

HOWLING WOMEN: LOCKED AWAY IN CHAINS



A newsletter created by participants in Webs of Support, a class by and for incarcerated survivors of violence and severe trauma, 2nd ed.

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

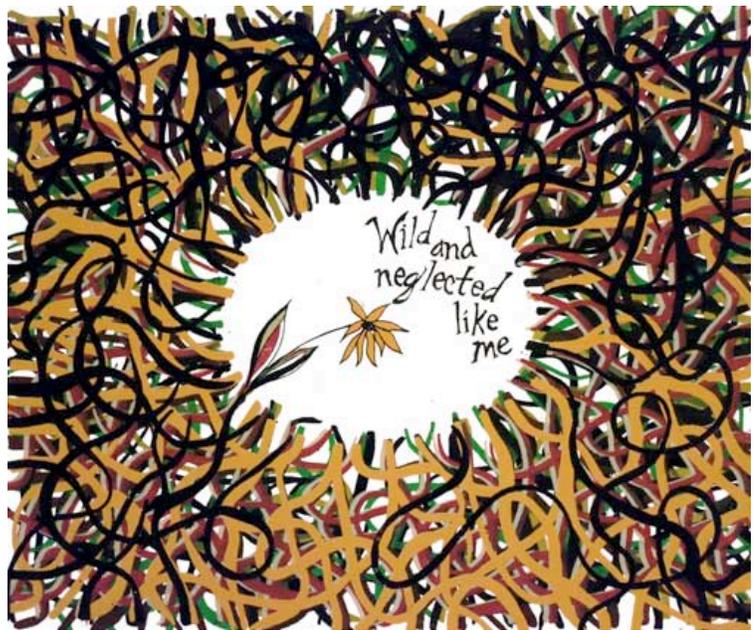
Table of Contents

Madness & Oppression	2 - 3
The Howling Woman	3 - 5
The Shadow Woman	6 - 8
PTSD and Fight or Flight	9 - 11
Grounding Exercises	11 - 12
We're All a Little Mad	13 - 16
Women's Prison Timeline	17 - 18
Dialectic Behavior Therapy	18 - 22
Poetic Healing	23
A Poet Goes to Prison	24 - 28
Acupressure	28 - 31
Theatre of the Oppressed	31 - 34
Resources	35

What is Oppression?

“Oppression is the systemic and institutional abuse of power by one group at the expense of others and the use of force to maintain this dynamic. An oppressive system is built around the ideology of superiority of some groups and inferiority of others. This ideology makes those designated as inferior feel confined, ‘less than,’ and hinders the realization of their full spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological well-being and potential. They are portrayed as “others” and are marginalized via social, mental, emotional, and physical violence which prevents their full inclusion in the community. All actions, systems, cultures, ideologies, and technologies which refuse to take full and equitable consideration of everyone and everything affected by them are aspects of oppression.”

Patriarchy (men are thought to be superior, women inferior),
misogyny (the hatred of women),
heterosexism (women and LGBTQ people are treated poorly), **racism** (people of color are thought to be inferior and experience more discrimination and violence),
ableism (giving privileges to people who are physically and mentally more able to conform to mainstream expectations – work 40 hours, be self-sufficient, etc.) are all examples of oppression.



Madness and Oppression

(Inspired by The Icarus Project's "Madness and Oppression: Paths to Personal Transformation and Collective Liberation")

It started long ago, women were nothing more than property, for show
Do not speak until spoken to
Do what I say and I'll do what I want to do
You have no worth, no value, no claim, if you don't like it, too bad, just try and go.
I'll replace you faster than you know,
That was the way things used to be, but my worth, my shame are still the same to me..
It may have started long ago, but not much has changed as far as what I know.
My worth, my value still seem so low.
Passed down from woman to woman, despite the fire, the inside glow deep deep within my soul.

--Arian Campbell

Hey come here, let's have a talk
Just a little reminder of everything you're not
You're not good enough, you're not worth it, it's plain to see
You're labeled a criminal and that's all you'll ever be

You say I have no worth but you get money to lock me away
Under false pretense of corrections but without prisoners you wouldn't get paid
So it's a cycle never-ending, you really don't care if you help
We're nothing but numbers, living in your hell

You're wasting your breath because you speak the truth
We really don't care and no one will believe you
It's your word against ours so don't forget your place
We hold the power and you're just pawns in a game

See that's where you're wrong, you're blinded by greed
It's your turn right now, but one day you'll see
That our stories don't end here; this doesn't have to be our lives
We can take back control we have the power to rise!

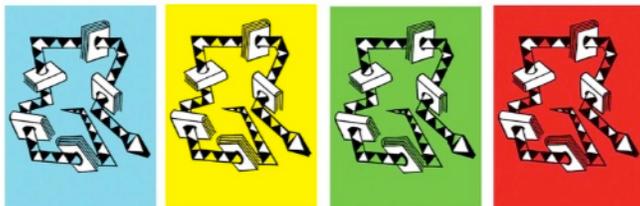
--Jenni Lyn B.

We go together like a pea to a pod
Precious in my children's eyes
Pumping in my living room
Roses are red and they rise in the morning.
Everyone feels the same way I do, caring.
Suffering, anguish, despised, and rejected.
Started for my independence by taking action for myself
Everyone feels the same way I do, caring.
Does it come as a surprise like a diamond?

--Pamela Branson

My shame for all to see
You followed your peers
And as my tears slowly fell
I felt the hell. Oppressed
They say, hell. For all to see
I'll soon be free.

--Dawn Richburg



The Howling Woman

The Howling Woman

by Dominique Christina

(She got a hole in her chest. She keep her fist in it.)

*She is a pocketbook with the seams
Pulled out.
Been clutterin' up her
Womb with men
Who ain't got no Jesus at all.*

*Just howlin' her
Saturdays from under her skirt*

*Plucks the tender kisses
Their hot mouths could not make
From her babies
And listens for rain clouds.*

*Howling woman in the moon-stretched night
Like a steeple in a valley of rotten fruit
She keep pullin' the weather
Out from the hem of her skirts*

*She remembers when she was cathedral.
How her hips didn't hold
No rent parties inside 'em.
How she knew what she sounded like as herself.*

*How the last man took up too much space in her body.
Slid out of her without a smile
And she couldn't find God nowhere in the room.
Just a howl.
Just a tremor.
Where her body used to be.*

Description of the Howling Woman poem, an excerpt from Dominique Christina's book entitled *This is Woman's Work*:

The Howling Woman is a dirge. A funeral procession that may or may not have a body. She is a lamentation. A sorrow-walloped soul. Her grief is an empire. A landing place. The only house she stays in overnight. She is the bluest hour. The anonymous groan. She is an agony. She is an agony. She is an agony. She is the bottom, the very bottom, of grief.

The Howling Woman *lives* in sadness and grief. She is consumed by it. She is bleary-eyed and grasping because of it. It is dogged work for the Howling Woman to keep her head above its current. So much of who she could be or would be is floundering underneath the weight of the sadness she holds. If she only could be like Atlas. If she only could get out from under it. If she only could find some daylight. If she only could know it was hers all along.

