone else to touch the pen
3. Ask the class what persuasive phrases they would employ to gain use of the pen. Some of these tactics offered by past students follow:
  - a. Can I see that pen? I want to see the difference between this and a prison pen.
  - b. Compliment “Goldie” – use the flattery angle.
  - c. “I need a working pen.”
  - d. Demand the pen.
  - e. Threaten assault.

- f. Threaten to bring ten inmates if the pen is not given up.
  - g. Reminisce. State that you remember your grandmother having a similar pen.
4. Discuss the many ways that staff can answer these tactics.

This is a great segue into a manipulation module.

It has been more than a dozen years since non-clear barreled pens were banned from the prison. I benefit from this with higher safety that comes from his rule. Goldie is still a part of my professional life. The pen continues to be a part of my speaking engagements, writing, and classroom work.



## Store-o-pod

Dear reader,

You get two for one with the “Store-o-pod” icebreaker. Here, I will touch on two topics in corrections with one of my favorite beverages. More specifically, “Store-o-pods” teaches about contraband control and is followed with a related article about staff relations. Coffee is the prop for this. First, we look at the contraband control aspect.

Coffee, if you have noticed, seems to be a recurring theme in my icebreakers. And why not? I absolutely love it. And it is a ubiquitous part of our culture. I reflect on this fact because I marvel at the availability of interesting new flavors. And coffee shops are everywhere. One need not be a coffee drinker in order to know of one.

At the risk of sounding ancient, the way coffee was made when I was younger is much different from how it is done today. (I hope that it is obvious that I am not talking about the good old days when people cooked coffee in a pot on a stove or over a camp fire. That method predated me.) As a child, I remember the percolator method. When I became a coffee drinker in my late teen years, the coffee machine was popular. In our house, we measured three scoops of the chosen coffee brand and brewed a 12-cup pot.

Years passed, and my brother introduced me to the single serve coffee machine. At first, I scoffed. It smacked of elitism and it seemed too expensive. Having tried it, I realize that I am no longer throwing out coffee at the end of the day. Also, I have a wide variety of flavor choices with the single serve. The coffee is not scooped out into a basket. It is premade. A small pod made of light plastic is placed in the machine and one cup of specialized coffee is just one minute away.

This is a very simple icebreaker:

1. The instructor brings in coffee pods that are now popular with certain brands of coffee machines.

2. These are made of light plastic and covered light metal foil. In addition, there is a mesh lining that serves to keep the coffee grounds out of the coffee cup. Of course, the remaining element is the coffee.
3. Offer the premise that staff may use these small pods.
4. With that premise, conclude that prisoners could have access to these pods if staff are inattentive or distracted.
5. Ask the class what could be hidden in the small pods.
6. Ask the class what could be made from the pods.
7. Have teams write the answers to these questions and report out.
8. The winning team gets free coffee for the session.



Coffee! It helps us work. It is a great part of socializing. It is a comfort. But could it be dangerous? It certainly could. It is not only a commodity of trade and can inspire fights and turf wars. In addition, the storage pods can hide small items and be made into tiny weapons or containers to store and throw potentially infectious materials.

Enjoy your coffee and be aware of the dangers of ingenious and applications of the pods.



## Store-o-pod Part II

Dear reader,

You get two for one with the “Store-o-pod” icebreaker. This part is about staff relations. Coffee is the prop for this. Now we look at the staff relations.

This is a great way to kick off a staff relations module while enjoying a cup of coffee with the class.

1. The instructor will prepare a large pot of coffee.
2. After all the people who want to partake in coffee have served themselves, break out some cookies and coffee cake. One trainer with whom I work calls this bait. I find that free food is a wonderful way to loosen the inhibitions of the participants.
3. Break students into teams of five.
4. One person will serve as a recorder.
5. Another person will serve as the presenter.
6. One by one, the facilitator will ask questions. See 8 -
7. The recorder will write the answers from their group as the discussion takes place.
8. Who takes out the garbage at your home?
9. Who does the dishes?
10. Who mows the lawn?
11. Who shovels the snow?
12. Who makes the coffee?
13. Do you believe that there is a fair division of labor?
14. What happens if the person who usually does a task does not do so?

