



OREGON CURE

Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants

The mission of Oregon CURE is to support the incarcerated and their families and friends by advocating for effective criminal justice policies and procedures.

Fall 2024, Volume 77

A Newsletter for Incarcerated People and their Families and Friends
P.O. Box 80193, Portland, OR 97280 | (503) 844-9145

WELCOME KYLE B, OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

In our newsletter, we asked for volunteer board members and Kyle was interested. She attended several of our board meetings to become familiar with what we do at Oregon CURE, and once she felt we were a good fit, she agreed to join our board and was unanimously voted in and gratefully accepted. Kyle has a wealth of knowledge and will help our membership by being our Resource Specialist. If you are incarcerated, you can write to us at Oregon CURE, Attention Kyle B., PO Box 80193, Portland, OR 97280 to ask for resource information and Kyle will get it to you ASAP. If you are not incarcerated, you can request such information via email at oregoncure@gmail.com and she will get the information to you via email ASAP. We are thrilled to have Kyle as the newest member of our board!

IN KYLE'S OWN WORDS:

The families and friends of loved ones in Oregon's prisons who reach out to CURE with questions and concerns about incarceration want honest answers, confirmation about their experiences and hope. In 2022 I became a Policy and Outreach Associate for the Oregon Justice Resource Center after serving 27 years in the women's prison. I talk for a living about improving the carceral system and justice modernization to city, county and state leadership. Those conversations pale in comparison to talking to a mom about how she is going to connect with her daughter and help her do her time. While incarcerated, after I was gaining ground on my healing, I helped as many women as I could including their families...it is an honor to continue to do that out here. The carceral system is often confusing, daunting and leaves those on the inside and outside feeling hopeless....but feelings are not an adequate evaluation of the truth. There are ways to navigate the system, feel supported and maintain hopefulness....connecting with CURE is one of those ways.

OREGON CURE HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Are you interested in being on our board of directors? If so, please let us know. Your attendance at our monthly board meeting in Beaverton Oregon on the first Saturday of each month from 1PM-4PM would be required for MOST meetings. The following is a list of the things needing done by board member volunteers:

- Recap monthly board meetings (Meeting Minutes)
- Track and report on Oregon Legislative Sessions (Bills)
- OARS: Evaluate and comment on changes to OARS as needed to ensure the health and safety of our loved ones. (Divided up among Board Members as we receive them. Most have been responded to. Volunteer AIC has now taken on the research of these items for us.)
- Participate in DOC workgroups as requested
- Groups to work on: PRAS, AIC access to healthcare, segregation, aging in prison, violence against AICS- both other AICS and staff, gangs in prisons, communications with doc facilities, improve visiting, communications for families, get Oregon CURE info out to people, increase education inside, bring technology into AICS, improve access for all AIC to all programs, maybe work with Pathfinders Our current board members do the following and some of those opportunities could be open as well:

Any help is welcome! We have more opportunities available and can work with your strengths. Just contact us.

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE LETTER OF OPPOSITION THAT WE AT OREGON CURE RECENTLY SUBMITTED REGARDING THE PROPOSED MAIL RULE CHANGES

We at the Oregon chapter of Citizen's United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE) recognize and acknowledge that we view prison operations differently than the administrators and staff working there. However, we have often worked collaboratively with the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC). When the department's design team produced a blueprint for a prototypical prison that included televideo visitation (then called 'remote visiting') in 1999, CURE was concerned. Because the department was attuned to the importance and fragility of family connection, it met with CURE about what 'remote visiting' might mean for families of adults-in-custody (AICs) and adults-in-custody themselves. A representative from ODOC's New Prison Construction branch attended monthly CURE meetings for nearly a year to discuss the concept's scope, technology, and rationale. Finally, the department decided to mothball the idea until remote visitation might be offered to AICs as an enhancement rather than a replacement for regular contact visitation. In these discussions, an overlap between ODOC's and CURE's perspectives became clear to both parties. First and foremost, families of AICs and the department shared many desired outcomes—for example, both ODOC and CURE desire to have AICs leave prison and successfully transition home. Additionally, families of AICs also want prisons to be safe and secure. It is impossible for an AIC to effectively program when they must be constantly aware of threats to their own safety. Finally, there was an appreciation on the part of CURE that the department seemed to be committed to a few important principles when evaluating new operational and security measures moving forward. In those early discussions with CURE, the department stated that processes were in place to ensure AIC's 'quality of life' and 'program needs' were considered when creating new policies to address emerging security concerns. ODOC assured CURE the following questions were answered when developing global operational alternatives for ODOC. Was there a demonstrable need for new measures? Were there specific concrete instances where a security breach could be tied to the practice in question? Were the security concerns based on real experiences and not the product of 'what if' thinking? Was the proposed solution the least 'restrictive means' of addressing the fact- and data-based need for increased security? Were all the stakeholders contacted and heard? Were the AICs themselves given the opportunity to weigh in before a new practice was given the go-ahead? A wary trust that was forged between ODOC and CURE during that time period has matured over the years. In the current proposed revisions to the AIC Mail Rule, CURE has identified several changes that would negatively impact the 'quality of life' for AICs, compromise the fragile bonds between AICs and their families, and result in further erosion of the belief in AIC populations that ODOC recognizes their fundamental humanity.