I have known so many women who operate from this energy pattern. So many. Too many to even remember. What I know is that sadness hangs on. And what's worse, sadness can become a thing that you become dependent upon. The Howling Woman has made an identity out of sadness. She has convinced herself that her hurt tells her who she is. Her pain is as important to her as her name, where she grew up, what schools she attended, who she first loved, what she knows most. It is an onerous inconvenience to have this kind of relationship to sadness. It doesn't let much daylight in. It doesn't let many people in. And if they do get in, they are hard pressed to stay. Having a commitment to sadness is the worst of it. If you are interested in joy, then you are aware that your sadness is problematic.

You may be trying to right (write) the wrongs. Because sadness is so present, you may be creating work that others call lifesaving. You may find that people are in awe of your truth-telling and transparency. They will tell you they know what you mean, or they have been through something similar. I find that people are so grateful to hear your grief stories, how you grapple, how desperate you became, how you managed to erect yourself despite whatever

was tearing at you. But mostly, people are listening for how you *survived* it, how you transcended it. If you are the Howling Woman, you may not yet have a transcendent story, but you can use your creativity to devise an escape route. The Howling Woman is caught under the rubble. Instead of digging her way out, instead of issuing a distress signal, she is trying to hang curtains in a house that has been demolished. She should know the only way to get out is to *leave*.

Exercises for the Howling Woman

You are carrying a wound. It has been allowed to hiss and lie too long. Try to describe your sadness. Is it a black and overmuscled steam that comes into the room and knocks you over? Is it a dark room with a low ceiling? Is it a person who told you things that made you question your worth? Describe it fully, the sadness. Be as detailed as possible. Next, have a conversation with the sadness. Tell it what it should know about you. Ask it questions, if that feels right. Perhaps you want to know how it got there or how long it plans to stay. Accuse it of things. Perhaps you need to speak to it in anger. Perhaps you need to speak to it with comforting, consoling language. Write it all down. It is also important for you to acknowledge that you and your sadness are not the same. You and your sadness are not inextricable from each other. It is its own thing. It is occupying space in your life, but it is *not* your life.

The next exercise is to write down all of the things that generate sadness for you. All of it – people, events, losses – all of it. Write it all down. Fill up as many pieces of paper as you need to until you have emptied out. Once you have done this, on a separate piece of paper, write down all of the things that give you joy, that bring you peace, that make you feel happy, hopeful. Write down all of the things, events, and people that help you know the full expanse of your royal capabilities. Once you have done this, take the piece of paper that contains all of the sad things and tear it up. Rip it up and place it on a larger piece of paper that you can then ball up and promptly throw into the trash. Leave your howling in the trash, woman, and be the phoenix. Be. Be.

Webs of Support entries – The Howling Woman

The grief that I carry with me
Matches me pound for pound
The sadness in my heart completely weighs me down
Will I ever be free
Will I ever get back to the person I used to be
Before grief and sadness consumed me

---Dawn Richburg

Embracing my Sadness

The foundation of my life was laid
Wirt bricks of hatred and shame
By hands of pure evil shaped
To believe I was nothing, Only
Good to be used in sick ways
I've slowly been repairing and rebuilding
Tearing down those bricks and replacing
Them with love and kindness.
But I can't escape an emptiness
That sometimes sneaks up and
Reminds me of the darkness
That I still hold deep within
There's a sorrow that will forever
Be apart of my soul, wounds that
Have healed, but haven't. My body
Is a road map detailed in scars
Made of anger and pain. Showing
That I've survived the depths of
A hell created by a man who
Stole my innocence.
And although I'm still bound
By invisible chains to my sadness
It's my sadness and I embrace it
It's a part of me and I've grown to love me.

--Jenni Lynn

My sadness is deep, like the water in the deepest part
of the ocean. Deep dark, cold, unknowing, it's
relentless. Just when you think it's gone, it creeps
right back in like the night overtakes the day. My
sadness pushes me off my cloud, it steals my
sunshine and pops my bubbles. My sadness always

manages to show up at the worst time; and it likes to
kick me when I'm down but to me, it's bittersweet
because my sadness is the only thing that never ever
leaves me. It never goes for good and unlike
everything else, I can always count on my sadness to
come back and keep me company when everyone
else has gone.

--Arian Campbell

My sadness is dark and its so deep it takes my breath
away. My chest tight like a vice grip tightly closed.
The silence is deafening. The pain is more than I can
bare at times. Drowning in depression like
suffocating – can't scream for help. Nobody cares.
Scars too deep to heal. Can't stand it anymore. I'm so
sick of suffocating, walking alone, enduring this pain
on my own all alone.

--Tiffany Weaver

Heartsick, heartsick, heartsick.
Everyone feels the way I do.
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Roses are red and they rise in the morning
To rise one final time
Suffering anguish despised and rejected
Is what brings me to my knees
Choose to rise one final time
Keeping my eyes on my final heart

---Pamela Branson

Still I go on. Life is out of control
One going crazy
Rejected, ashamed.
Rejected, ashamed.
One going crazy
With your bitter lies
Falling down like teardrops
Up from a past in pain
Let go of the past.

--Pamela Branson



The Shadow Woman

by Dominique Christina

(She cannot wait to be born. She is always waiting to be born.)

*Pulled up from dust
You are at home with secrets...
A nighttime quiver
A hacked up midnight*

*The growl we keep
In the dark and low places
We cannot bear to name*

*An old familiar knowing
We turn away from every morning*

*Shadow Woman clutching your blackness
So tight...*

*You are all that is left
Of the longing*



Description of the Shadow Woman poem, an excerpt from Dominique Christina's book entitled *This is Woman's Work*:

The Shadow Woman is mostly unborn. She is the deep silence before the water breaks. Jungian psychology talks about the shadow as the unblessed or repressed parts of our personhood, the things about ourselves we do not wish to honor or integrate. For me the Shadow Woman is the secret self. The underbelly And as pejorative as that may sound or seem, the shadow is necessary. It is what we have not yet reckoned with, bt what we *must* reckon with to have full command of the self. This archetypal energy is tricky because it is purposely hidden, intentionally tucked away and guarded. It is the part of us that we gatekeep and manage. The Shadow Woman is perhaps unrealized. She is a woman in waiting. Hers may not be a fully actualized life – not yet.

I would never posit that *everyone* is supposed to be in the “light.” Darkness has its place. This position contradicts what Jungian psychology opines about the shadow. Jung reasoned that the shadow embodies latent chaos and trouble, that it is an unblessed, repressed, unconscious space of being. It is languaged, by a Jungian standard, as principally negative and problematic. I am, myself, more available to the idea that darkness can grow beauty. That it is not merely the stuff of nightmares and things that need repair. I like imagining it as a possible place. An unmapped place. A place that asks for the soul to increase. It is an unseen place. An enveloped place. A birthing place.

Exercise for the Shadow Woman Out of Balance

Describe the thing that keeps you in the shadows – or keeps you silent. (This can also be the thing that keeps your ideas, your true personality, your gifts from being born.)

Now assign this thing a character. For example: “My silence is kept by a man with too many keys. He is always closing the door I am trying to walk through. He never permits my entrance. His mouth is always snarling. He has too many teeth. He never remembers my name.” Describe as much of this character as you can, and remember that the “character” is the thing that keeps you in the shadows, keeps you from being “born.” What do they look like? What does their voice sound like? Does it remind you of anything? What do they have on? Do they have a smell? Describe their hands, how they stand, what they look like when they walk into a room.