15. What are some ways to fairly assign and perform little jobs around the house?
16. Do prisoners take note of how staff might try to force or fool other staff into doing undesired tasks?
17. Have each person report out.
18. Distribute the Impact of Coffee Pot Predator article.



## Store-o-pod Part II worksheet

Who takes out the garbage at your home?

Who does the dishes?

Who mows the lawn?

Who shovels the snow?

Who makes the coffee?

Do you believe that there is a fair division of labor?

What happens if the person who usually does a task does not do so?

What are some ways to fairly assign and perform little jobs around the house?

Do prisoners take note of how staff might try to force or fool other staff into doing undesired tasks?

## **Impacts of coffeepot predators**

Dear Reader: Please note that the following collection of coffeepot predators is a composite based on 30 years of observation in the course of consuming caffeine. I am not currently in a coffee club and am in no way pointing fingers at any current colleagues.

At work do you ever wonder who leaves the last cup of coffee in the pot? In these instances, there is not quite enough in the pot for another full cup. However, there is too much of throw away. Because of the frequency of this, you suppose that cannot be pure coincidence. Even the most trusting soul would conclude that someone is jockeying to avoid making the next pot of coffee for the group. The coffeepot predator has struck once again.

Before we delve into this behavior, we might question the merit of this particular complaint. In other words, is such a little bad habit really worth the bother? The answer is that it could be. It depends on a number of factors including the duration and intensity of the problem. Also, we have to consider the tolerance of all people in the group.

First of all, in the stressful job such as corrections, staff unity is occasionally strained. In addition, because we depend on one another for safety, little acts of inconsideration can compound and produce fractures on this crucial working relationship. Third, offenders watch our moods and interactions. They see division, even if it is over who makes next pot of coffee. Given that and an enterprising handler, a point of departure into the setup is provided. And we all know that manipulation can lead to breaches of security, uneven enforcement of rules, introduction of contraband, and inter-collegial distrust.

In theory, a coffeepot fund is a wonderful thing. Colleagues donate money and or coffee and cream and sugar. In exchange, one can drink coffee throughout the entire workday. That is the theory. In practice, we often encounter some coffee oriented behavior the stresses the good relationship between coworkers.

Here are some irritating little behaviors connected to a coffeepot fund that can steadily erode staff relations:

**Jockey** – Described above, this is the person who times it so he or she never makes a pot of coffee. Although it seems like a lot of effort and observation to avoid work, this is a common coffeepot predator.

**Coffees Czar** – Sometimes when the coffee club is without leader, a strong figure is needed. This is a person who takes charge, the person who reminds colleagues to donate money and supplies as necessary. However, the Coffees Czar can become an autocratic, bullying and badgering figure.

**Feigned failure** – A passive way to avoid making coffee can be achieved when someone makes a horribly weak or incredibly strong pot of coffee. If it is bad enough, the rest of the coffee club will forbid another pot from this person. It seems unbelievable for someone to stoop to that. Still, I've seen many intelligent people over the years play dumb and sabotage a pot in order to avoid a task.

**Flattery** – Some in the coffee club will fawn over the coffee making ability of others in order to avoid making a pot themselves. Working the ego of a colleague in order to make a cheap gain seems like an act of low integrity. There are some out there who use this tactic.

**El Cheapo** - Most coffee clubs at one time or another have an el cheapo. These are the people who do not pay for the privilege of drinking coffee. They may promise, but they never pay nor do they bring in supplies. It's also in the form of someone who steals coffee – waiting until it seems that no one is looking and taking a cup without donation.