Of particular note, portions of the proposed rule that would restrict paper color, envelope color, paper and envelope size, and paper weight would unnecessarily negatively impact both AICs and families. There is no rationale for these changes other than the ubiquitous 'security concern'. CURE believes these changes are excessive and will prevent Christmas cards, Father's and Mother's Day cards, Birthday cards, Valentine's Day cards, etc., for all inmates (not just the few who may have attempted to abuse rules currently in place). By the restriction of 'white only' paper and envelopes, ODOC removes another avenue for loved ones to keep their emotional connection to their AIC alive and vibrant. While the size restriction on envelopes to being no larger than 9" x 12" might work for most certificates, licenses, or other official documents, (excluding legal documents, often requiring 9" x 14" manila envelopes,) in theory, the restriction of only using white envelopes (not Manila) is onerous and expensive for families pinched by daily cost-of- living concerns. Non-white envelopes are often sold as part of the purchase of greeting cards as discussed above. Why disallow them?

CURE wishes to take exception to the following statements: 1) the proposed rule does not disproportionately impact communities of color and, 2) the proposed rule does not have a significant financial impact. Communities of color are more dependent on traditional forms of communication. Changing the mail rule will affect a more significant segment of populations of color who may need the means to purchase electronic tablets or travel to visit. Minorities are already grossly over-represented within ODOCs AIC population. While the proposed rule may not significantly impact the cost of government, proposed changes may dramatically impact the costs to the families of AICs as expensive alternatives to old-fashioned mail are offered to the AIC and families in lieu of traditional mail.

Other families will be tasked with finding and purchasing new materials to send correspondence to their loved ones. In conclusion, these changes all seem to be 'a-solution-in-search-of-a-problem'. They seem to have emerged not as a reaction to a series of events but as something else.

CURE appreciates the opportunity to participate in the review process. Mail is of paramount importance to friends and families of AICs and AICs themselves. We object emphatically to the changes discussed. We believe the methods detailed in the current rule are adequate to control the flow of contraband, and these changes are unnecessary and unfairly punitive to both AICs and their loved ones.

THIS IS 'A VERY SPECIAL INVITATION'- BEYOND THE WALL TOASTMASTER CLUB

by Kyle Robinson, VP Public Relations

I recently went onto the Prison Pipeline show on KBOO Radio right here in Portland where I talked in greater depth about something special happening in the centennial year of Toastmasters International. At the beginning of 2024 a new Toastmasters club was started to serve people being released from incarceration in the development of their communication and leadership skills. It is called Beyond the Wall, and we meet every Sunday evening in-person (7901 NE Glisan St.) and online (www.beyondthewalltm.org) from 6:30pm to 8pm. Although it is founded by previously incarcerated folks and focused on re-entry support, everyone is welcome to attend!

Toastmasters International, through individual clubs, seeks to educate using a curriculum called Pathways in which members select leadership and communication skills to cultivate. I happened to select the Persuasive Speaking path, but hey, I'm not trying to tell you what to do.

So, how does it work?

Members begin a 5-level path with projects designed to build their comfort with public speaking. We advance through the program by taking on challenges such as evaluating others' speeches, which greatly improves listening skills. These enhanced communication skills are appreciated immediately as we manage relationships, interactions, or even potential challenges to a stable reentry. Path projects advance through to build professional-level leadership or administrative competence. Some examples are maintaining an online blog, creating a podcast, or facilitating an online meeting. These projects transition a member who hasn't yet developed the technical skills to perform these tasks confidently. Too often, these skills are painfully lacking in an overwhelming number of returning citizens.