This exercise is one I use a lot because in describing the thing that keeps you hidden, you get to have full access to it. You get to see it for what it is; you get to recognize your relationship to it. And once you do that, you can make changes.

Webs of Support entries – The Shadow Woman

I hear a voice
A familiar sound
Whispering promises
Of never being found
The lies told
Are easy to believe
When all your life,
Darkness is what you've seen
Do I have the power
To break the chains?
Or in the dark
Am I bound to remain?
I feel the hands around my throat
Squeezing tighter
Whenever I get close
To realizing a truth
Just out of my reach
Is the voice mine?
And the shadow me?

--Jennifer Lynn

My silence is kept by the stitches across my mouth that keep me from saying anything my arms are chained down keeping me from going anywhere sometimes. I feel that my eyes are sewn shut but they're not it's just the darkness that surrounds me. My silence is kept by a dog at the end of that chain. He can't quite reach me as long as I stay where I'm at. He is always reminding me of just how close he is by jumping and snapping his teeth right next to me. Sometimes it seems that the chain may break but it never does.

--Arian Campbell



The growl we keep hidden in the dark place familiar to be in the waves trying to be an ocean.
How it feels clutching the darkness that was silent waiting to come out to nourish the feeling of the loving arms of the holy one.

Exercise for the shadow woman in balance deep, so deep in the dark, it is hard to find secret-keeping inside.

Shadow woman clutching your blackness so tight it is longing to come out.

Hidden to prevent the cover-up waiting to undevelop as an unborn child.

An old familiar knowing being wanted.

Darkness is a holy thing. I tremble and learn to be patient, guarded in darkness.

Of the longing

Woman in the balance.

--Pamela Branson

The true me hides

Behind too many lies

For too long I've been pretending

Patiently waiting to escape from this guarded place

This place where I have no choice

But to hide my face

--Dawn Richburg

Trapped

I'm trapped. Can you help?

I'm in the shadows.

I'm disrespected

I'm lost and cold.

I'm afraid.

I'm trapped... Who can help?!

When I'm not seen deep from within

When they're stripping us and looking in every hole possible

When I wanna be found, heard and warm

When I want to be safe and sound in a nice real home.

I truly feel trapped... Do I need help? Who's willing to help??

--Dawn Richburg



PTSD and Fight or Flight

What is the "fight or flight response?"

This fundamental physiologic response forms the foundation of modern day stress medicine. The "fight or flight response" is our body's primitive, automatic, inborn response that prepares the body to "fight" or "flee" from perceived attack, harm or threat to our survival.

What happens to us when we are under excessive stress?

When we experience excessive stress—whether from internal worry or external circumstance—a bodily reaction is triggered, called the "fight or flight" response. Originally discovered by the great Harvard physiologist Walter Cannon, this response is hard-wired into our brains and represents a genetic wisdom designed to protect us from bodily harm. This response actually corresponds to an area of our brain called the hypothalamus, which—when stimulated—initiates a sequence of nerve cell firing and chemical release that prepares our body for running or fighting.

What are the signs that our fight or flight response has been stimulated (activated)?

When our fight or flight response is activated, sequences of nerve cell firing occur and chemicals like adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol are released into our bloodstream. These patterns of nerve cell firing and chemical release cause our body to undergo a series of very dramatic changes. Our respiratory rate increases. Blood is shunted away from our digestive tract and directed into our muscles and limbs, which require extra energy and fuel for running and fighting. Our pupils dilate. Our awareness intensifies. We become prepared—physically and psychologically—for fight or flight. We scan and search our environment, "looking for the enemy."

When our fight or flight system is activated, we tend to perceive everything in our environment as a possible threat to our survival. By its very nature, the fight or flight system bypasses our rational mind—where our more well thought out beliefs exist—and moves us into "attack" mode. This state of alert causes us to perceive almost everything in our world as a possible threat to our survival. As such, we tend to see everyone and everything as a possible enemy. Our fear is exaggerated. Our thinking is distorted. Fear becomes the lens through which we see the world.

We can begin to see how it is almost impossible to cultivate positive attitudes and beliefs when we are stuck in survival mode. Our rational mind is disengaged. Our consciousness is focused on fear, not love. Making clear choices and recognizing the consequences of those choices is unfeasible. We are focused on short-term survival, not the long-term consequences of our beliefs and choices. When we are overwhelmed with excessive stress, our life becomes a series of short-term emergencies.

What is our fight or flight system designed to protect us from?

Our fight or flight response is designed to protect us from the proverbial saber tooth tigers that once lurked in the woods and fields around us, threatening our physical survival. At times when our actual physical survival is threatened, there is no greater response to have on our side. When activated, the fight or flight response causes a surge of adrenaline and other stress hormones to pump through our body. This surge is the force responsible for mothers lifting cars off their trapped children and for firemen heroically running into blazing houses to save endangered victims. The surge of adrenaline imbues us with heroism and courage at times when we are called upon to protect and defend the lives and values we cherish.

What are the saber tooth tigers of today and why are they so dangerous?

When we face very real dangers to our physical survival, the fight or flight response is invaluable. Today, however, most of the saber tooth tigers we encounter are not a threat to our physical survival. Today's saber tooth tigers consist of rush hour traffic, missing a deadline, bouncing a check or having an argument with our boss or spouse. Nonetheless, these modern day, saber tooth tigers trigger the activation of our fight or flight system as if our physical survival was threatened. On a daily basis, toxic stress hormones flow into our bodies for events that pose no real threat to our physical survival.

Has the fight or flight response become counterproductive?

In most cases today, once our fight or flight response is activated, we cannot flee. We cannot fight. We cannot physically run from our perceived threats. When we are faced with modern day, saber tooth tigers, we have to sit in our office and "control ourselves." We have to sit in traffic and "deal with it." In short, many of the major stresses today trigger the full activation of our fight or flight response, causing us to become aggressive, hypervigilant and over-reactive. This aggressiveness, over-reactivity and hypervigilance cause us to act or respond in ways that are actually counter-productive to our survival.

It is counterproductive to punch out the boss (the fight response) when s/he activates our fight or flight response. (Even though it might bring temporary relief to our tension!) It is counterproductive to run away from the boss (the flight response) when s/he activates our fight or flight response. This all leads to a difficult situation in which our automatic, predictable and unconscious fight or flight response causes behavior that can actually be self-defeating and work against our emotional, psychological and spiritual survival.

To protect ourselves today, we must consciously pay attention to the signals of fight or flight.

To protect ourselves in a world of psychological—rather than physical—danger, we must consciously pay attention to unique signals telling us whether we are actually in fight or flight. Some of us may experience these signals as physical symptoms like tension in our muscles, headache, upset stomach, racing heartbeat, deep sighing or shallow breathing. Others may experience them as emotional or psychological symptoms such as anxiety, poor concentration, depression, hopelessness, frustration, anger, sadness or fear.

Excess stress does not always show up as the "feeling" of being stressed. Many stresses go directly into our physical body and may only be recognized by the physical symptoms we manifest. Two excellent examples of stress induced conditions are "eye twitching" and "teeth-grinding." Conversely, we may "feel" lots of emotional stress in our emotional body and have very few physical symptoms or signs in our body.

