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Hi Kyla, I got your comment today. Thanks! I'm flattered you asked me about prison counselling... as you can guess, not a lot of ppl want my advice anymore. " It feels good, which makes it even harder to tell you... I may not be the person you ~~want~~^{went} to ask about this. If you read my Introduction, you'll see I have some pretty unconventional — and strong — views about prison issues, but I'll try not to let my bias make this worthless for you.

First, I'm really glad you want to help ppl, and if your friends say you're easy to talk with, then you probably are. What do you know about prison counsellors in whatever state you're in? In California, at least, the "counsellors" don't do much "counselling" at all — they're basically just prison administrators who deal with paperwork concerning security levels, which prisons an inmate is restricted from, what "jobs" he or she can be forced to do, etc. . It's really not a helping job at all, and they certainly aren't in the business of relieving prisoners' stress, but maybe it's different in your state.

I wonder... are you maybe talking about becoming a therapist in a prison? They are usually psychologists (sometimes interns) who try to "counsel" prisoners dealing with their insane environment. Although I believe they often do more harm than good, I also think you can do useful work in prison mental health departments, assuming you keep a reasonable perspective of the circumstances of your clients, the inmates.

Still, I have to ask: why aim toward prisons at all? I strongly believe that the sooner we can eradicate this whole foul obsession with cages and punishment from society's consciousness, the better. It's like cancer — cut out the disease to save the body. I doubt the value of becoming part of a toxic system, even with the best intentions. Have you considered pointing your humanitarian impulses toward schools or ~~international~~^{international} aid? Remember, prison counselling probably requires the same academic atta-girls as any other entry level psych position, so maybe it'd be better to work in an environment that doesn't enthusiastically promote the self-loathing of ~~people~~^{people} who are already weakened and debased? I'd much rather use any influence to encourage people to resist oppressions while they're still strong enough to reject the external — and internal — structures of dominance and coercion our society begins imposing from birth. You might consider the field of law, too... it may be a way to work within the system to improve lives by defending accused "criminals", civil liberties, etc. . You can be a voice for the voiceless, if you want to help in that way.

I realize I haven't answered your direct question: If you were my counsellor, how could you help me? I guess my best short answer is, do all you can to affirm prisoners' value as individuals and the legitimacy of their experiences. Help them escape the gravitational pull of that moral black hole they cynically label "rehabilitation"; i.e. the relentless pressure to conform, obey, and negate the self. You could guide people into their own strength, and through that strength toward generosity, understanding, and empathy. Toward being the kind of people the world needs more of.

(* Please feel free to write me at the address above if you want to talk less publicly.)