This invitation to Beyond the Wall Toastmasters club represents an incredible opportunity for returning citizens. It is a chance for personal transformation and empowerment. It is a space where we build confidence, refine our communication skills, and unlock our leadership potential. Through Toastmasters, we can rewrite our narratives, leaving behind the labels of the past and embracing a future filled with possibilities. It's an opportunity to connect with a supportive community, where we're not judged by our past but celebrated for our resilience and determination.

For the broader community, this club represents an eagerly awaited conversation model between justice-impacted community members and the community, which comprises diverse stakeholders. It is a tangible demonstration of what a collective commitment to second chances, rehabilitation, and reconciliation can resemble. As the club grows and expands its reach, its transformative effects will be felt far beyond its walls across our city. The members of Beyond the Wall encourage folks to join us on Sunday evenings 6:30pm to 8pm to learn communication and leadership skills as well as build community! www.beyondthewalltm.org

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD SPEAK TO YOUR LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVES... THEY WORK FOR YOU!

As this is being written the Legislators of Oregon are already writing bills for the 2025 session. As of yet there haven't been any particular bills to report on. Attending Representative Town Halls and reviewing their newsletters reveal directions they are heading, some concerns and hopes for the upcoming legislation.

ECONOMY

Here is a link to take a deeper look into the forecast of Oregon's Economy, the address is also included:

www.oregon.gov/das/OEA/Pages/forecastcorev.aspx

Office of Economic Analysis
Executive Building
155 Cottage Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97303

EDUCATION

Information on this subject can be found at this link, the address is also included:

www.oregon.gov/ode/Pages/default.aspx

Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97310-0203

TRANSPORTATION

Please utilize this link to find out more:

www.oregon.gov/odot/Get-Involved/Pages/OTC_Main.aspx

JUSTICE

The Task Force on Specialty Courts has been meeting to study and evaluate how that system is functioning and what changes need to be made. They are directed to report to the Judiciary Legislators no later than Nov. 15, 2024. Discover more about Specialty Courts at the following link: www.oregon.gov/cjc/sc/Pages/default.aspx
Criminal Justice Commission
885 Summer Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

The Oregon Public Defense Commission (OPDC) has been restructuring itself on many levels. Judges of each judicial district have been directed to develop plans to address the number of unrepresented persons. The OPDC is creating new data collection protocols to ensure representation for all Oregonians but doesn't plan on being able to fully implement the improvements until 2026. Review the causes and intended solutions here:

www.oregon.gov/opdc/SiteAssets/Lists/General%20Accordions/AllItems/Plan%20Guidance%207.14.2023.pdf
and www.oregon.gov/opdc/Pages/default.aspx

Oregon Public Defense Commission
Business Office
198 Commercial Street #205
Salem, Oregon 97301

These are some of the issues that Oregon's Leadership is focusing on for the 2025 Legislation session. Since the pandemic our Legislative Committees have been looking at system agencies policies and protocols and attempting to make decisions for overall efficiency and better future outcomes. As citizens of Oregon, we are affected by the passage of bills, and changes to laws and statutes. You can be a pivotal part of the decision-making process by staying informed on the issues that Oregon is experiencing, contacting your Representative's and providing testimony about proposed changes. Voicing your concerns, suggestions or support provides Legislators the opportunity to hear from their constituents. Remaining quiet about issues that affect us, but to complain is neither productive nor helpful to solving them.

The energy and time spent criticizing how things aren't working could be used to help inform Legislation about the negative outcomes and the potential impacts on daily living. Believing that your voice doesn't make a difference is a lie, when you submit your opinion or give oral testimony it is put on the record. People review submitted testimonies, re-watch legislative hearings, data calculations are performed from the statements opposing or supporting a bill, and it inspires others to participate. Now.... knowing that your voice could make a difference, will you?

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY WILL BE PRESENTED THIS 2025 LEGISLATION!