By recognizing the symptoms and signs of being in fight or flight, we can begin to take steps to handle the stress overload. There are benefits to being in fight or flight—even when the threat is only psychological rather than physical. For example, in times of emotional jeopardy, the fight or flight response can sharpen our mental acuity, thereby helping us deal decisively with issues, moving us to action. But it can also make us hypervigilant and over-reactive during times when a state of calm awareness is more productive. By learning to recognize the signals of fight or flight activation, we can avoid reacting excessively to events and fears that are not life threatening. In so doing, we can play "emotional judo" with our fight or flight response, "using" its energy to help us rather than harm us. We can borrow the beneficial effects (heightened awareness, mental acuity and the ability to tolerate excess pain) in order to change our emotional environment and deal productively with our fears, thoughts and potential dangers.

Grounding Exercises

It is useful to have a selection of grounding exercises that you can draw upon to keep your mind and body connected and working together, particularly for those times when you are becoming overwhelmed with distressing memories, thoughts and feelings.

People who have experienced childhood sexual abuse or adult sexual assault can sometimes be confronted by flashbacks or intense memories of what was done, to the point that they are feel as if they are back there, re-living the abuse all over again.

Grounding exercises are a way for you to firmly anchor yourself in the present.

Grounding is a technique that *helps us reorient to the here-and-now*, to bring us into the present. They are a useful technique *if you ever feel overwhelmed, intensely anxious, or dissociated from your environment*.

The following grounding exercises are about using our senses (see, hear, smell, taste, touch) to build our mind and body connection in the present. In working through the grounding exercises suggested here, you might find one or two that work for you – remembering only to use the exercises that you feel comfortable with.

SIMPLE GROUNDING EXERCISE

1. Place both feet flat on the floor
2. Lean back into your chair, and make note of the feeling of the chair under you and against your back.
3. Cross your arms over your chest
4. Gently tap your shoulders, alternating one side at a time.

Alternatively, ***you can place your hands on your thighs*** if you are in public, tapping one leg at a time.

Although not as effective as shoulder tapping, this technique can still calm you down.

5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING EXERCISE

The “54321 game” is a common sensory awareness grounding exercise that many find a helpful tool to relax or get through difficult moments.

PROCEDURE

1. Describe 5 things you see in the room.
2. Name 4 things you can feel (“my feet on the floor” or “the air in my nose”)
3. Name 3 things you hear right now (“traffic outside”)
4. Name 2 things you can smell right now (or 2 smells you like)
5. Name 1 good things about yourself

You should feel calmer and more at ease by the end of the exercise. ***Repeat the 5 steps more than once if needed.***

Try out the technique in different situations, you may find it works well for ***insomnia, anxiety, or for general relaxation.***



We've listed more grounding techniques below. *These work best if practiced regularly (every morning for example) for about 2 to 3 months in order to create the habit*, as remembering grounding exercises in a moment of stress or panic is difficult if it is not something we do on a regular basis.

- Remind yourself of who you are now. Say your name. Say your age now. Say where you are now. Say what you have done today. Say what you will do next.
- Take ten breaths, focus your attention on each breath on the way in and on the way out. Say number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash water on your face.
- Sip a cool drink of water.
- As you wake, during the night, remind yourself who you are, and where you are. Tell yourself who you are and where you are. What age are you now? Look around the room and notice familiar objects and name them. Feel the bed you are lying on, the warmth or coldness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear.
- Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them.
- If you are with other people, and you feel comfortable with them, concentrate closely on what they are saying and doing, and remind yourself why you are with them.
- If you are sitting feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it.
- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- Look around you, notice what is front of you and to each side, name first large objects and then smaller ones.
- Get up, walk around, take your time to notice each step as you take one then another.
- Stamp your feet notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.
- Clap and rub your hands together, hear the noise and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.
- Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and flick it gently, so that you feel it spring back on your wrist.



We're All A Little Mad: **Mental Health Deinstitutionalization and Imprisonment**

Deinstitutionalization doesn't work. We just switched places. Instead of being in hospitals the people are in jail. The whole system is topsy-turvy and the last person served is the mentally ill person. -- Jail official, Ohio

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, several U.S. states drastically transformed their mental health systems. This process, known as *deinstitutionalization*, involved a shift away from centralized, state-operated mental health hospitals and towards decentralized systems of care. Because of the many problems that state mental health hospitals had, the public and governmental officials alike thought it best to provide treatment through community-based mental health services. State hospitals, much like the Colorado Mental Health Institute of Pueblo (formerly known as the Colorado Insane Asylum), were charged with rampant abuse by staff towards the patients including physical and sexual assaults, as well as intrusive and unnecessary therapies. “Therapies” such as frontal lobotomies (removing part of the brain) and electroshock were widely overused and had permanent and irreversible damage to the victims. Part of the motivation for *deinstitutionalization* was that public opinion began to condemn such abusive treatments towards mental health patients. Several pieces of legislation incentivized states to transfer funding to local mental health service delivery programs that were based in the community, to be used in conjunction with newly developed antipsychotic medications such as Thorazine. Lawmakers posited that mentally ill individuals were better served by outpatient services where they could retain community and family ties and enjoy greater personal autonomy. This led to a drastic decline in hospitalized populations and a simultaneous increase of mentally ill populations in the community.

Although this shift was lined with good intentions, the results were unfortunate. Throughout the 1970s, 80s, budgets for community-based mental health programs were, and continue to be cut. Most of those patients who had been deinstitutionalized and moved out of psychiatric hospitals were severely mental ill:

Between 50 and 60 percent of them were diagnosed with schizophrenia. Another 10 to 15 percent were diagnosed with organic brain diseases – epilepsy, strokes, Alzheimer’s disease, and brain damage secondary to trauma. The remaining individuals residing in public psychiatric hospitals had conditions such as mental retardation with psychosis, autism, and other psychiatric disorders of childhood, and alcoholism and drug addiction with concurrent brain damage. The fact that most deinstitutionalized people suffer from various forms of brain dysfunction was not as well understood when the policy of deinstitutionalization got under way (Frontline 2016).

Many of those with severe mental illness find themselves attempting to navigate their daily lives in the community with limited resources and assistance. With the simultaneous rise in policing and the use of incarceration during an era of budget cuts for mental health services, there has been a sharp rise in the use of prison in response to mental health needs.

Many people struggling with mental illness – whether severe or not – find themselves left with no support and limited resources, thereby forcing them into situations in which they must commit “survival crimes”: theft, substance use/abuse and self-medicating, acts associated with homelessness, sex work, and self-defense. Moreover, once they are in the system, “they tend to be subjected to far harsher sentencing than others for the very same crimes” (Stanford Law School 2015).

