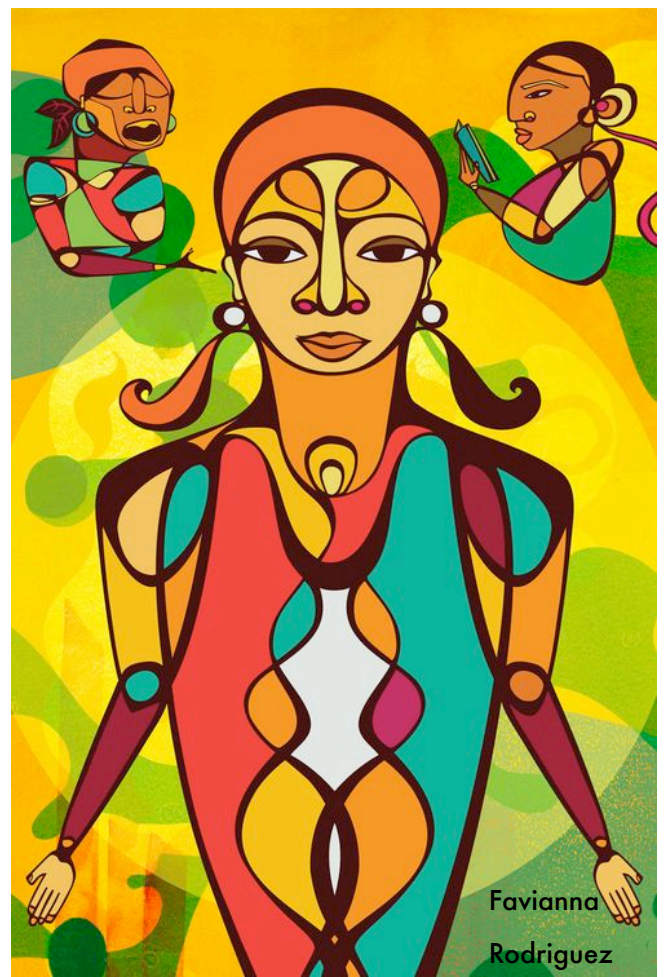


HARMONIUS INVICTUS: WOMEN'S WEBS OF SUPPORT



A newsletter created by participants in Webs of Support,
a class by and for survivors of violence and severe trauma

Webs of Support is a 12-week curriculum dealing with issues related to violence and trauma and also develops personal empowerment, a sense of community, growth, and healing.

In the late winter/early spring of 2016, we developed this newsletter to be a resource guide and source of inspiration to any other person struggling with similar issues.

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PERSONAL AFFIRMATION

Always Love & Accept Yourself

I accept myself completely.

I accept my strengths and my weaknesses,
my gifts and my shortcomings,
my good points and my faults.

I accept myself completely as
a human being.

I accept that I am here to
learn and grow,
and I accept that I am learning
and growing.

I accept myself without
condition or reservation.

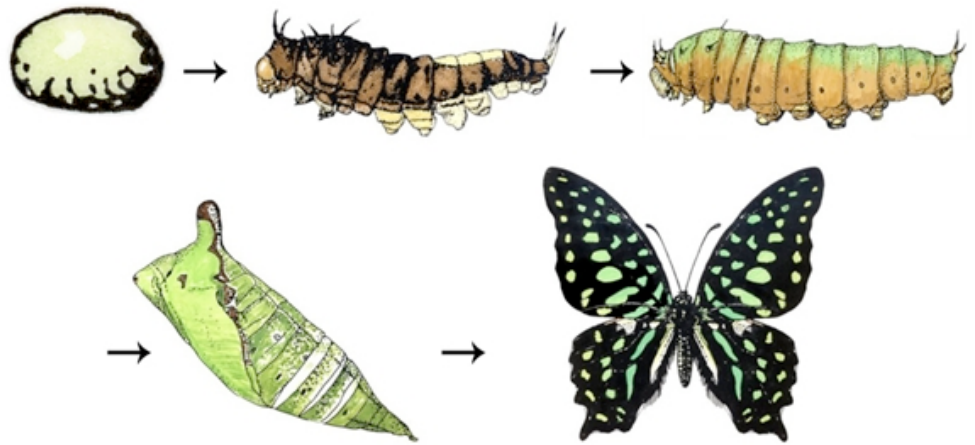
I accept that the core of my
being is goodness
and that my essence is love,
and I accept that I sometimes
forget that.

I accept myself completely,
and in this acceptance
I find an ever-deepening inner
strength.

From this place of strength, I
accept my life fully
and I am open to the lessons it
offers me today.

I accept that within my mind
are both fear and love,
And I accept my power to
choose which I will experience
as real.

I recognize that I experience
only the results
of my own choices.



INSIDE OUT MOTIVATOR

What motivates you to change from the inside? And what else could motivate you in your mind like family to become a better person in life! Work on self-esteem; God will help with our emotions while we're gaining more knowledge and staying out of bad situations and prison. The mind is a very fertile ground. Our concepts, ideas, opinions; you can qualify your self for everything. Learn how to interact with different people. Prepare yourself to be a winner and and you will have the love and self-support required to learn from your previous actions in order to take corrective steps. Acceptance cannot be facilitated without acknowledgment and awareness. This level of personal growth requires diligent and compassionate self-forgiveness from all of the judgments you hold about your past behaviors and experiences.

-Regina Anderson

To be able to change the way I think and change from the inside out. To give me the understanding about what freedom means to me. I don't like to be told when I can go eat or go to the yard or medical. I like to have that choice to go eat or to get my medical needs taken care of. The other things that help me to change are the programs that help me to get the help that I need and to be able to get my GED and work skills – this helps me change from the inside out. And to show my children and my grandsons that I am not too old to change my ways and to see myself as a better person than what I did before I came back inside the prison system. To be able to teach others to get motivated, to get others to see who they are on the inside and on the outside to change their way of thinking by changing bad habits into better ways. That is what helps me to change the way I think; waiting for my freedom. I was able to tell my story to the group and it helped me to be able to heal on the inside about talking about it. By having this class, Webs of Support, it has helped me heal. I want to take this with me on the outside by showing my children that I have changed on the inside, so they can see me as a better person. To see that I'm not the same person that I was when I went in. I left the old way and I'm going to leave prison as a new person and to feel better about myself.

-Pamela Branson



Tangled Behind Bars

Q: What does it mean to be a survivor?

“It means being resilient. It means detaching from things that matter less than the present moment. It means being grateful. It means valuing substance, being diligent. It brings wisdom and courage that strengthens any step taken to achieve the termination of the thing.

Survivors never quit.”

-Kelli Christy

Q: What does it mean to be an incarcerated woman?

“I never thought I’d see myself between 4 white walls in such a place with such disgrace. A feeling of shame for all to see, but not brought down from love, but one who’s supposed to love you with unconditional love. So as you see, family can hurt you more than help you and just when you thought you would give your life to save one of theirs, here you end; and here I sit, Alone in the Dark.”

-Dawn Richburg

Q: What does it mean to be an incarcerated woman?

“To be an incarcerated woman means different things to different cultures. For some, incarceration is expected, and it may mean respect to others. For some it may be a label you try to get out of. In my life, incarceration is what I am working to move above. Incarceration as a woman to me means to know failure and a stereotype. Forced to focus on the depth of character defects and imperfections. A particular way

of thinking and learning the tools to overcome a struggle. #MindOverMatter

#IncarceratedWomenAreStrong”

-Mel Louis

Q: What does it mean to be a survivor?