The Oregon Corrections Ombudsman is the hope of many incarcerated people and their families when a problem exists within Oregon's prisons. The Ombudsman position is an independent resource for Oregonians that exists to investigate complaints and violations relating to the Department of Corrections treatment of those in its care, whether by daily operations, staff, or facility and it also provides agency oversight. That sounds simple, but since filling the position in 2023 a number of obstacles have prevented those duties from being carried out.

- A legal conflict of interest exists as the Ombudsman and DOC are both represented by the Department of Justice.
- The Ombudsman office has the power to subpoena records but has been unable to use it.
- Directives from higher authorities have directed the office to exclude oversight of one facility.
- Requests have been denied or placated.
- A website for relevant news, data reports and public submissions like other State Ombudsman Office's has been postponed and prolonged.

In an effort to enable the office to execute its duties uninterrupted, a bill will be brought before the Judicial Committee in the 2025 session. Without testimony from those who have experienced difficulties getting timely and meaningful resolutions from the Department of Corrections, Legislators may think that empowering the Ombudsman isn't necessary. The Legislators are elected by the people and work for the people, they are bound to listen to the citizens of Oregon. Speaking about the concerns and issues that affect our lives is imperative. Our voices have the power to raise awareness and a sense of duty. A question for you....if CURE was not informing you about this issue, would you know that it exists and needs attention?

CURE will be posting the bill number and times and deadlines for submitting written testimony and in person testimony as well.

BASIC LEGISLATION ACTIVITY

The Legislative Policy and Research Office does research for presented bills, but individual citizens or organizations contain perspectives and experiences that data doesn't always represent. What if cultural or daily living impacts are not considered....or future ramifications aren't investigated? This is where your perspective could provide insight into the decision-making process. The safety and quality of life in our communities and the state in its entirety is the Legislature's responsibility....and let's not forget it controls the purse strings. Currently Oregon is struggling in many areas; Covid and how it affected school systems, rural areas, agencies, business owners and individuals, the 2023 walkout followed by a short session, the addiction/mental health/homeless crises, supporting wildfire resources, establishing a sustainable workforce for various agencies, to name a few have left quite a bit of unsolved problems on the table. These concerns and other long- term issues are being dealt with and best-case solutions being implemented. As the recipient of those decisions, it is critical that in the upcoming 2025 session your voice is heard. Only you can present your opinion on an issue. Believing or hoping that someone else will show up is not the spirit of Civic duty. The general welfare and basic rights of society and the application of the law within our communities and state are also our individual responsibility to help protect. Please be encouraged to investigate our Local Leadership, the issues at hand, and take an active role in how decisions are made for Oregon.

The following link will provide you with access to individual Legislator's, the Legislation as a whole, particular Committees, past hearings, how to submit testimony and much more. Oregon State Legislature Oregon State Legislature (www.oregonlegislature.gov)

The address for the Legislations House Representative and Senator's is below. If you do not know the name of your counties Legislators, the following will help direct your mail appropriately.

Oregon State Legislation
Senator/House Rep for _____ County
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Maximum Security, Minimum Ego: An AIC's Path to Awakening

by Scott Spencer-Wolff, Ph.D.

Over the past 49 years of my own experience with prison, as an inmate, volunteer, and teaching staff dude – I've witnessed remarkable transformations in how Adults in Custody perceive their environment and themselves. Today, I want to share insights that blend the unique perspective of prison life with a deeper understanding of what it means to be "Conscious" or "conscious" in any circumstance. I want to unpack the belief that being incarcerated or in prison (or prison itself) is a bad thing instead of just a thing. These beliefs serve a purpose but not a positive, worthwhile purpose. Instead, we make ourselves victims. We create stories in our minds that since prison is bad, we must be bad. It doesn't take a genius to recognize how unhelpful that is. Then, we enroll others in this victimology. We continue, knowingly or unknowingly, the games of "what can I do to get over on the 'man,' or the 'system' or whoever it is we're working overtime to manipulate in some way. We do it to others, and they do it to us – the staff mirrors that behavior. OY. What a mess. We would all be happier if we stopped doing that.

Many insiders and outsiders view prison as a place of punishment and deprivation. However, by shifting our perspective, we can uncover unexpected opportunities for growth and self- reflection. One inmate's journey of Consciousness serves as a powerful example of this transformative approach.