Mental Health

*Do you see me here...
Do you hear me scream...
Do you care that I exist...
Do you realize I need help...
Do you know of my thoughts of suicide...
Mental Health... Oh yea, what a joke...
They don't care I exist...
They don't care you're here...
They don't care about your screams...
They only care to help by asking do you want coloring pages...
They don't care when the bones go snap and pop...
I don't know anymore, do I need help...?
--Dawn Richburg*

The history of psychiatry and mental health treatment is particularly fraught with mistreatment towards women. After the era witch-hunts and accusing mostly women of the crime of sorcery, the medical field produced new diagnostic categories based on women being “possessed” – albeit in different ways. Psychiatry developed the term “hysteria” exclusively for female patients and medical experts curiously borrowed much of the same language that was used in trials against women who were accused of witchery – for example, those with hysteria were charged with causing trouble for family and neighbors, nervousness, hyperactive sexuality, irritability, and faintness. Early physicians absurdly claimed that hysteria resulted from things like female semen turning venomous within a woman’s body if she did not give birth to children on a socially acceptable basis. Other bizarre assumptions claimed that breast milk could travel to a woman’s brain and cause insanity. Critics have charged the diagnostic category of “female hysteria” to be nothing but a label to control women who were either truly suffering from some unknown mental health illness *or* to control women who were not submissive and therefore were too “unruly” for their husbands, their families, or their communities. There are many documented reports of husbands and/or families turning their female loved ones into wards of the state because they thought the women should be more docile and more subservient. If women did not act like a “proper lady,” then they were punished for deviating from their gender expectations. Early mental health treatment served to *control* women rather than *treat* women’s mental health issues. Even today, women are called “crazy” far more than men are on a regular basis, and often in situations where women are expressing themselves in ways that society doesn’t approve of. Using the word “crazy” towards women dismisses their emotions and worse, has even been used to dismiss claims of sexual assault and rape.

Women should be seen and not heard. Rule of thumb, and in many more degrading terms have been associated with women since before we can remember. “She’s crazy.” “She’s worthless.” “She’s not even a woman.” Unfortunately to this day it’s the same as it was in many ways back in the 1800s when all a man had to do was claim his wife was a “victim” of hysteria and she would get locked away. Now of course it’s not that easy but all a man or anyone really has to say is “she’s crazy – you can’t believe a words she says” and the effects those words have can be just as harmful.

What happens when a person repeatedly is told they’re dumb, worthless, crazy? They start to believe it. And even years later, when a person thinks they’re healed from whatever harm was done, those degrading words and phrases sneak back up even if we don’t realize it and start to affect everyday life. Now of course, it’s not just women who have to deal with degrading treatment, but if we’re being honest, 9 out of 10 times it’s a woman or a young girl being called crazy. Why is that? I know I’ve been infuriated in a situation when I was told I was crazy because The Man was trying to skirt the truth, but I’ve also learned to trust in myself because of situations like that. It hasn’t happened overnight – it never does – but slowly and surely we as women can learn and master trusting ourselves no matter how much residual buildup we have left over from the bullshit.

--Jenni Lynn

Female hysteria was finally removed from the diagnostic categories in 1980, but its legacy remains. Psychiatry served to punish gender deviance and for those women who truly did have a medical health issue, they were not treated with care but rather taught how to be more obedient. In the modern era, the rising use of incarceration is now the new institution that serves “deal with” mental health issues, though there is similarly not much care or psychological treatment available in jails or prisons. For example, 12% of non-incarcerated females have symptoms of a mental health disorder, compared to 73-75% of women incarcerated in jail or prison. Although incarcerated men also have high rates of reporting a mental health issue (55%-59%), incarcerated women often have histories and biographies that complicate their mental health status. Three-quarters of incarcerated women report a history of substance abuse, over 80% report past physical or sexual abuse, and nearly half have a parent who abused drugs or alcohol. Given these statistics, it is clear that incarcerated women need specific programming and mental health treatment that takes into account their unique life histories.

At one women’s prison in a Western state, participants conducted surveys among their peers to get a sense of what kind of mental health issues are prevalent and what, if any, treatment services there were. In all, there were 96 respondents who reported high rates of mental health issues. Based on this sample size (out of a population of approximately 600 prisoners), we came up with the following findings:

- 16% have eating disorders
- 10% have committed self-harming behaviors (like cutting)
- 25% have post-traumatic stress disorder
- 9% have schizophrenia
- 12% have depression
- 10% have bipolar disorder
- 9% have anxiety

Still others reported issues such as co-dependency, anger, sleep problems, grief and loss, poor self-esteem, and personality disorders. Sadly, the vast majority does not feel as though they are receiving adequate mental health

services, which corresponds to national studies. Research demonstrates that incarcerated women often leave prison or jail without receiving necessary mental health treatment. In this survey, we found that about 15% of respondents reported that the mental health services they received were adequate. But, over 60% of respondents felt that the services were not helpful or were inadequate. In asking survey respondents what they needed instead, more than half reported that more counseling, support groups, and programs would benefit them greatly. Of the remaining respondents, they suggested that more doctors and greater availability would be highly useful, as well as more information on diagnoses and better medications.

Unfortunately, many women who have a period of incarceration will never receive the help they need. This leads to a vicious cycle of trying to survive – which can sometimes lead women to revert to coping mechanisms such as substance use or other activities that are criminalized. Jails and prisons are full of people who are suffering from untreated mental health issues, which in some situations is quite ironic. For example, the women's prison in the Western state mentioned above is actually in a set of buildings that used to be a part of the state's asylum. In fact, the building sits atop a series of tunnels that connects the prison to buildings that are still functioning as the mental hospital. Within these tunnels there are water tanks that were used for hydrotherapy, cells that presumably housed unruly mental hospital patients, and restraint cuffs still shackled to the wall. The old asylums are the new prisons, and not much has changed.

Over the centuries, mental illness has been an unsolved issue. People with mental illness are treated as less than human – degraded, abused, and treated as science projects, as if they no longer matter if they are ill, no longer having feelings and no longer deserving of basic rights as a human being. Sadly, not much has changed. If anything, society has turned a blind eye and has remained neglectful, only furthering the damage done by mental illness. Over time people have fought and won more rights for the mentally ill, but that didn't change the fact that they don't get help – shutting down mental health hospitals just means that those with mental health illnesses aren't abused in the same ways anymore. Stricter laws banned abusive treatment and experiments on the mentally ill, making asylums a thing of the past, but nothing was established to replace them, thus leaving the mentally ill still at square one – ill and with no treatment.

Unfortunately, the mentally ill needed something but got nothing. The problem falls on the justice system, and now treats the mentally ill the same as criminals, placing them in jails and prisons, still getting abused and still neglected because there is a lack of treatment. Relying on jails and prisons for this population essentially labels mental illness as a crime. Being currently incarcerated, I am an eyewitness to many people who don't get the treatment they need and are suffering. On top of them suffering from their illness, they are treated harshly by officers, bullied by other prisoners, and often pushed to their limits unjustly.

The mental health services available are scarce, almost non-existent. The healing or being healthy is a pipe dream and it is ridiculous that after several decades we have made just minor steps from where we started, and we are no closer to helping mentally ill people. We fight for breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer's, etc., yet when it comes to mental illness, people become dead silent. It's a fight not many people want to take, a stand not many get up for – but, this is a problem everyone has to deal with, one way or another. I don't even know where to start myself. I have friends who I wish I could help, family members who could use some treatments. So I stand up and yell out, but unfortunately I'm met with silence, too.