“To be a survivor means to keep going. It means to never stop trying. It means to persevere and push. To not just “think” you can but to “know” you can. To survive means to be okay with being strong and okay with times of weakness. It means to learn from the past, to help others and to help yourself. To be a survivor means being bigger and more powerful than your past. It means the simple things like getting up and going to work everyday. Even smaller things like taking a shower or remembering to eat. Being a survivor means living a meaningful life after the traumatic experience.”

-Tiffany McCoy

Q: How are your desires limited by this environment?

“This environment limits my desires in almost every way imaginable. My desire for touch, to touch, to express myself through physical closeness has been torn from my being. I shower my children in affection, both verbal and touch in three hours each month. A month or more of love crammed into one brief Sunday afternoon. It’s not enough, yet, it is what we have and we are grateful to have it. Good-byes linger ‘til the last moment...”

The simple urge to embrace another human being who is suffering, or leaving, or has just achieved something great is, in here, against the law. How does one condition one's self not to touch another... not ever? Our heart's desires are in suspended animation. Put on hold and for some may even become as alien as... the very environment that spawned it."

-Tamara

Q: How do you stay strong?

"I think what makes me strong is knowing that God has helped me to get through the hard times and to know that my children and grandchildren help keep me strong and knowing that I don't need anyone to make me strong."

Q: What does it mean to be a survivor?

"What it means to be a survivor to me is knowing that I have made it through the hard times of my life and knowing that I am not a victim anymore. I am a survivor. I am free on the inside and out, even though I am incarcerated, because I know that I will be free again; physically on the outside as well as on the inside in prison."

Q: What does it mean to be an incarcerated woman?

"What it means to me is knowing what I chose that made me get here and to learn not to do it again and that my freedom is

very important to me by changing the way I see myself and let others see who I really am."

-Pamela Branson

Q: What does it mean to be a survivor?

"I have come a long way from growing up where I had to stand up for myself when I had been picked on. I had to fight to survive because I had long hair and was pretty all my life and I was always determined to have things in my life that I worked for so that I could achieve what I needed and wanted to survive!"

Q: How do you stay strong?

"I stay strong by praying, reading my Word, having Faith that God will never start something in a person that He wouldn't finish. I want my family to not give up on me, so I work hard on changing myself."

-Regina Anderson

Q: What do I deserve?

"I deserve to be happy and to not be afraid to love someone. I deserve to change after learning more about the bad things in my life and not judging myself for what I have done in my life. I want someone to love me through all the good and bad times by not trying to change me to be someone I am not. I want someone to enjoy the same things in my life. I like to go camping, fishing, and being with my children and my grandchildren as well. And to be able to laugh and to be able to have someone that loves the Lord

God and puts Him first in their life. And to be able to have someone that is honest with me and not lie to me. I deserve to be there through the hard times and good times in our lives together. That is what I feel I deserve in my life.

Q: What is my ideal for love?

"I want to be loved, understood, and to understand how to love the people in my life. My ideal for love is to be able to love myself before I can love someone else. I want someone that I love to be able to show me they love me by being honest from the heart and by showing me that they love me by being truthful to my needs and to others. My ideal for love is to find someone that will listen to me when things are going bad or when good things are going on. My ideal would be to have the ability to show the person that you are with the same thing. That is what I want for love; to be there for each other when they are sick or if they are feeling good."





Intimate Partner Violence: Facts and Red Flags

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans. The term "intimate partner violence" describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy. Approximately 12 million people in the U.S. have experienced intimate partner violence.

About 1 in 4 women (24.3%) and 1 in 7 men (13.8%) have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner (e.g., hit with a fist, or something hard, beaten, slammed against something) at some point in their lifetime.

Most female and male victims of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner (69% of female victims; 53% of male victims) experienced some form of intimate partner violence for the first time before 25 years of age.

Intimate partner violence can cause lifelong (but treatable) mental, physical, and sexual/reproductive health consequences. IPV can produce anxiety, depression, PTSD, suicidal thoughts and suicidal behaviors. It can also produce physical stress and indirectly cause complex pain syndromes or escalate heart issues. IPV additionally can result in unintended pregnancies, pregnancy complications, gynecological disorders, unsafe abortions, and/or STIs/HIV (Black 2011 and CDC 2011).

Colorado statistics on Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence

In 2008, Colorado state filed a total of 17,026 misdemeanor charges for domestic violence. We were unable to view the breakdown by gender (how many men vs. how many women).

In 2008, *nationwide* there were an estimated 2,340 intimate partner homicides. In Colorado, there were at least 34 domestic violence related deaths.

Some of the risk factors that might cause someone to perpetrate IPV:

Individual beliefs and behaviors:

Witnessing or experiencing violence as a child, heavy drinking, prior history of aggressive behavior.

Family history and relationship dynamics:

Marital conflict, poor communication and family functioning, and economic stress are all correlated with perpetrator's use of IPV. But, abusing a partner is part of a cycle of violence that has to do with wanting to exert power over someone they perceive to be weaker than them.

Cultural and social norms:

Low social capital and poor social networks that glorify violence, weak community sanctions against domestic violence, poverty

Social and Economic conditions:

Traditional gender norms, social norms that are supportive of violence

Red Flags to Consider When Beginning a New Relationship

The following is a list of red flags for you to notice and pay attention to when dating someone or beginning a new relationship. Some of them are indicators that the relationship may become abusive. Others are positive indicators that you are becoming involved with an abuser. The more "yes" answers, the more likely it is that you are dating an abuser.

Quick Involvement

- 6 months or less before living together/engaged
- Claims of love at first sight
- Says you are the only one who can make him/her feel this way
- Pressures you for commitment

Unrealistic Expectations

- Compliments you in a way that makes you seem superhuman
- Very dependent on you for all needs
- Expects you to be perfect
- Says things like, I am all you need. You are all I need

Controlling Behavior

- Advises you how to dress without your asking for advice
- Pretends to be concerned for your safety or your productive use of time
- Acts like you do not have the ability to make good decisions
- Becomes extremely worried or angry when you are late
- Constantly questions who you spend your time with, what you did/wore/said & where you went
- Insists that you check in constantly
- Monitors your phone/email
- Makes you ask permission to do certain things

Red Flags, continued

Jealousy

- Wants to be with you constantly
- Accuses you of cheating all the time
- Follows you around or frequently calls during the day
- Odd behaviors like checking your car mileage or asking friends to check in on you

Isolation

- Tries to cut off all your resources
- Puts down everyone you know: says friends are stupid, promiscuous, or accuses you of cheating with them; says family is too controlling, they don't really love you, or you are too dependent on them
- Refuses to let you use car or talk on the phone
- Makes it difficult for you to go to school or work

Blames Others for Problems

- If there are problems at school or work, it is always someone else's fault
- You're at fault for everything that goes wrong in the relationship

Blames Others for Feelings

- Makes you responsible for how they feel:
- You made me mad.
- You're hurting me by not doing what I ask.
- I can't help being angry.
- You make me happy.
- You control how I feel.