It would be an empty exercise to simply identify staff dividers such as coffeepot predators. Incidentally, this is certainly not limited to corrections staff. You can find these archetypes in any number of occupational subgroups. However, since staff unity is so crucial in supporting our mission of safety, the coffeepot predator poses a more serious problem in corrections than in other vocations. Here are some solutions:

1. If there are chronic abusers but the identities are vague, a meeting can be called and this could be brought to the fore. Perhaps to avoid embarrassment, a few quick guidelines of conduct can be outlined by the coffee leader.
2. Charts or sign-up sheets can be created to fairly determine who will bring supplies and at what time.

3. Tact is important. Accusations should be proven before issued.
4. Check yourself. Be aware of your own flaws within the system before you attack others.
5. Lighten up. It is only a coffee club, after all.
6. Balance the importance of your appointment as Coffee Czar. Apply the least pressure possible when action is necessary.

It may seem strange to dissect behaviors in a group setting with a collective goal of providing coffee. However, big problems can be tied to little offenses such as undesired behavior in a coffee club. You could regard this as an awareness of potentially bigger problems. Understanding some of these behaviors and having solutions at hand is worthwhile in order to keep staff unity.

The steady drop of water through five heaping tablespoons of coffee produces a bitter brew. Much the same can be said of colleagues who maneuver to avoid little jobs and push them onto others. Like a rhythmic annoyance, the coffeepot predator never fails to irritate. Little things mean a lot. Positive staff relations can be strained through simple acts.

## Find the Perils of Bad Staff Relations

It is not secret that staff division is one of corrections most vexing problem. Below is a simple word search. Within are 10 different staff dividers and bad consequences that may result either directly or indirectly. This is a way to have participants consider the issues surrounding this very important safety issue. Have fun in your search!

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

Rumors

Clique

Deceit

Drones

Overfamiliarity

Lawsuit

Drugs

Weed

Dismiss

Sexual acts

## Puzzle Key

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|
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## The Colossal Chocolate Complement Coin Conspiracy

In corrections, we perform jobs that many would never dare to do. The added element of working inside a prison is a dissuading factor for many. Even so, there are days which are extremely difficult even for seasoned corrections veterans.

Sometimes, a quirky, interesting gesture for a deserving colleague is in order. Recently, a committee group for on which I served offered a covert tribute to one of our own. This particular colleague described the process of answering less-than-supportive emails to angry inquisitors. We really saw how much she puts into her work endeavors. Her professionalism in the face of adverse words was astounding. It was evident that she is the epitome of engagement and is truly supportive.

Secrecy was the key. This was all arranged without the recipient knowing any of the details. Someone in our group outlined the following

1. During the next meeting, each committee member was given a chocolate coin by a volunteer within the group.
2. Each person could, if they wish, write a tiny compliment on a sheet of paper that will be provided with the coin. One could write, for example, "Thank you for your energy and sense of humor."
3. In turn or as a group, participants walk up in orderly fashion and give the person a coin with the written compliment.

Or

A diversion or ruse can lure the target of the group's good wishes outside of the room. The person returns and sees a pile of chocolate coins with tiny compliments attached.

4. The coin idea mirrors the teamwork coin - like the coins distributed by some agencies. Those are wonderful, of course. However, we not all have access to these. In addition, chocolate has an advantage as a tasty treat. One simply cannot eat a metal coin, no matter how nicely decorated.

I know that everyone brings something special to the group. Still, I strongly believe that there is usually one outstanding person who deserves a quirky little

surprise like this. It is quick, easy and will not detract from any meeting for more than a few minutes.



Some might wonder if this is a bona fide classroom exercise. I submit that it is because many elements of interaction are met:

- Teamwork and coordination
- Interpersonal dynamics
- A benevolent conspiracy
- Recognition of the good work of others
- Thinking on one's feet when one considers the many variables in luring the 'target' from the room.

The long-lasting effects of a nice gesture and a friendly conspiracy are hard to estimate. This may be the well-deserved attention necessary to recharge a devoted colleague. In any event, there really are no losers when one considers the magical bonding of chocolate.