--Arian Campbell



Women's Prison Timeline

- 1813 – The work of reformers like Elizabeth Fry assert that women offenders are capable of being reformed because they are “fallen” victims.
- 1839 – The first facility is built for incarcerated women in NY (Mount Pleasant Prison Annex).
- 1845 – Abigail Gibbons starts the Women’s Prison Association (WPA) in NYC to push for improvements in prison conditions for women.
- 1867 – The use of chain gangs is introduced in prisons in the South, including women’s facilities. Women’s prisons almost exclusively used Black female labor.
- 1873 – Indiana Women’s Prison opens. It is the first stand-alone adult female prison in the country. It was also the first maximum security prison for women.
- 1877 – The first “reformatory prison” for women opened in Mass., and intended to improve the moral character of women and to teach them ladylike behaviors.
- 1928 – The first federal prison for women opens in W.V. The purpose was to reform women by having them farm the land, cook, and perform office work.
- 1964 – The Civil Rights Act prohibits sex discrimination in employment and applies to prison settings so that women can have greater access to corrections jobs.
- 1973 – Mandatory minimums are imposed in NY through the notorious “Rockefeller Drug Laws” and quickly become popular throughout the U.S. This is a result of the “war on drugs.” Since 1986, there has been a 400% increase in female incarceration.
- 1987 – The “Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers” organization starts in Atlanta to maintain family ties during incarceration.
- 1992 – The first Girl Scouts Behind Bars program begins in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women.
- 1996 – Sheriff Joe Arpaio reinstates chain gangs for women in an effort to be “tough on crime” (in Arizona).
- 2003 – The Prison Rape Elimination Act is passed, to deal with the 14-20% of prisoners who have been sexually assaulted.
- 2010 – Colorado becomes the 8th state to outlaw the practice of shackling pregnant prisoners during labor and delivery.

Reflection on the Women's Prison Timeline

The way that women were treated in the 1800s was absolutely terrifying. And the way that things were handled back then is even more scary. It's crazy that back then they were more worried about racial segregation than gender segregation. In the late 1980s they started the Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers Act. Mother and child reunification is the most important thing of me as a mother in prison. It's so hard to be away from your family but knowing that your babies are out there without you is heart wrenching. It makes every day in here a challenge. Why is it that it took until 2003 for something to be passed to help against sexual violence and rape in prison? I think that chains and shackles while in labor or during birth is inhumane. I also think that three or six hours isn't enough time with your newborn baby before being ripped away. We are all doing our time for one thing or another but not everyone is a reckless, careless criminal. The 2010 labia lift searches conducted in Denver Women's Prison is the most degrading and dehumanizing thing I have ever heard of. I know when I was in DW I felt super uncomfortable when having a flashlight shined at my "area." Prison can be very traumatizing at times and I know that things could be worse so I guess you do have to find the positive in today.

--Tiffany Weaver



HEALING THROUGH DBT: DIALECTIC BEHAVIOR THERAPY

Written by Alexandra Veron

Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a treatment designed for individuals that struggle with depression, bipolar disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, eating disorders, or alcohol and drug problems. DBT is highly effective for individuals with self-harming behaviors such as self-cutting, suicidal thoughts, and suicidal attempts or urges. DBT was originally created to treat Borderline Personality Disorder but has been clinically proven to be highly effective for individuals basically struggling with very intense and frequent negative emotions. Emotional vulnerability and DBT help individuals create "Lives Worth Living."

The goal is to learn new skills, learn to experience emotions, and accomplish ordinary life goals.

- **What does “Dialectic” mean?**

Dialectic means “weighing and integrating contradictory facts or ideas with a view to resolving apparent contradictions.” This means to *balance Change with Acceptance*.

DBT gives us simple and easy skills and worksheets to build a sense of mastery and emotional competence.

Some examples:

FEAR

- Do what you are afraid of doing... over and over and over.
- When overwhelmed, make a list of small steps or tasks you can do. Do the first thing on the list.

SADNESS OR DEPRESSION

- Get active! Approach, don’t avoid.
- Do things that make you feel competent and self-confident.

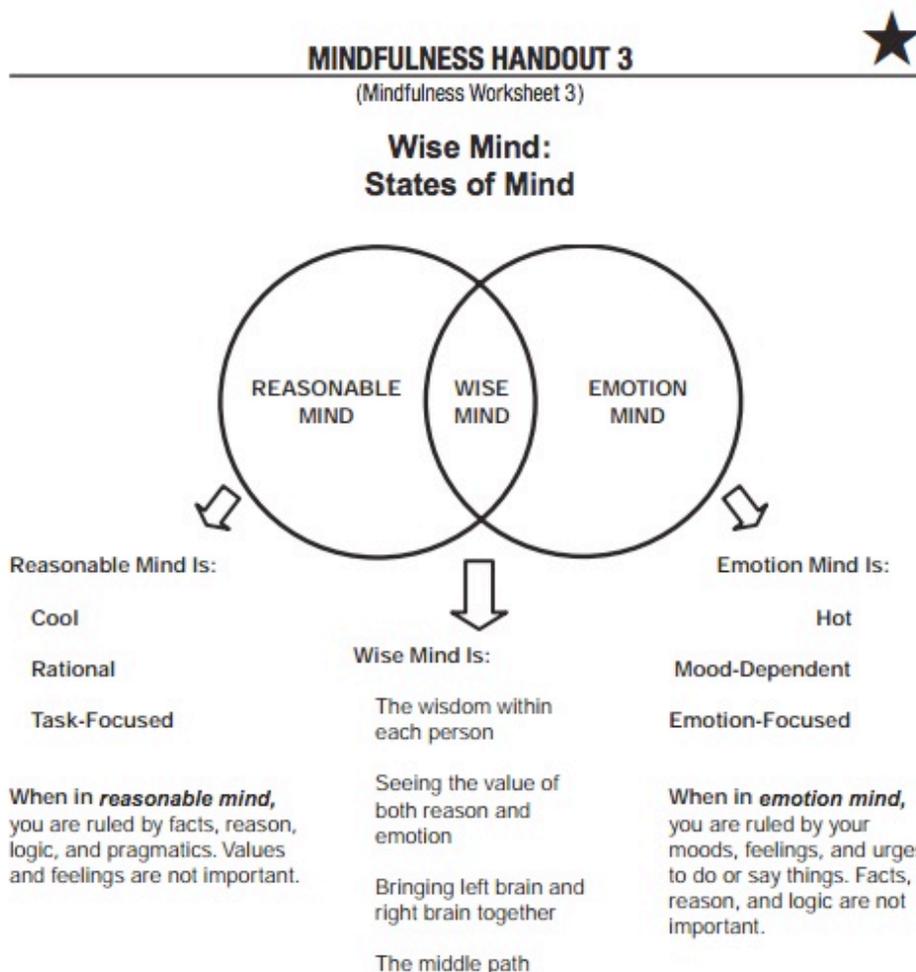
- **What skills are taught in DBT?**

Mindfulness: The practice of being fully aware and present in this one moment.

Distress Tolerance: How to tolerate pain in difficult situations, not change it.

Interpersonal Effectiveness: How to ask for what you want and say no while maintaining self respect and relationships with others.

Emotional Regulation: How to change emotions that you want to change.



DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 4

(Distress Tolerance Worksheets 2, 2a)

STOP Skill



Stop

Do not just react. Stop! Freeze! Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!

Take a step back

Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let your feelings make you act impulsively.