Hypersensitivity

- Easily insulted
- Sees everything as a personal attack
- Has a tantrum about the injustice of things that happen to him
- Totally goes off about small irritations
- Looks for fights
- Blows things out of proportion

Disrespectful or Cruel to Others

- Punishes animals/children cruelly
- Insensitive to pain and suffering
- High expectations of children beyond their abilities
- Teases children or younger sibling(s) until they cry
- Doesn't treat other people with respect

Expects Control During Sex

- Little concern over whether you want sex or not, & uses sulking or anger to manipulate you into compliance
- Makes sexual or degrading jokes about you

Rigid Sex Roles

- Believes women are inferior to men
- Unable to be a whole person without a relationship

Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde

- Sudden mood changes--like the person has two different personalities
- One minute nice/next minute exploding
- One minute happy/next minute sad

Past Battering

- You may hear the person was abusive to someone else they were in a relationship with, they may deny it saying it is a lie or their ex is crazy/it wasn't that bad

Breaking or Striking Objects

- Used as punishment
- Breaks cherished possessions
- May beat on tables with fist
- Throws objects at/around/or near you

Any Force during an Argument

- Physically restrains you from leaving the room
- Pushes or shoves you

Twenty years in May is the time I gave to you
You've controlled my life since the day we met at a friend's barbeque
That friend of mine she told me, "He's not good for you."

She knew
But I couldn't stay away

My time had come I had it all
Graduating from college the sky was the limit
My life lay before me my optimism contagious
You watched, you listened, you pretended to be
Everything I needed to live life effortlessly and so I said, "I do."

Then things started to happen
Excuses became my friend
I knew you didn't mean it you said so again and again
My world started to contort my perceptions they were skewed
You wanted it a certain way I lost myself in you

My friends fell off, my family estranged
It's all a part of your plan
Nothing I did was ever right you wanted it to be
Like it was that first enchanted night
The kids are young my shifts are long I never sleep my pain so deep

I begged for help but no one came
You made me feel so weak
I left the first time you struck our son and threatened my silence to keep
You pretended to be the strong one but a few came through for me
They pulled me from your web of deceit but you lured me home again

And then one night eleven years in... the silk fibers snapped
I had never before felt so worthless so destroyed so trapped
If this is love I'd rather die I can't get away there's nowhere to go
The bruises and broken bones weren't that bad... but the words they killed my soul
Please... just let me go



Love and Pain



What scares me about love?

Loving someone is no guarantee of how they will treat me. Sometimes... loving the wrong person can result in the most unpleasant side effects.

What excites me about love?

There is a music that forms sometimes from the pairing of two people. I've seen it... An inescapable cadence or rhythm that continues on regardless of circumstance.

~ I've been bent and broken, but hopefully into a better shape ~ (Grimm)

-Tamara

Trust and Believe

They put their hands on you and called it love
That kind of love is not from above
I tell myself it's the only kind of love they know
It's the only kind of love they have ever been shown
In my mind I want to believe the thought I conceive
That I can help them see what real love means

Yet trust and believe in reality
If I allow them to keep putting hands on my
Unless my god intercedes I will end up to be
Only a memory in the minds of those who know me

-Tina Leanne Thomas "Tommy"
original 2006-2007
Remixed 2016

love is a voice
voice is a pain
pain is love
love is strength
strength is a deep breath
a deep breath is hurt
hurt is within & within
one's Love can be Divine

-Dawn Richburg

What scares me about falling in love with someone means they may hurt me or won't care about my feelings or they will walk away from me. Because when my heart and my trust goes out to the person that I m with, it changes how I feel about them or me. That's even for family; I go through that with my mom and my brother as well. That is why I am scared about love because when I start to love someone then I get hurt. I have to deal with both my ex-husbands as well.

This is what excites me about love. I did have one man in my life show me what love is and was treated like a woman when he showed me how much he loved me, not just telling me that he loved me. He showed me what love is by being with me through the hard times and good times as well, and my children show me love, and so do my grandsons. They even tell me that they love me as well.

It scares me to know that I will not live with someone that is not abusive because I always look for the other shoe to fall. But I will be glad to live without having someone controlling me. I can live my life without fear and shame and guilt. I can move on without always looking over my shoulders to see or have someone always tell me that I was never wanted. Because I know that I am

wanted because of my God and my children and grandkids.
-Pamela Branson

A lost heart
A broken soul
Still I go on, Life is out of control

A mountain to climb,
Wondering inside, will it
Be too tall?

Faster and faster
I descend down on
My knees, praying
When will this pain end?
-Kelli

What scares me about love:
I don't want you to settle.
You deserve to be proud of your life, your decisions.
Aspiring to your personal highest value
And obtaining what you find valuable.
I'm deeply in love with you
And I'm convinced I will always be.
But above all...
I don't want you to settle.
#BeautyIsInTheEyesOfTheBeholder
#YourImperfectionsMakeYouBeautiful

-Mel Louis

How Deep the Father's Love Is For Us

How deep the Father's love is for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch his face away
As wounds which mar the chosen one
Bring many sons to glory
Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished
I will not boast in anything
No gifts no power no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom

--Pamela Branson

EROS: A FOOL FOR LOVE

I got to have it like a jackrabbit.
Can't I have love too? You have somebody, why can't I?
Nobody's perfect, I just want someone to love me.

Love means being scared, vulnerable, afraid they'll take their love away. How do you trust love?
Love is a word I want to go away - way over there because all he has to do is make one phone call and I'm right back here, behind bars.
You can't tell someone what love is, but you sure can show them what love ain't.
Love ain't takin my hard earned cash, or destroying my credit.
Love ain't invading my privacy; jealousy and control is not love.
Love ain't pain, hate, manipulate, and don't forget intimidate.

We made a pact, my dad and me; I love you, even though you ain't no good.
He's toxic, he's gonna kill you! No, you don't know him like I do.
Love put me here, in prison. I don't want to love like that anymore, where you do anything for love.

I'm learning to look for something I never had. I want to live and love, free from pain.
Forgiveness is giving us a space to move forward.
And love means giving it a chance to happen.

Let go of the past, learn to love, from the inside out.



*If you can dream it,
you can do it*

Poetry from Webs of Support's Poetry Workshop

Variation on the Word Sleep

--Margaret Atwood

I would like to watch you sleeping,
which may not happen.
I would like to watch you,
sleeping. I would like to sleep
with you, to enter
your sleep as its smooth dark wave
slides over my head

and walk with you through that lucent
wavering forest of bluegreen leaves
with its watery sun & three moons
towards the cave where you must descend,
towards your worst fear

I would like to give you the silver
branch, the small white flower, the one
word that will protect you

from the grief at the center
of your dream, from the grief
at the center. I would like to follow
you up the long stairway
again & become
the boat that would row you back
carefully, a flame
in two cupped hands
to where your body lies
beside me, and you enter
it as easily as breathing in

I would like to be the air
that inhabits you for a moment
only. I would like to be that unnoticed
& that necessary.

