

Mule Creek State Prison

Self Exploration through Writing (SEW)

An Introduction and Overview
Fall 2011

What is the SEW

Mission Statement:
SEW to repair the fabric of torn lives.

What does this mission statement mean? It means taking the first step in repairing the holes crime has ripped the fabric of the lives of victims, their families, offenders and their families. This first step starts with offenders examining the thinking and behavior with resulted in their criminal behavior. For many their committing offense was the tipping point of a life time of bad decisions resulting from maladaptive thinking. The first stitch begins with changing that thinking.

Current inmate participation in MCSP rehabilitative programming, such as Criminals and Gangs Anonymous (CGA), Alcoholic Anonymous (AA), Narcotic Anonymous (NA), and Victim Awareness Offender's Program (VAOP) demonstrates the willingness of inmates to seek and utilize the available self-help programs.

However, any requirement for written activities is restricted to the confines of the program philosophy and is often viewed as "compulsory" by those who are not task orientated. This fact tends to negate the therapeutic and cathartic benefit of writing, in particular writing which is focused on self exploration. SEW seeks to address this fact by encouraging a rehabilitative "philosophy assembly" area for writing.

SEW is designed to be a primer for other rehabilitative programming as well as a rehabilitative enhancement for more experienced self-help participants and seeks to encourage, nurture and promote offender participation in a structured self exploration program, in order to mine the *cognitive propositions* of offenders through writing.

Program writing assignments for participants will focus on:

- Exploring the origins of their criminality
- Exploring their interpersonal relationships
- Exploring their societal relationships pre/current/post incarceration
- Exploring the emotional and mental conditions of their current lives with the goal of improving its quality via personal perception

Program Theoretical Orientation

SEW will utilize a cognitive theory approach for program objectives and development. This approach will target:

- Common offender cognitive methods used to organize information and their internal representation of that information.
- Common offender cognitive frameworks.
- Common offender cognitive methods utilized to internalize, store and retrieve information.
- Common offender ideas, emotions, thoughts, and personal evaluations of people

Program Practices and Activities

SEW will utilize the aforementioned theoretical approach in conjunction with introspective writing and journaling to passively encourage the acknowledgement of anti-social and criminal behavior by offenders. This acknowledgement is an absolute required element in increasing inmate responsiveness toward rehabilitative programming which targets:

- Anti-social and criminal choices
- Anti-social and criminal beliefs
- Anti-social and criminal values
- Anti-social and criminal behavior thinking

The use of journaling is a very important tool for observing and identifying thinking and behavioral patterns and will serve as a storage space for the participants to be utilized as a resource for the writing assignments within the program. SEW will utilize existing program materials to impart information which will be used in the development of writing assignments. SEW is not seeking to re-invent the wheel but to utilize the rehabilitative momentum of other programs to encourage an even deeper examination of behavior, free from the confines of any one specific program. For example, the introduction of basic concepts regarding Problem Solving, Anger Management, Effective Communication and Stress Management. These concepts would then be utilized in structured writing questions which ask the participants to consider how the lack of the previous knowledge and or skills contributed to their criminality, inhibited their ability to engage in appropriate and voluntary relationships, and or continue to affect their ability to live productively in or out of prison.

Peer Facilitation and Education

*Facilitators are agents of change and represent what is possible through active, prosocial, and productive participation in life.*¹ SEW is a peer education driven program utilizing one of the most powerful teachings strategies, modeling.

Peer educators within this program have traversed the difficult path of recovery and utilize that experience to assist those participants within the program who are will to embark on a similar but individually unique journey. The helping traits of empathy, genuineness, courtesy, compassion assembled with interactive communication skills (Self-disclosure, Immediacy, Concreteness, and Confrontation) to scaffold participants during their participation.

¹ J. Jordan, MCSP VAOP Facilitating Guide

Living On Purpose (LOP)

Statement Workbook

Adapted from D. Amen's M.D. One Page Miracle

In Group Assignment

1. Listed below are common values for any person. Rank them in order of importance (1 being the most important and 10 being the least important).

Value	Rank
Personal wisdom	1
Money	5
Meaningful and fulfilling relationships	3
Fame	5
Personal accomplishments	4
Legacy	2
Honesty/integrity	3
Faith in yourself	3
Faith in a higher power	2
How you appear to others	5

Group Discussion

Briefly describe why you ranked the items in the order listed above.

Personal wisdom is the only one I ranked most valued because this is what I've always aspired to achieve above all else. Ranked second of value is both Faith in a higher power, and Legacy. I believe Cosmic Consciousness (TGAOTU) is both my higher power and my Legacy which personal wisdom manifests. Third of value I listed Faith in myself, Honesty/Integrity, and Meaningful/Fulfilling relationships. I feel these are all interrelated and naturally next in order following the aforementioned. I placed Personal accomplishments fourth in value — one value rank above the half-point of five. Perhaps I value Personal accomplishments higher, i.e. Personal Wisdom for instance is a personal accomplishment, but I did not want to seem pretentious in placing personal accomplishments above my number Three ratings — although in hindsight I think that I actually always have ranked personal accomplishments ... above Relationships and Integrity. (ouch!) Fifth, between One and Ten, I ranked Money, Fame, and How I appear to others. The least important above all other items on the list.

Living On Purpose (LOP)

Statement Workbook

Adapted from D. Amen's M.D. One Page Miracle

In Cell Assignment

Answer the following question to help you shed light on what you value, use another sheet of paper if needed.

2. What are you doing to accomplish or enhance the first five items you placed on the list?

What am I doing to accomplish or enhance the first five items on the list? Personal wisdom, Personal accomplishments, Meaningful/fulfilling relationships, Fame, Money:

I study arcane metaphysical and transcendental material which helps me bring much of the mundane world in proper perspective. The better perspective I have, the more empowered I am over myself and my environment which consequently helps me in fulfilling relationships — ideally,

Fame and Money? What am I doing to enhance these? My seditious crusades of the 1990's made me pretty famous — but now I suppose my artwork is serving to enhance these. In here it's tattoos and dialogue — but then I also send out artwork to friends who market my work and finance my quarterly care packages.

Or was this assignment intended to address those items I ranked one-through-five? Which in my case all are listed 1-5. What am I doing to enhance these? I aspire for more than what life in prison offers! I seek knowledge — and ways to apply it. I seek peace of mind — and I cherish it. I seek to develop my art skills — and I appreciate the appreciation it gets. I determine to LIVE in spite of proclivities of dispondency.