"At first, I saw prison as the end of my life," the AIC shared. "But over time, I began recognizing it as a unique environment for introspection and personal development. The limited external stimuli, which I initially perceived as deprivation, gradually revealed itself as a gift – a chance to dive deep into my psyche without the distractions of the outside world." For me, it happened one afternoon at EOCI when the light was coming through my cell window, and particles of dust were dancing in the air. It was incredibly beautiful, and the awareness of its perfection triggered a peak experience moment. Over the years, there have been many similar moments for me – but the difference is that long ago I learned these moments were possible – so I opened to them. Consider this moment an invitation to be open to wonder – *no matter where you are.*

This is the essence of what I want to talk about.

Being "Conscious" or "awakened," different terms for the same thing, is often misunderstood. It's not about escaping reality or achieving a constant state of bliss. Instead, it's about developing a heightened awareness of our thoughts and emotions and the development and creative process that shapes and organizes our minute-by-minute experiences. Buddhist author Jack Kornfield wrote a wonderful book that sums it up nicely with just the title. *After The Ecstasy, the Laundry.* Life goes on; crappy stuff will still happen, people will still be shit-heads, and you may still get in trouble – all of this stuff is part of the weave of life. What changes as one becomes conscious isn't what happens to you; it's how you respond (rather than react) to it – and how, with some practice, you can retain your balance even in the most difficult of situations.

In prison, this awareness becomes particularly powerful. As one inmate put it, "I started to see that my experience wasn't just happening to me. I was creating it through my thoughts and beliefs. Even in this controlled environment, I realized I had a choice in how I perceived and responded to my circumstances." The magic word is *choice*. You always have choices. If not in what you can do, you have choices in who you can *be* and how you respond.

Whether in prison or not, each of us has what psychologists call an "Internal Map of Reality." This map, comprising our beliefs, values, decisions, and ways of perceiving and organizing information, generates our internal experiences and significantly influences our external perceptions and circumstances.

A number of things combine and interact to make up our internal map of reality: beliefs, values, decisions, strategies, the language we speak (and the culture behind it) and the words we choose, the ways we perceive, organize, and sort incoming information, along with the way we store and remember information, to name a few.

For the unconscious person, life seems to happen, often leading to a sense of victimhood, especially in challenging environments like prisons. The conscious individual, however, sees the link between their internal map and experiences. They recognize their role in creating reality, even within prison walls or fences.

What would we look like as a *more* Conscious person?

The word “Conscious” (AKA “Conscious” or “Enlightened”) is used a lot in personal, religious, and spiritual growth circles. I’ve noticed that there are almost as many definitions of “Conscious” as people using the word. And quite frankly, I’m conscious of the fact that a lot of the people using the word don’t really know what it means, why it is so important, or what living Consciously might actually look like.

The *Conscious* person is not at odds with the world – even the prison world. Resistance is futile. You are where you are and can resist all you want, but it won’t change anything. (This does not mean you can’t take positive action steps to change your circumstances, but that’s not what I’m talking about.) But don’t be overly attached to the outcome. Having the idea that “I’d like to see THIS happen, but I’m OK if it doesn’t.” dominates the worldview of a conscious person. They are not full of “shoulds.” Having a lot of should is the reason for all our suffering. This or that should happen, or shouldn’t have happened – or, “I shouldn’t have been caught, etc., etc.” We were, and no amount of “shoulding” will change that. Like Jesus, a Conscious person would be *“in the world but not of it.”* – watching as it all goes by and participating with as much detachment as you can muster up. You would know that most people are caught in the world but unaware of being caught, so you are compassionate and do what you can to help others with their suffering – even if that means sometimes simply pointing out that they are suffering – and asking them how (and perhaps why) that suffering seems to be working for them.

To the Conscious person, the world is a play, and life is like playing a part in that play. You know it’s just a role, but you play it to the hilt and enjoy every moment. One also realizes that the script is just a script, and from the highest perspective, it doesn’t matter what part has been written for you – good, bad, or indifferent. You can exert a certain amount of control over your part. Still, ultimately, you have only limited influence over what is because your effort is just one of an infinite number of other efforts, all with their personal ends in mind.

Instead of being an automatic response mechanism, responding to the world based on unconscious rules, beliefs, fears, and limitations, the Conscious person develops and practices the capacity to be able to consciously evaluate each situation, in the moment, and instantly and instinctively know exactly what to do and how to respond in order to gain the most resourceful outcome, both for oneself and for others.