“Everybody hurts, everybody bleeds
Everyone has felt the pain of need
Where we begin no one concedes
And where it ends no one agrees
Yet I choose to believe my mind
Is the path to see, my perception
Is what brings me to my knees
Or to achieve or to take me to heaven
For my own relief
It doesn’t matter what others think they see
It’s the truth that lives deep within me
And it’s the me I choose to feed that
Will be the one that shines from me.”
-Tina “Tommy” Thomas

Rebel Woman

Precious in my children’s eyes
Accept people as they are
May I be kind to myself in this moment
Everyone feels the same way I do caring.
Love one another
And together we sing

Being kind to others
Roses are red and they rise in the morning.
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
No gifts no power no wisdom
Suffering anguish despised and rejected.
In time I will forgive
Noticed that I am the one that went and got things
Started for my independent study GED.

-Pamela Branson

Brave

I am brave enough to keep going after what I want
For myself like getting my GED. Now my other
goal is
to work on getting a place to live and to parole
when it comes time to. So taking the brave
step on my part and doing for myself now
I am stubborn enough to keep doing this to
help myself to get where I have to
go when I get out of here; I can’t rely
on them to help me I need to help my

self. So I am taking action for myself and writing
the parole board on my behalf by letting
them know what I am doing and why I am in here;
that does take being brave on my part.

-Pamela Branson

“Being here in such a place makes
One go crazy. Being confined like
Crabs in a bucket makes you wanna
Say; ah “f*** it.” To be free in such a beautiful
place, without
A sad face and no trace of anyone,
Anywhere. You swim far and near to drip all
thoughts so sincere.

When I close my eyes, I see you near
I feel your worries disappear and your
Warmth subside. Your smile is darling
As you’re holding me near and wake when I wake
up and you tell me how near and
Dear I am and I love you.

I fell in love with you and let you take
My soul, but I choose to rise.
I then gave in and became addicted
To your lies and I choose to rise
I then hit the pipe and wanted more...
But choose to rise.
I became sprung to the needle and
The warmth in my veins and I choose to rise.
Finally I became sick of the addiction, the lies, your
mouth, claimed
My soul back, played to God and finally
I choose to rise, one final time
I rise,
I rise,
I rise...”

-Dawn Richburg

Still I Rise

--Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

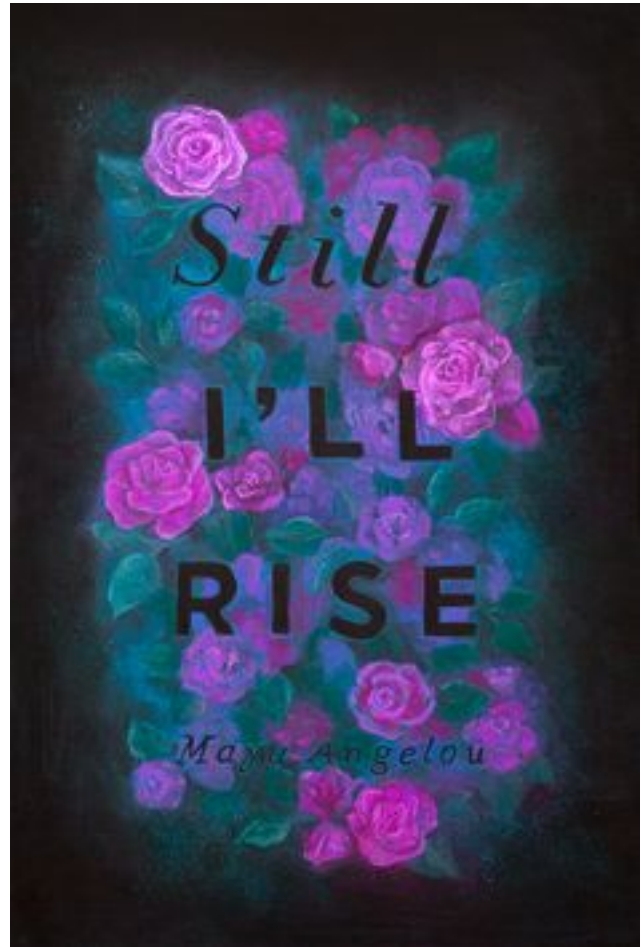
Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.
I rise.



RESOURCES

Prison Activist Resource Center will mail you a free booklet of resources in Colorado and around the country, like legal advice, books behind bars organizations (free textbooks and other books), college resources, prison newsletters, and pen pal services. Write them a letter and request a free resource guide:
Prison Activist Resource Center
PO Box 70447
Oakland, CA 94612

Prison Yoga Project seeks to make yoga available “to all those who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience the transformational benefits of this powerful practice” including to women behind bars. Please write them to request information and/or a yoga booklet:
Prison Yoga Project
PO Box 415
Bollinas, CA 94924
Also try:
The Give Back Yoga Foundation
900 Baseline Road 13B
Boulder, CO 80302

Prison Health News is a quarterly newsletter by and for prisoners about health care. They seek to make health care information accessible to all people, including prisoners. Write them for a free subscription to their newsletter:
Prison Health News
c/o Philadelphia FIGHT
1233 Locust Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Prison Legal News is a monthly 72-page magazine on the rights of people in prison and recent court rulings. A sample issue costs \$3.50 and a yearly subscription costs \$30/year.
Write them at:
PLN
PO Box 1151
Lake Worth, FL 33460

Prisoner Diabetes Handbook is a 37-page handbook written by and for prisoners dealing with diabetes. Free for one copy. Also write them at:
PLN
PO Box 1151
Lake Worth, FL 33460

Inside Books Project provides a free national resource guide for people in prison, with listings of organizations that can send free books or info on finding legal help, pen pals, release planning, publications, and more. Write them for the free resource guide at:
Inside Books Project
c/o 12th Street Books
827 West 12th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

AIDS Library answers questions that people have about any health condition, not just HIV/AIDS.
Write them at:
Philadelphia FIGHT
1233 Locust Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

POZ Magazine is a lifestyle, treatment and advocacy magazine for people living with HIV/AIDS. Published 8 times a year. Free

subscriptions to HIV-positive people in prison. Write them at:
POZ Magazine
462 Seventh Ave, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10018-7424

Black and Pink is an open family of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer) prisoners and “free world” allies who support each other. Free monthly newsletter and pen pal program for incarcerated LGBTQ people. Write them for the newsletter:
Black and Pink
614 Columbia Road
Dorchester, MA 02125

Earth First! Journal sends a free monthly newsletter to prisoners interested in environmental issues. Write them for a free newsletter:
EF! Journal
PO Box 964
Lake Worth, FL 33460

PEN Writing Program for Prisoners provides incarcerated people with skilled mentors and audiences for their work. Write for a free *Handbook for Writers in Prison* at:
PEN American Center
588 Broadway, Suite 303
New York, NY 10012

Reproductive Health, Living, and Wellness Project provides a free 50+ page manual about incarcerated women’s reproductive health. Write them for the free manual:
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SELF-CARE

Two out of three (2/3 or 66%) of female prisoners in Colorado have been diagnosed with psychological disorders. This has risen to more than twice the level of male prisoners. In contrast to the 66% statistic, just 39% of women in Colorado who are **not** incarcerated have been diagnosed with some type of mental illness.

Of course, if you are suffering with a mental health issue, you should seek help. Also try to establish a social network on the inside and on the outside of people who care about you – who truly care about you and are good for your growth.

To honor the pains of dealing with mental illness, we included this section on self-care for those who want to learn different techniques of care that they can provide to themselves while in prison. You'll see a variety of information in this section, the first of which is a kindness meditation. The second piece deals with "healthy eating" while in prison – good physical health can lead to good mental health. Some of this information has to do with breathing, relaxation, and yoga techniques. We advise you to take what works for you (or leave it if it doesn't) and to show yourself love – because you deserve it. The more we treat ourselves with compassion, and the greater level of care we can provide to our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls, the better we will feel. Believe in yourself!