## Flyer, Flyer, Pants on Fire!

I know that advertisers are hired by vendors of all sorts to make money. And I understand that using print and electronic ads can help in sales, especially if the advertisement is particularly effective. Certainly, one can appreciate the art of good persuasion.

In corrections, when an offender is trying to get something from staff by using persuasion, it could also be called manipulation. Because of the many dangers to operations and individuals from manipulation and the set-up, it is important that we examine the topic. We can learn a great deal about methods enterprising inmates might employ by looking at the simple car ad.

Even in this age of electronics, I still receive full page car ads from dealers in the mail. Even if that were not so, any visit to an automobile web site will yield what is needed for this icebreaker.

1. Introduce the concept of manipulation and persuasion to the class.
2. Ask the class to volunteer answers about the dangers of the set-up in a correctional setting.
3. Give each team a copy of a car ad flyer.
4. Instruct that the ad is designed in this case to separate the reader from their money. (Again, this is a natural part of our economy and I am not trying to demonize car sellers. They need to make a living and one does get a car out of the transaction.)
5. Give the group five minutes to look at and list the many manifestations of print persuasion.
6. Have the teams report out one by one.

Some of the persuasive elements that students have found in this exercise include:

- Font size, bold and italicized
- Tilted words in exciting graphic balloons
- Use of conditional words (You could get 110% Kelley Blue Book value on your trade in.)
- Limited time offers

- So many cars on our lot to choose from
- Ad individualized as though the sale was just for recipient
- You have been selected

Those are just a few ways that the persuasion is done. However, I feel that the point about conditional phrasing is important and can segue into a policy-driven exercise. For example, at times policy is written with conditional phrasing on non-mandated words such as could, should, and might. Other times, when the idea is absolute and without wiggle room, mandated words are utilized. These include, must, shall and will. Students who grasp the difference between mandated and non-mandated language shall have an advantage and will do well in deflecting manipulation.

When you go through your junk mail, you should not necessarily hit delete or shred the envelope and its contents. You may be missing an opportunity. I am not referring to an opportunity to save big buck and have your world forever changed by a purchase. Rather, the ad can be instructive. As they say in the sales biz, “You have my 100% guaranteed! Act now!”



## You Bully!

Among the many techniques that bullies use, I employ the POINTS bully classification. This is a simple system that I created. The POINTS classification refers to the following intimidation tactics: Physical, Obnoxious, Intellectual, Necessity, Together, and Sexual. A short description of each follows.

1. Go over these with the class.

**Physical** – This type of intimidator is one who uses size, strength, hostility, or posture to coerce others into action. Aggression is a big part of this. A bully does not necessarily have to be large to be intimidating.

**Obnoxious** – This sort of bully wears a thorny hide of sarcasm and forceful, tactless, and loud opinions. They believe that theirs is the only way. The views of others have no consequence. To most people, it is easier to kowtow to such a person than to defend a minor position.

**Intellectual** – The intellectual bully specializes in condescension. Their insecurities are masked in large words and aloof, arrogant sentences. Their offense consists of a belief that they are smarter than the competition. They enjoy making others feel inferior.

**Necessity** – Those who are in the chain of command who believe that it is necessary to belittle subordinates in order to get them to do as they say. This is power drunkenness.

**Together** – They say that there is safety in numbers. The together bully knows this. It is a sort of gang mentality. When observing this type, one sees differences between when they are alone and when they are in their clique. The together bully is always strongest when they have an audience.

**Sexual** – This strategy is used by both sexes. Some staff force their agenda by using gender as a weapon. For example, when the sexual bully is given instruction, no matter how reasonable, they might cry ‘sexual harassment’. The implication is to get results by perverting a valid and necessary complaint system.