Mainly, we watch as we play our part and marvel at the complexity, the infinite permutations, the surprises, the certainties, and the uncertainties. We are calm most of the time, but sometimes our part requires us to be upset or to have some other emotion or reaction. That is being human. But whatever our mood, there is an underlying peace of mind, an underlying, effortless happiness. We are not attached to our particular emotional state of the moment or become attached to specific emotional states in general.

Let’s start by looking at what “being conscious” does NOT mean. First of all (and I hate even to have to say this, but some people need clarification, so I have to mention this), I’m not talking about the difference between sleeping and waking states. Second, being conscious does not mean being anti-war, or helping the poor, and saving the rain forest (though a conscious person might be or do any or all of these things—but then again, they might not). A conscious person does not need to get write-ups for hugging everybody, officers included, that they see. Nice if you do, but it will make people wonder.

It also doesn’t mean that we’re “beyond,” or in some way not subject to, experiencing normal human emotions, such as anger, fear, being down, etc. We just don’t live in those places very long, and we’re conscious that to feel great, we sometimes have to feel crappy. Our recovery time from upsets becomes impressive. That’s what allows us to know what great feels like. We just don’t get stuck in either place. Attachment to always feeling great or always feeling terrible is still attachment and counterproductive to accepting life as it is. And, it doesn’t mean that we’re immune to getting sick, or that you we can’t die of some dread disease, crappy medical care – or whatever. Or that all of a sudden, life is filled with potentially synchronous karmic goodies.

And, *seriously*, it doesn't mean you don't experience the everyday problems of being human. Such is life. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but that's just the way it is. However, being conscious is, in many ways, better than all these things.

Remember that six billion other people are also doing their best to gain the outcomes they want, which often will conflict with what you want, and because many non-human natural forces are also occurring (think hurricanes, or just everyday weather, for that matter), you do not have total control over what happens around you.

Being conscious also does not necessarily mean you are in constant experiential and ecstatic union with God, Jesus, Buddha, or whatever other heavenly entities happen to be your personal favorites—although it *could*. The trouble with that is it requires round-the-clock nursing care, which is pretty much, at least today, limited to monasteries. And while prison is very monastic in many ways (actually, the similarities are amazing – and I spent some time as a monk, so I am pretty familiar with monastic life,) I wouldn't count on the medical care.

Developing this consciousness requires practice, but prison, paradoxically, can provide an ideal setting for this work. Here are some strategies Adults in Custody have found effective:

Ask yourself the big questions, ponder your answers, and even write them down so you can watch how they change as you change. Prison is a perfect place to do this.

What am I aware of? Who am I?

What positives do I believe to be true about myself?

What Negatives do I believe to be true about myself?

What is significant to me?

How should we interact?

What do I see when I look inside myself? (Or do I even do this?)

What is of ultimate concern to me?

Is there anything I believe in I'd make sacrifices for?

What do I need? (Different than 'what do I want.')

Viktor Frankl, who was incarcerated in a Nazi Concentration Camp, wrote, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." [*Man's Search for Meaning*] One of the most profound realizations for many conscious Adults in Custody is that true freedom is an *internal* state. As one inmate reflected, "I may be physically confined, but I've never felt more free. I've learned that my thoughts create my reality, and I control my thoughts."

Frankl and his fellow prisoners had everything stripped from them: families, friends, jobs, health, possessions, even their names, and the hair on their bodies. But one thing remained truly their own. Stoic philosophers refer to it as our inner discourse or guiding principle. Namely, we can choose how to react to any thought, emotion, or circumstance.

Viktor Frankl's experience in a Nazi concentration camp represents one of the most extreme and dehumanizing environments imaginable. These principles apply even in the most dire situations, including the threats, gang violence, and lack of support that many inmates face. The core message is that even when external circumstances are overwhelmingly negative and beyond one's control, there remains an inner space of choice. For inmates dealing with constant threats or pressure from gangs, this principle suggests that while they can't always control their physical safety or surroundings, they can still make choices about their mental and emotional responses. This doesn't come naturally to many people and takes practice.

Frankl's philosophy was developed in extreme conditions, offering a powerful tool for resilience. For AICs struggling with harshness in their prison life, the idea that they can still choose their attitude can be a source of strength and a way to maintain their sense of self in a dehumanizing environment.