Meditation: Be Kind to Yourself

By: Kristin Neff

A three-step contemplation to give yourself the compassion you need (and deserve)

1. Put both hands on your heart, pause and feel their warmth. You can also place your hand anywhere else on your body that feels soothing and comforting, like your belly or face.
2. Breathe deeply in and out.
3. Speak these words to yourself, out loud or silently, in a warm and caring tone:

*This is a moment of suffering
Suffering is a part of life
May I be kind to myself in this moment
May I give myself the compassion I need.*

The first phrase, *This is a moment of suffering*, is designed to bring mindfulness to the fact that you are in pain. Other possible wordings are

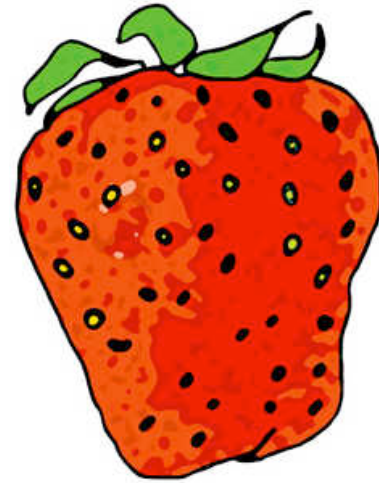
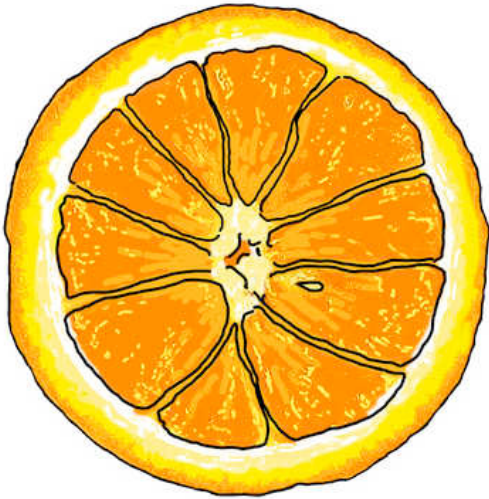
I'm having a really tough time right now, This hurts, or anything that describes the suffering you are experiencing.

The second phrase, *Suffering is a part of life*, reminds you that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. Other possible wordings are *Everyone feels this way sometimes, this is part of being human, etc.*

The third phrase, *May I be kind to myself in this moment*, helps bring a sense of caring concern to your present-moment experience. Other possible wordings are *May I love and support myself right now. May I accept myself as I am, etc.*

The final phrase, *May I give myself the compassion I need*, firmly sets your intention to be self-compassionate. You might use other words such as *May I remember that I am worthy of compassion, May I give myself the same compassion I would give to a friend, etc.*

Find the wordings for these four phrases that are the most comfortable for you and memorize them. Then, the next time you judge yourself or have a difficult experience, you can use these phrases as a way of reminding yourself to be self-compassionate. This practice is a handy tool to sooth and calm troubled states of mind.



Taking a Smart Approach to Healthy Eating

Written by Alexander Heyne, 2013

Emotional Learning

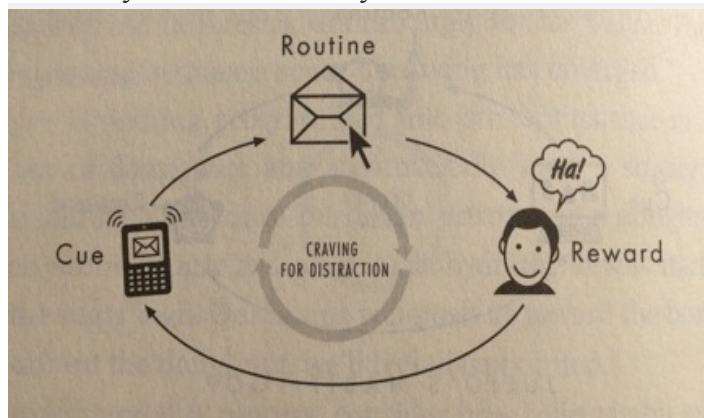
For many (most?) of us, emotional eating has become a habit of comfort – in other words, it’s a behavior induced by certain cues like situations, feelings, people, commercials, etc.

In studies, animals & people that were more stressed ended up eating more and gaining weight.

In the vast majority of people, uncontrolled eating happens in two (emotion-related) situations:

- Boredom (“I’m just sitting watching TV and eating”)
- Stress events (“I feel bad, so I eat”)

So here’s how you use emotional learning to take the *smart* approach to beating food addiction, which ultimately revolves around your habits.



Via Charles Duhigg’s book *The Power of Habit*

#1 Figure Out Your Cues

Most of us emotionally eat because of cues outside or inside of us.

For example: we’re in our cells. Food is there, so we eat it (availability – external cue).

Another example: It’s 2:30 at work, and you’re on the home stretch. You start getting low energy, and you’re looking for something to do – so you go grab a cookie (low energy – internal cue).

So the secret for many of us is to **A. learn our cues**, and then **B. avoid them**.

A technique I commonly recommend for figuring out your cues is what I call the *Awesomesauce Index Card Method*.

But to keep it simple, spend time for 1-2 weeks recording a few things:

- What time of the day do I crave food?
- What moods make me crave food? (Usually boredom and stress)
- In what situations do I usually over eat?
- With what people do I usually eat the wrong foods?
- What places usually end up causing cravings? (E.g. Late night in your cell and you *have* to eat something?)

#2 Swap The Routine

Another incredibly common origin of bad habits is boredom.

I once was working with a stay at home mom who had sugar cravings, and after doing the index card exercise for 1-2 weeks (see above), she realized that almost all of her sugar consumption happened when was “bored” or wanting something to do.

While watching TV mindlessly, surfing the internet, or just hanging out around the house, she just *wanted something to do* – which ended up turning into a massive sugar consumption habit. Fortunately for her, **once she figured out the cue, she changed the routine.**

So, let’s say you know that you eat food when you’re bored. You can do #1 (avoid being bored), *or* when you’re bored (and realize it), start doing something that gives you something to do.

For example: If, at work, 2:30 hits and you’re getting a bit bored and tired, and you know you usually grab a cookie, *find something to do that stimulates you*. Ask yourself, what might that look like for you? What can you do that is allowable? Dancing in place? Talking to a friend? Strategy #2 all revolves around three things: **the emotion you’re feeling, why you’re feeling it, and finding things that truly address the underlying cause (e.g. boredom).**

Cognitive Control

Cognitive control revolves all around how you view food, and I divide it into two broad categories:

1. Mental chatter

2. Personal rules

There’s often a lot of self-talk going on when we try to fight foods (or fight anything, really).

And what usually ends up happening is that the more time we try to talk ourselves out of something, the stronger it becomes and the more it steals our attention.

Ever tried jumping off a high rock? The longer you wait and talk yourself up, the less chance you will actually jump.