2. Facilitate discussion, being careful not to use names of staff working in the facility.
3. Distribute the true or false bully test below.

| #  | Statement  |
|----|--|
| 1  | <b>POINTS</b> is a system to remember bully types. They are Physical, Optimistic, Intellectual, Negative, Together and Sexual bullies. |
| 2  | Sexual bullies can only be male, and their actions is directed only toward female staff.   |
| 3  | Intellectual bullies specialize in condescension and generally try to appear smarter than their target.                                |
| 4  | Bullying is about intimidation and is always physical in nature.   |
| 5  | A bully does not necessarily have to be large in order to be intimidating.   |
| 6  | An obnoxious bully is typically, tactless, sarcastic, and insulting.   |
| 7  | Together bullies operate in a lone wolf manner: They do not need an audience to perform as a bully.                                    |
| 8  | Some sexual bullies harass targets by claiming they, themselves have been harassed.  |
| 9  | Necessity bullies are usually in the chain of command and can be described as power-drunk.   |
| 10 | Obnoxious bullies typically consider the points of view of others.   |

## Key to the bully test

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. True
9. True
10. False

Remember that bullies on the school yard can grow up to be subtle manipulators. Bullies come in many forms and can upset the harmony of the workplace in a number of ways.



## All Should Be True

*This is dedicated to and written for correctional trainers. From time to time, we need to hold the mirror to our own faces.*

Two friends of mine are great correctional trainers. They are mentioned in the acknowledgements. Shane Gray and Chris Schweikert have different presentation styles that reflect on their individual personalities. This buttresses for me the notion that there are often many good routes from point A to point B.

As trainers, there are peaks and valleys in our careers. What we learn in the deep, dark valleys can be used later when we ascend the tallest peaks. There we can stand taller if we learned the lessons. I believe that this is easier when we are truly honest with ourselves.

So, this is an exercise where trainers introspect. And here we are asked to look at ourselves unflinchingly in the full light of the day. I first heard a great saying from a mentor of mine, Dave Burnett, who said, “If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don’t have integrity, nothing else matters.” (I learned later that this quote is attributable to Senator Alan Simpson.)

What follows is a ten-question true or false quiz. In writing this and based on my experience, all answers should be true (hence the title). But, you have made it to your position without me at your side. You are the master of the grading of this quiz. Some may scoff, others may self-flagellate. It is my hope that those who lie between those extremes of self-analysis enjoy the quiz. Please note that I do not consider myself perfect by any means. As a trainer, I am a work in progress – flawed, but hopeful.



## Trainer self-assessment quiz

(True or False)

1. I can laugh at myself and even poke fun at myself.
2. I can take tips from other trainers.
3. I truly want to deliver material that supports the mission of our agency.
4. I generally like my job.
5. I feel that instruction such as I deliver is important to overall safety.
6. Sometimes, my nerves can hinder my presentation.
7. I am respectful to all people in my classes.
8. I can control or deflect hecklers in a way that is not malicious or childish.
9. Sometimes, I get into a teaching rut.
10. Engaging participants is often hard but worthwhile.

What does all of this mean in my mind? At this point, what is most important is what you do with your findings. In other words, dare to hold the mirror to your face. Be honest in your self-assessment. That is the true route to improvement.



## About the Author



Dear Readers:

I hope that you have enjoyed the IACTP Icebreakers Series. Perhaps you found that some of these exercises provides you with a good manner in which to engage students and drive home a lesson. Thus far, I have penned over 200 individual exercises/icebreakers which are divided into eight books and two compilation volumes. To find these, please go to [www.iactp.org](http://www.iactp.org)

One does not live by icebreakers alone. I also write about many other corrections subjects, including in my specialty topics of contraband control and staff relations. At the time that I wrote this postscript, I have over 1,350 articles and 13 books to my credit.

I enjoy speaking ‘on the road’ and have rendered over fifty presentations at other corrections venues across the United States. Many ideas and exercises are presented first to criminal justice students at the colleges at which I have taught.

Let’s break some ice!

- *Joe Bouchard*