While choosing one's attitude doesn't solve external problems, it can significantly impact how an AIC navigates them. For example, an inmate facing gang pressures might use this principle to maintain or develop their moral compass and sense of identity, even if they can't change their immediate external circumstances.

While choosing one's attitude doesn't solve external problems, it can significantly impact how an Adult in Custody (AIC) navigates them. For example, an AIC facing gang pressures might use this principle to maintain or develop their moral compass and sense of identity, even if they can't change their immediate circumstances.

Something else interesting happens when we cultivate this inner strength—the energy we emit becomes calmer and more centered, and people respond differently to us. Many individuals in prison, both staff and residents, thrive on conflict and negativity—we might call them 'psychic vampires.' These people constantly seek drama and weakness in others to exploit.

However, when these drama-seekers encounter someone who doesn't react with fear or aggression and maintains their composure even in difficult situations, they often don't know how to respond. They're used to feeding off others' negative emotions, but a centered individual doesn't provide that 'fix'; these 'psychic vampires' may leave you alone or even start to change their behavior in your presence. The bully persona is a mask put on for the benefit of others, or even their own weak egos.

This shift in your inner state can create a small bubble of calm in the chaos of prison life. It doesn't make all problems disappear, but it can make them more manageable and less overwhelming. Over time, this approach can even influence the overall environment around you, as others may be drawn to and learn from your example of maintaining inner peace despite external challenges.

For Adults in Custody who feel powerless due to lack of support or constant threats, the idea that they still have control over their inner world can be empowering. It provides a sense of agency in an environment where most choices are taken away.

This philosophy encourages a long-term view. Even if current circumstances are terrible, maintaining control over one's attitude and inner life can help preserve an inmate's core self for the future, whether that's eventual release or simply surviving their sentence with their humanity intact.

It's important to note that while these principles can be powerful, they don't negate the very real and often traumatic experiences many AICs face. The challenge is in applying these ideas without dismissing the severity of the problems many incarcerated folks encounter. These concepts offer a tool for maintaining one's humanity and mental health under challenging circumstances, not a solution to the systemic issues within prisons or the genuine dangers many Adults in Custody face daily.

This understanding aligns with spiritual teachings across cultures. As the Sufi mystic Rumi said, "You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop." Even in the most restrictive environments, we contain the vastness of human potential and consciousness.

Consciousness is not a destination but an ongoing journey. It's about developing the capacity to be present, observe our internal processes, and consciously participate in creating our experience. Whether in a prison cell or the free world, this journey offers a path to inner freedom and a more profound engagement with life.

Remember, the goal isn't to escape reality but to engage more fully and consciously. By cultivating awareness and understanding the power of our stories and perceptions, our potential to transform - we open doors to personal growth and self-discovery that we might never have imagined possible – even within the confines of a prison cell.

Do you have questions about this? Or, do you have other topics you'd like to see covered? Write to the CURE address, and we'll try to respond with something helpful. You are loved.

OMBUDS CORNER

This November will make two years since the Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) has been reimplemented. Not surprisingly, the progress has been slow. It has been a challenge to start an office up from scratch, especially considering the systemic barriers that are in place.

The OCO recently released its first investigative report on the DOC phone system. While the creation of an OCO website (which is where these reports will eventually be posted) is currently under review I am looking for other ways to make this public document accessible to everyone. The positive news is that a community coalition is working on a legislative bill to have free phone calls in Oregon's prisons.

Some of the goals of the OCO for the following year include a creating a website, more investigative reports on DOC issues, hiring part time staff to respond to complaints, and more engagement with community organizations like CURE. I've had a chance to attend three CURE meetings so far and I look forward to attending more in the coming months.

Thank you,

Adrian Wulff, LPC,
Office of Corrections Ombuds Office of Governor Tina Kotek

HOTLINE: 888-685-6842
EMAIL: DOC.OMBUDS@oregon.gov
Attn: Oregon Corrections OMBUDS
900 Court Street, NE, Suite 254
Salem OR 97301-4047

SHOP & SUPPORT OREGON CURE

You can benefit Oregon CURE when you shop at any Kroger/Fred Meyer store. Simply sign up at Kroger.com. Link your shopper's card if you already have one or sign up for one and choose Oregon CURE as the organization you wish to benefit from your shopping with each transaction.