One of the easiest things you can do in regard to your mind is **change the mental chatter.**

Rather than looking at cookies and saying to yourself, “Oh man those look good,” tell yourself the truth, “I know I can’t just have one bite... I’m going to eat 20,” and even remind yourself of your goals, “tomorrow I’m going to feel like crap and totally regret this.”

Jon Grant, at the university of Minnesota, asks patients with a history of shoplifting to write out a shopping list before they go to the grocery store and just put two items on the list: handcuffs, to remind them of their previous history, and a bologna sandwich, to remind them of what they were eating in jail.

Basically this just jogs their memory and reminds them of the consequences of their behavior, and similar to saying “I’ll feel terrible after eating cookies,” it instills a sense of guilt beforehand.

Food Rules

Setting rules for your food is another way to beat using willpower.

For example, you can make rules like “I don’t eat french fries,” or “I don’t snack.”

Rules actually *aren’t* using willpower – and they can quickly become habits which bypass willpower altogether.

It’s best just to pick 2 or 3 rules to stick to, that you can apply in a variety of situations. Better yet, identify your eating type and set rules based on what type of eater you are. For example, are you a “grazer?” Do you eat very frequently throughout the day, even though you aren’t hungry? Then set rules about *when* you eat. Or, are you a “binger?” Do you eat as much as you can in one sitting? Then set rules about *how much* you eat.

My own favorite personal

rules? I don’t eat french fries or any fried foods and don’t snack. These quickly become a part of your identity, and when you say “I don’t eat french fries” it ends the conversation and doesn’t require any fighting whatsoever.

**Relying on Social Support
People can have a huge
influence over your success or
failure with regards to healthy
eating.**

Utilize **people** to leverage your success.

If you want to gain control over your eating, learn to utilize people in a couple ways:

- Build a support group where people have the same experience and goals
- Embark on a challenge with a friend (or your entire family)

- State a goal... publicly, and then have friends and family hold you to it

Become Your Own Coach

Anyone with a chronic health problem has quickly learned that **they need to become their own expert**. Beyond just learning everything on the subject, you need to understand your own vulnerabilities, and start experimenting.

It's almost impossible to really come up with a perfect diet for every person, or a perfect system for every person – which is why experimentation is so important.

For example, if you know that certain foods make you over eat every time – you know you have a personal kryptonite and you should stay away from them.

So how specifically do you experiment and become your own expert?

Use something that I call “definitive documents.”

I've unfortunately had a number of various health problems in my life that were chronic and very difficult to solve by western doctors. Usually there were many pieces to the puzzle, and I was left experimenting on my own.

For many of you this will be the same case. Over the years, I found myself creating these word documents called “definitive documents” where I could

document every piece of the puzzle I was trying to solve. Keep a journal about your experiences!




What do you write in these journals? Everything you know.

For emotional eaters and people that are addicted to food, **keep track of the following things:**


- Events that trigger episodes; were you visiting with family? Were you feeling especially sad? Were you eating lunch alone? Did you not have time for lunch?
- What kinds of foods are your kryptonite that you end up craving more than others? What foods do you over-eat, every time you eat them?
- Experiments you have tried; does eating oatmeal for breakfast leave you full, or do eggs? What time do you usually get sugar cravings? What has worked to beat your sugar cravings?

We all need to become our own expert, particularly if we have a long-standing chronic problem – often there are many, many interconnected pieces that one person cannot give you.

Breathing for Relaxation 4-7-8

HOLD



While touching your tongue to the ridge of tissue behind your front teeth:

1. Breathe in through your nose (count 4)
2. Hold breath in your belly (count 7)
3. Blow out through lips (count 8)

Repeat for 4 cycles and relax.
Practice 2X/day for 4 weeks and use PRN, then increase to 8 cycles.

From: "Breathing: the Master Key to Self-Healing" by Dr. Andrew Weil, University of Arizona Medical School.

RELAXATION EXERCISES

IAM - Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique® for Organizations

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EXERCISE 1



a

inhale



b

exhale



c

inhale



d

exhale



e

rest

EXERCISE 2



a

rest



b

inhale



c

in, cont.



d

in, cont.



e

exhale



f

rest

EXERCISE 3



a

rest



b

inhale



c

exhale



d

rest

EXERCISE 4



a

rest



b

inhale



c

in, cont.



d

exhale



e

inhale



f

exhale



g

rest

RELAXATION EXERCISES

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for Organizations, Page 2

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EXERCISE 5



a
inhale



b
exhale



c
inhale



d
exhale



e
inhale

EXERCISE 6



a
rest



b
inhale



c
exhale

EXERCISE 7



a
rest



b
inhale



c
exhale

EXERCISE 8



a
rest



b
inhale



c
in,cont,



d
in,cont.

f
rest

e
exhale

RELAXATION POSE



EAT, EXERCISE, AND ENDURE

**The following is taken from “Eat, Exercise, and Endure”: a guide for healthy living in prison. This was written by a former prisoner for current prisoners.

Beating the Odds

Surviving prison must be easy: More than 700,000 prisoners will walk out the front gates of U.S. prisons this year, their sentences completed. But wait: Many studies show that more than half of these “survivors” will march right back into jail or prison within two or three years of their release, having caught a new beef.

Apparently, we can survive prison but not freedom.

What’s going on here? Why are the odds stacked against us, and what can we do to put them in our favor?

Remember, we are extending the definition of *prison survival* to mean not just getting through the in-prison bit, but to then build a successful life on the outside that will keep you there. We should all want to be a “former prisoner” for the rest of our lives.

This is going to be a total approach. Not everything – eating, for example – will ever be the same in prison as on the outside, but we can talk about learning discipline and values during your imprisonment that you carry over and use in the real world.

Where’s the (real) beef?

Let’s start with food, which in prison is never five-star. Remember, the average taxpayer is buying your dinner tonight and every night you are behind bars. Remember, too, that many of them may be working long hours to put spaghetti, beans, rice, or mashed potatoes on the table for their own family, so they are not going to favor steak and lobster for you. With the state footing the food bill, you will be fed as economically as possible. You are going to see a lot of starchy carbohydrates and greasy fat and less protein. Carbs and fats cost less.

You can survive on prison food. You just need to learn to supplement and control your intake of foods that both dietitians and doctors agree can harm

your body over time. That usually means replacing some chow hall visits with home-cooking from the commissary or canteen and your locker. You have probably already noticed that the all-time best-selling prepared food products in prison commissaries are ramen noodles and canned tuna. The noodles are dry; just add hot water. The tuna lid has a pull tab so you don’t need a contraband can opener. There are many different ways to fix the tuna; on crackers, in a salad, or as a sandwich. And best of all, tuna – packed in water, not oil – is one of the healthiest foods you will find on either side of prison walls.

And ramen noodle packages are popular wherever hot water or a microwave is available to cook them. If the accompanying spice package doesn’t go into the soup, it is used to spice up other food items. At the end of this chapter, we’ve included some recipes you can try in prison. And yes, we’ve taste-tested them all!

Many food-savvy inmates check the posted prison menu in advance each week and decide which meals they want to replace. Ideally, you will have enough canteen credit to buy the items needed to replace the skipped prison meals. And if you just can’t get enough to eat between the mess hall and the commissary, then you are a candidate for a job in the kitchen.

Finally, many commissaries today sell multiple vitamin products. Consider using these daily, not just in prison, but on the outside as well. We seldom get all the needed nutrients through regular eating, no matter how careful we are. Drink water; you can find that in prison, our bodies are largely water and we need to replace fluids that are lost and to flush our systems. Keep drinking it when released; it’s just a good life habit.

Where eating on the inside has similarities with the outside is at the waistline. More than 60 percent of Americans in and out of prison today are considered above the weight that is healthy for them. Extra weight leads to all kinds of health problems down the road, from diabetes to heart attack or stroke. You tire easily, your joints hurt, and you are spending money constantly buying larger clothing.

I speak from experience; after prison, I gained an average of three pounds a year. Doesn’t seem like much one year at a time, but it adds up. I can see why

so many others fail in dieting. It is much easier to never put on the extra pounds in the first place than to try to take them off later.

Each time I see my doctor, he anticipates my question about the effectiveness of the latest fad diet. "Diet and exercise," he chides me. We skip the details; he has been over them many times before with me. He wants me to watch how much I eat and what I eat for the greatest nutritional value with the lowest calorie count. One trick that works for me is to drink a glass or two of water just before eating. You feel full sooner, plus you can always use the water.

My doctor also wants me to follow a varied exercise program regularly to maintain heart and circulation, improve joint flexibility, and burn extra calories. He never suggests special diets that have caught the public's eye; just eat the right amounts of the right foods.

The American Cancer Society recently changed its guidelines, saying that a third of the 500,000 cancer deaths a year now result from poor diet and no physical activity. It states that eating a nutritious diet, staying active, and limiting alcohol are the top activities Americans should do to fight cancer.

The Track and the Pile

Prisoners spend much time just lying around. Do that in prison long enough and you will develop a bad habit that will carry over to your life after prison. The human body needs exercise, nearly everyone agrees. "Use it or lose it," some say. Our bodies are strongest and healthiest when we force them, through exercise, to work harder than at rest.

There are three different types of useful exercise, and examples of each can be done in prison as well as on the outside. **Stretching** exercises pull the muscles, extend your various bending points for mobility and flexibility, lower the risk of muscle strain, and help with balance.

Resistance exercise involves lifting, pulling, or pushing against something to build muscle strength. Here's where the weight pile comes in, if you are at a prison that still has one. But simpler resistance activities, such as calisthenics, push-ups, sit-ups, bicycling, and even stair climbing offer muscle-building opportunities. I was able to find

stationary bikes at my prison; I now have one at home to go with my treadmill and weight bench.

The third type of exercise is **aerobic**, or endurance training activities. These get your heart and lungs pumping while exercising other muscles. An ideal aerobic exercise will raise your maximum heart rate 50 percent or more above your normal heart rate and stay raised for at least 20 minutes. Walking and jogging are aerobic exercises you can do in prison; that's what the walking track is for. At home, I mix treadmill (high impact putting stress on muscles and joints) with lap swimming, which offers the lowest impact of all and combines aerobic with resistance activity.

At the federal prison where I did my time, another inmate started a walking club. Names were posted in the gym, and at the end of each day we marked how many miles we had walked or jogged that day around the prison track. Some inmates topped 1,000 miles in a year! The discipline I gained through regular walking and jogging around the prison yard carried over to my civilian time, and I feel rotten if I fail to get some aerobic exercise on a given day.

Eating properly and getting regular exercise are two important ways to not only make it through a prison sentence but to also build a pattern of good habits to follow on the outside.

RECIPES FROM COMMISSARY ITEMS

Microwave Peanut Butter Balls

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup dry milk (or non-dairy creamer)
- 1/2 cup banana nut granola cereal (for variety, replace the cereal with 1/2 cup or one envelope of instant uncooked oatmeal, your favorite dry cereal, or 1 cup of crunched sandwich cookies)

Directions

1. Place the honey, peanut butter, and cereal into a microwave safe bowl.

2. Cook in a microwave on high power for about 1 1/2 minutes. (Microwave power settings vary. You may need an extra 1/2 minute.
3. Remove from microwave when peanut butter is soft. Stir until well blended.
4. Mix in dry milk a little at a time (if you are going with the variation, mix those ingredients in now). Mix with a spoon until the mixture will not stick to the back of your spoon or it becomes like Play-Doh.
5. Form the dough with your hands (or spoon) into 1/2-inch round balls, or pat onto a flat microwave bowl lid.
6. Set aside for several hours in a cool place or on ice until hardened.

Servings: about 10 balls or 12 two-inch squares

Zesty Tuna Wraps

Ingredients

- 1 6-oz can tuna, drained
- 1 tbsp salsa
- 1 small dill pickle, diced
- 1/2 tsp honey
- 1/2 tsp low-fat mayo
- 1 flour tortilla
- 1/2-oz Velveeta cheese

Directions

1. Combine tuna, salsa, pickle, honey, mayo in bowl, stirring until well blended.
2. On clean work surface, place 1 tortilla (the wrap) on two paper towels.
3. Spread cheese along one edge of wrap. Place tuna filling on top of cheese.
4. Roll wrap starting at the edge with the filling, roll halfway, fold insides inward and finish rolling. This will close the ends. Tortillas can crack, but if warmed a few seconds in the microwave, they will be more “rollable.”
5. Microwave wrap on paper towels for one minute (or eat cold).

Note: If your commissary doesn't sell tortillas, you can try substituting bread or spread the filling on crackers.