Once you sign up, any transaction you make moving forward using your membership Shoppers Card number will benefit Oregon CURE at no expense to you. Kroger will donate a percentage of what you spend with them to Oregon CURE. What a great way to benefit our non-profit.

SUPPORT US IN OTHER WAYS

Oregon Cure appreciates your donations and support. Click to see the full QR code and scan to go directly to our PayPal link.



HOW DOES YOUR DONATION HELP?

It pays for our phone service, post office box, and postage to correspond with those who write to us, both in the free world and the incarcerated, it pays to print and mail our newsletters, and it pays for our non-profit status.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your membership renewal date is on the address label of this newsletter. If your renewal date is expired, we ask that you please renew today to continue to receive this newsletter and to continue to support our organization.

You can also make a donation for someone you know to become a member. Your support is important to our mission and your donation is tax-deductible.

Send your membership tax-deductible donation to Oregon CURE, PO Box 80193, Portland, OR 97280.

Please fill out the member donation form below to receive our newsletter. Adult in custody subscription donation is \$3 and Individual Non-Incarcerated subscription donation is \$15. **All tax-deductible donations are greatly appreciated and can be made in any amount. Visit our website at oregoncure.org.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____
(optional)

City/State/Zip: _____

Name of incarcerated loved one / SID & facility: _____

PUBLICATION NOTICE

This newsletter is a publication of Oregon CURE. Oregon CURE is a 501 (c)(3) organization whose goal is to reduce crime through criminal justice reform. The opinion and statements contained in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Oregon CURE.

Contributions of articles, letters to the editor, notices, etc. are welcome but may be edited or rejected for space. Articles may be copied in their entirety with credit to the author or to the publication. Oregon CURE is an all-volunteer organization that is not a service organization. Do not send us any legal documents, we are not a legal service. We are not qualified to assist you with legal matters.

RELEASE ORIENTATIONS

Release Orientations are co-facilitated by Community Corrections and Oregon CURE. Find out how you can help your recently or soon-to-be-released loved one successfully re-enter our communities. Before attending, please phone one of the county coordinators' departments listed below to confirm the date, time, and location.

Washington County

Contact: Michelle Scholl (503) 846-3455

Marion County

Contact: Austin Herman (503) 540-8043

INTAKE ORIENTATIONS

Intake Orientations are co-facilitated by the Oregon Department of Corrections and Oregon CURE. Find out about Oregon's prison system, the intake process, phones, mail, and visiting requirements. There will be opportunities to ask questions and learn how you can get through your loved one's incarceration. Please email for Zoom link prior to meeting:

oregoncure@gmail.com or admin@oregoncure.com

7pm-7:30pm First Wednesdays via Zoom

Portland Metro

Location: Varies - please call Oregon CURE to confirm: (503) 844-9145 or email oregoncure@gmail.com

Oregon CURE
7805 SW 40th Ave.
PO Box 80193
Portland, OR 97280

ATTENTION:

Your address label has printed your renewal-date, below your name. This will be your last newsletter if your renewal date has passed. [Renew today to remain informed!](#)



SUPPORT GROUPS

Oregon CURE support groups are intended for adult family members and friends only. Some topics of discussion may not be suitable for small children or pre-teens. Attend a support group and network with family members who have “been there”.

Some of these support groups meet via zoom and some meet in person. Please reach out with the contact information given below as you are planning to attend, or if you have any questions. There is no limit to which or how often you attend a support group, nor is there a location requirement, if you are interested in attending a support group, we welcome you to do so.

Each meeting offers different insights and valuable information, and you are not required to share anything at all, if you do not wish to, simply listen and learn from other attendees.

Portland East Side Support Group

Varies & flexible – please call if interested.
Please call Ray at (530) 635-2763
RayAllenFox@gmail.com

Eugene Support Groups

1st Thursdays: 6:30pm-8:30pm
Please call to confirm location.
Dave (541) 344-7612 or Don (541) 521-2231

Zoom Support Group

1st Wednesdays: 7pm-8:30pm
Please email for Zoom link prior to meeting.
oregoncure@gmail.com or admin@oregoncure.com

Salem Support Group

1st Saturdays: 9:30am-11:30am
The Keizer Senior Center
930 Plymouth Drive NE, Keizer, OR 97303
Wayne (971) 432-0148