Tex-Mex Beef Fiesta

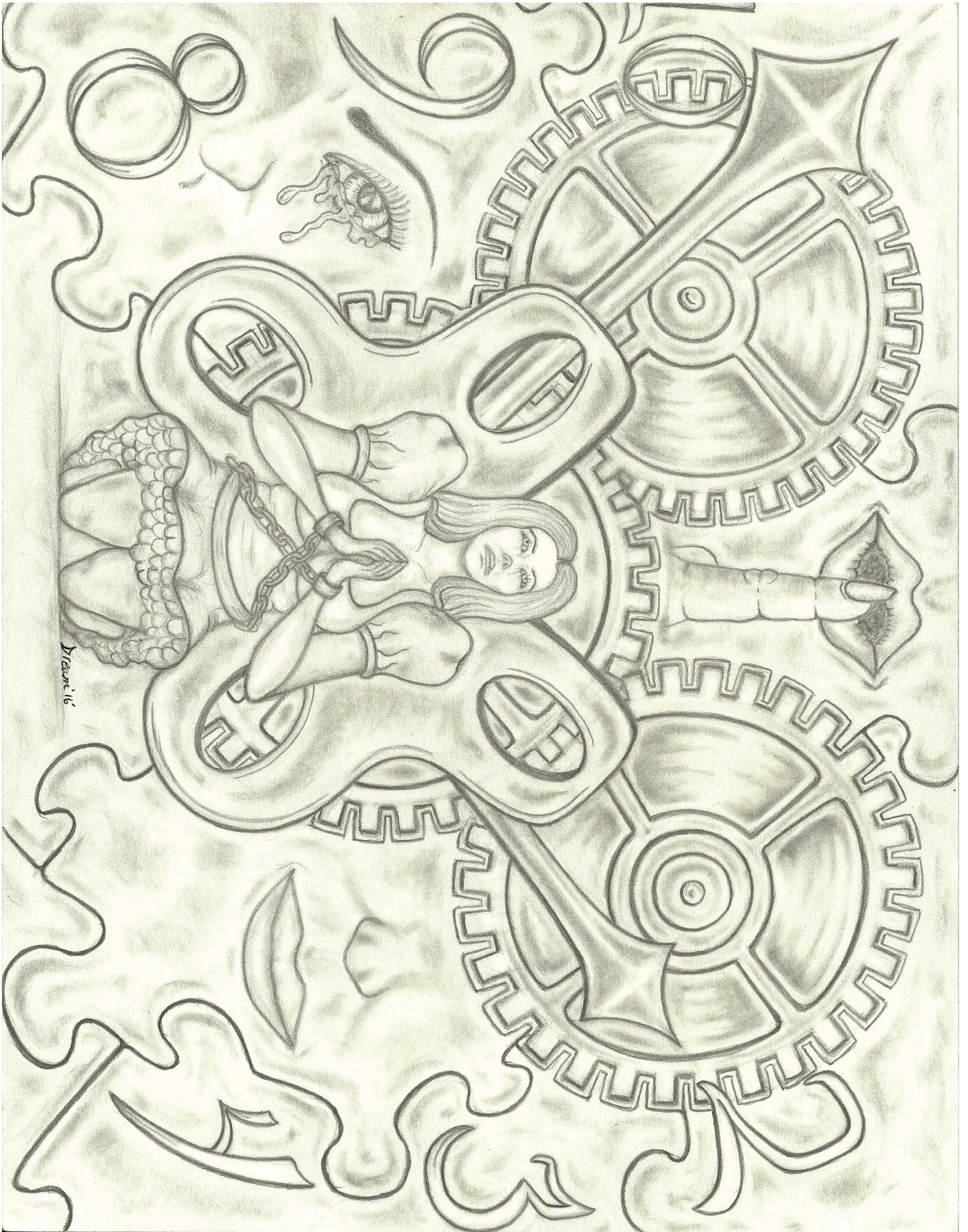
Ingredients

- 1 5-oz can low-fat hot & spicy (or regular beef summer sausage)
- 1 15-oz can chili with beans (or dried chili mix)
- 4-oz salsa
- 1 large hot dill pickle, diced
- 8-oz Velveeta cheese, cubed (or cheese spread)
- 2 packages Ramen Dry Noodle soup, chili or beef flavor
- 3-oz black olives, diced (optional)
- 3 tbsp honey
- 2 small jalapeno peppers, diced
- 1/2 cup bell peppers, chopped (fresh or dehydrated)
- 1/4 cup onions, chopped (fresh, dehydrated, or powdered)
- 2 tbsp low-fat sour cream chip dip (optional)

Directions

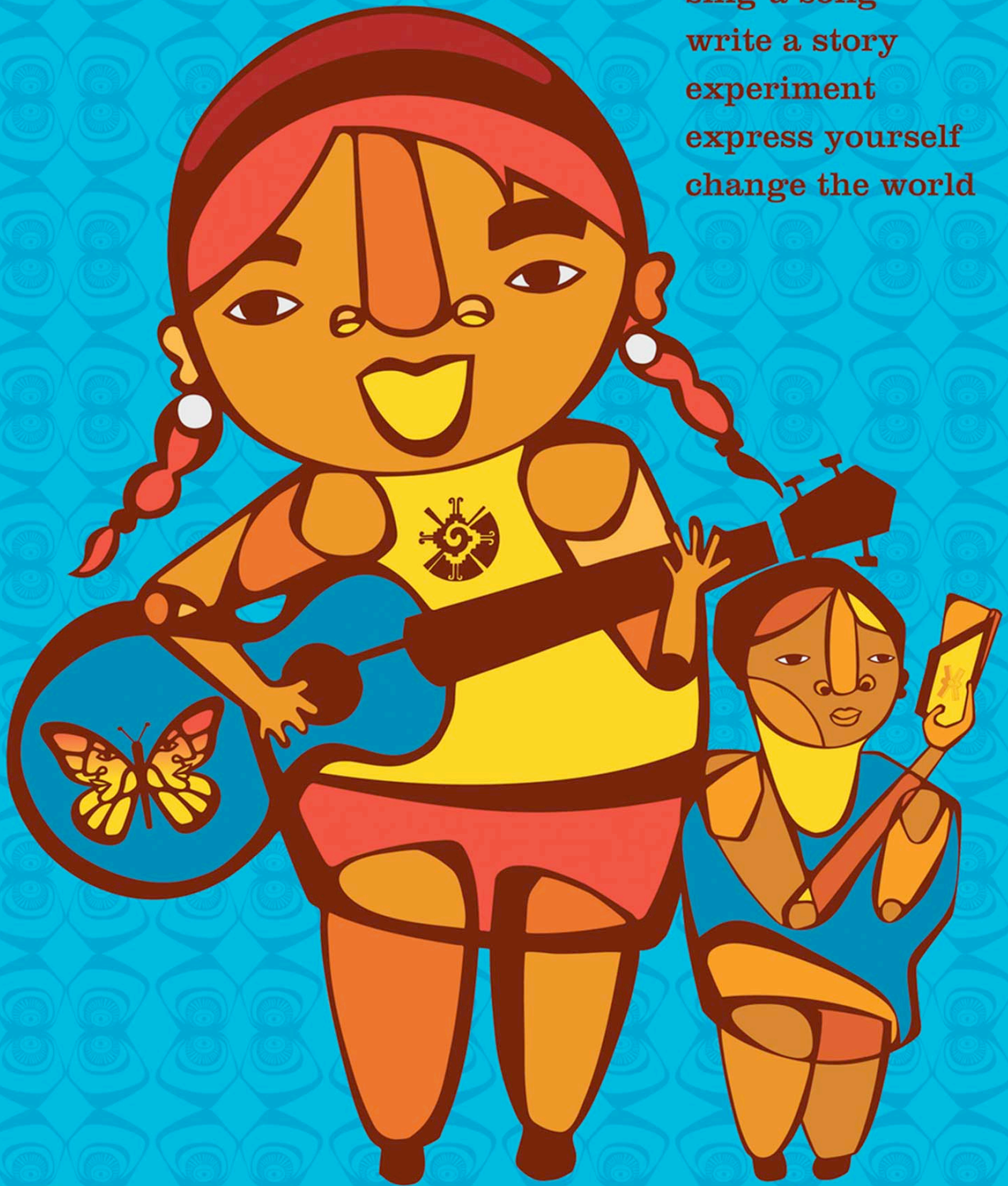
1. Prepare soup according to package directions. Set aside.
2. Dice summer sausage, bell peppers, and onions and put in microwave-safe bowl. If using any dehydrated ingredients, add water according to package directions. Microwave about 3 minutes, stirring once after 90 seconds. Set aside.
3. In third microwave-safe bowl combine chili, diced pickle, honey, jalapeno peppers, and cubed cheese. Microwave 2 minutes, stir, cook 2 more minutes.
4. Combine the chili and summer sausage mixtures in one bowl, mixing well.
5. Drain Ramen noodles and pour chili mixture over the top. Divide into two bowls and spread salsa evenly over each serving.
6. Garnish with low-fat sour cream chip dip and olives.

Try replacing some chow hall visits with “home-cooked” meals created from ingredients available in most prison commissaries. We’ve taste-tested all of these!



Dream 16

draw something
sing a song
write a story
experiment
express yourself
change the world



be an artist

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