Observe

Notice what is going on inside and outside you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are others saying or doing?

Proceed mindfully

Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people's thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals. Ask Wise Mind: Which actions will make it better or worse?

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 14

(Emotion Regulation Worksheets 9–14b)

Overview: Reducing Vulnerability to Emotion Mind— Building a Life Worth Living

A way to remember these skills is to remember the term **ABC PLEASE**.

ACCUMULATE POSITIVE EMOTIONS

A

Short Term: Do pleasant things that are possible now.

Long Term: Make changes in your life so that positive events will happen more often in the future. Build a "life worth living."

BUILD MASTERY

B

Do things that make you feel competent and effective to combat helplessness and hopelessness.

COPE AHEAD OF TIME WITH EMOTIONAL SITUATIONS

C

Rehearse a plan ahead of time so that you are prepared to cope skillfully with emotional situations.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR MIND BY TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

PLEASE

Treat **P**hysical illness, balance **E**ating, avoid mood-**A**ltering substances, balance **S**leep, and get **E**xercise.



Exercise: Distract Yourself from Self-Destructive Behaviors

Here are some safer actions that you can use to distract yourself from your self-destructive emotions and thoughts. Check (✓) the ones you're willing to do, and then add any healthy, nonharming activities that you can think of:

- _____ Instead of hurting yourself, hold an ice cube in one hand and squeeze it. The sensation from the cold ice is numbing and very distracting.
- _____ Write on yourself with a red felt-tip marker instead of cutting. Draw exactly where you would cut. Use red paint or nail polish to make it look like you're bleeding. Then draw stitches with a black marker. If you need to make it even more distracting, squeeze an ice cube in the other hand at the same time.
- _____ Snap a rubber band on your wrist each time you feel like hurting yourself. This is very painful, but it causes less permanent damage than cutting, burning, or mutilating yourself.
- _____ Dig your fingernails into your arm without breaking the skin.
- _____ Draw faces of people you hate on balloons and then pop them.
- _____ Write letters to people you hate or to people who have hurt you. Tell them what they did to you and tell them why you hate them. Then throw the letters away or save them to read later.
- _____ Throw foam balls, rolled-up socks, or pillows against the wall as hard as you can.
- _____ Scream as loud as you can into a pillow or scream some place where you won't draw the attention of other people, like at a loud concert or in your car.
- _____ Stick pins in a voodoo doll instead of hurting yourself. You can make a voodoo doll with some rolled-up socks or a foam ball and some markers. Or you can buy a doll in a store for the specific purpose of sticking pins in it. Buy one that's soft and easy to stick.
- _____ Cry. Sometimes people do other things instead of crying because they're afraid that if they start to cry they'll never stop. This never happens. In fact, the truth is that crying can make you feel better because it releases stress hormones.
- _____ Other healthy, nonharming ideas: _____

DISTRACT YOURSELF BY COUNTING

Counting is a simple skill that can really keep your mind busy and help you focus on something other than your pain. Here are some examples. Check (✓) the ones you're willing to do, and then add any activities that you can think of:

- _____ *Count your breaths.* Sit in a comfortable chair, put one hand on your belly, and take slow, long breaths. Imagine breathing into your stomach instead of your lungs. Feel your belly expand like a balloon with each inhalation. Start counting your breaths. When you inevitably start thinking about whatever it is that's causing you pain, return your focus to counting.
- _____ *Count anything else.* If you're too distracted by your emotions, simply count the sounds that you're hearing. This will take your attention outside of yourself. Or try counting the number of cars that are passing by, the number of sensations that you're feeling, or anything else you can put a number on, such as the branches of a tree you're looking at.
- _____ *Count or subtract by increments of seven.* For example, start with one hundred and subtract seven. Now take that answer and subtract seven more. Keep going. This activity will really distract you from your emotions because it requires extra attention and concentration.
- _____ Other counting ideas: _____

Here's an example of using counting to distract yourself. Dawn became upset when her mother told her to help set the table for dinner. "She's always telling me what to do," Dawn thought. She could feel her anger getting worse, so she went to her room and remembered that the last time this happened, counting her breaths had helped soothe her emotions. She sat down and did it again. After ten minutes, she felt calmer, so she went back to the dining room.

CREATE YOUR DISTRACTION PLAN

Now identify those distraction skills that you're willing to use the next time you're in a situation that's causing you pain and discomfort. These chosen skills will make up your distraction plan. Remember, these are the first steps you will use in your plan to distract, relax, and cope. Write your chosen distraction techniques below. When you're done, write them down again on a 3 x 5 inch note card or a sticky note to carry around with you in your wallet or purse. Then the next time you're in a distressing situation, you can pull out the card to remind yourself of your distraction plan.

POETIC HEALING

A Meditation on Poetry and Mental Illness

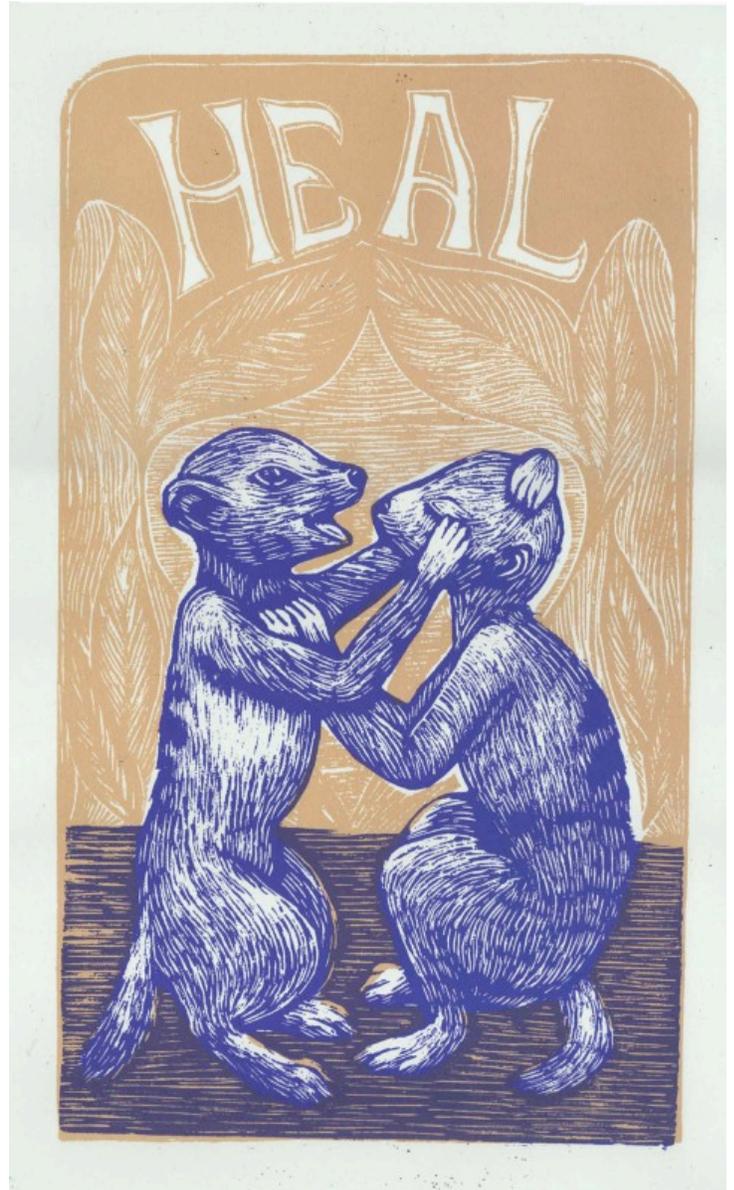
Poetry is a type of literature in which the sound and meaning of language are combined to create ideas and feelings. The first part of *Break, Break, Break*, a poem by the English poet Lord Tennyson that was first published in 1842 helps show how poetry does this:

Break, Break, Break

*On thy cold gray stones, o seal
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.
In the four lines.*

Poetry can help relieve stress and can also help with mental illness and PTSD, and even with women in prison as well. To be able to write your feelings down on paper into words is immensely powerful. Poetry has the basic ability to connect, often going to the very core of someone's needs. Poetry helps us to understand what it means to be human. If nothing else, poetry has helped to shape my identity. When someone is dealing with mental illness, there is a way for them to share their feelings by writing them down on paper so that other people can read it. It helps them to recover and gives them some hope by showing them a bit of light at the end of the tunnel.

--Pamela Branson



A Poet Goes to Prison

In the fall of 2016, WEBS of Support had poet and author Juan Morales host a two-part workshop in which participants read poetry and created their own individual and collective pieces. We will share some of the poems Juan brought and the writing exercises so you can practice your hand at poetry. We will also share some of the poems our participants wrote.

ODES

Odes are a type of poem or song that are intended to celebrate someone, something, or some moment. These poems are tributes that often relay an emotional connection the author has to the person, the thing, or the event. Poet Kevin Young, a prominent African American writer, published an entire book of odes entitled *Dear Darkness: Poems*. Kevin does an interesting thing with his odes; he devotes entire poems to nonspectacular foods – every day items that we perhaps takes for granted, Kevin attempts to express his love and appreciation for. Here is one of his odes:

Ode to Chicken

You are everything
to me. Frog legs,
rattlesnake, almost any
thing I put my mouth to reminds me of you.
Folks always try getting you to act like you someone
else –
nuggets, or tenders, fingers
you don't have – but even
your unmanicured feet
taste sweet. Too loud
in the yard, segregated
dark & light, you are
like a day self-contained –
Your sunset skin puckers
like a kiss. Let others
put on airs – pigs graduate
to pork, bread
become toast, even beef

was once just bull
before it got them degrees –
But, even dead,
you keep your name
& head. You can make
anything of yourself,
you know – but prefer
to wake me early
in the cold, fix me breakfast
& dinner too, leave me
to fly for you.

--Kevin Young (2010)

Exercise:

Write down two or three things that you find mundane or even of things or people that you don't like. Now choose one of those and make a list of 4 to 7 qualities/traits of that thing or person. For example, the WEBS facilitator chose the wall clock to write about, and some of the qualities about that clock are: it is loud, persistent, methodical, annoying, and frustrating.

After doing that, try to write a poem of your own using the characteristics you wrote down and try to also write about what – if anything – you appreciate about the thing or person.

Using the wall clock as an example, here is a poem about it:

Ticking Wall Clock

Ticking wall clock,
your frustrating
persistence is striking
every last nerve of mine.
Yet, despite that, there's
something I appreciate about
your methodical ways
of keeping us on task.
Linear time is not an
attraction of mine, but like
spreadsheets and schedules and
lists, your commitment is commendable.

Here are some other odes we came up with:

You are an enigma
That comes back
And forth into my life
Disappearing without warning
And leaving, chasing thoughts
Inside my mind.
You make it so easy to
Hate you yet so is
The addiction to love you
So easy
You linger
Like a ghost, haunting me,
Never leaving my ruminating mind.
Your laugh is like a mermaid call, sirens to my
mind.
Stop collecting, and
Leave my emotions alone.

--Alexandra Veron

His lies – habits, hurts and hang-ups. Bad
relationship.
Selfish, selfish man, dishonest lies about
everything, even his age. Careless – I was just
another casualty in his game. Charming with his
deceiving qualities. Cold hearted man.

--Tiffany Weaver.

Because I don't like eating beets,
Because I don't like wearing green,
Dislike green – it is not my favorite color to wear.
I dislike the taste of beets.

--Pamela Branson

Ode to fake people

They sure can tell some stories,
They constantly back stab and back bite.
They make false promises and truly
Hate you while they do it.
They annoy me to my core

And they never go away,
Even if they did go away,
Another one would take their
Place, all these fake and
Plastic people all up in my face.

--Arian Campbell

You call me day and night
You are so friendly
You wanna be touched by all
You taste and feel amazing and well...
You make me feel so good; yet,
When I don't have you I need you
But I absolutely HATE you... Heroin.

--Dawn Richburg



LISTS

Many poet have used the “lists” method in their writings; choosing a topic that they are passionate about, or choosing to write about themselves and their identities, poets can more fully describe a thing, often using humor in the process. An example of a “list” poem is: *187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross the Border* by Juan Felipe Herrera. We've included a list poem written by Jim Daniels, entitle *You Bring Out the Boring White Guy in Me*, and we've included an exercise and participant contributions after.

You Bring Out the Boring White Guy in Me

the Ward Cleaver in me. The Pat Boone
in me. The K-Mart in me. The Slurpee
in me. The boiled hotdog in me. The mac
and cheese in me. The Tang in me.
You bring out the Hamburger Helper
in me. You bring out the Twinkie
in me. The Cheez Whiz in me.
You bring out the bowling trophy
in me. The student council in me.
The parliamentary procedure in me.
The missionary position in me.
You bring out the canned vegetables
in me. The Jell-o in me. The training
wheels in me. You bring out
the lawn edger in me. The Valu
Meal in me. You bring out the white
briefs in me. You bring out
the cheap beer and weak coffee
in me. You bring out the 15%
tip chart in me. The sad overweight
weekend golfer in me. You bring out
the ex-smoker in me. The jumper
cables in the trunk with flares
and the red flag to tie to the window
in me. You bring out the Tony Orlando
in me. The canned situation comedy
laughter in me. The elevator music
in me. You bring out the medley
of TV commercial jingles in me.
The Up with People in me.

I've come to a complete stop
at the stop sign. I've got my
emergency flashers on. My doors
are locked, baby,
I'm waiting for you.

--Jim Daniels (2003)

As you can tell, Jim is satirically mimicking white, nondescript American culture in his “list” poem. But, he is also describing concrete characteristics of a culture, albeit bland and homogenous. Everyone *has* a culture, though some are more deeply connected to their racial or ethnic lineages while others are more connected to a universal identity. Also note that this “list” poem does not use proper sentence structure and this in fact adds to the kind of dramatic delivery the author is attempting to achieve.

Exercise: List 3 to 4 identities or roles that you have. Mother, Chicana, Muslim, Prisoner, Butch, etc. Choose one of those identities and titled your poem: *You Bring Out the Boring _____ In Me*. Then, proceed to write a list poem without proper sentence structure.

Here is a “list” poem that one of our participants came up with:

You Bring Out the Trailer Park In Me

The hand-me-down clothes, the Ramen
noodles eaten dry, the football in the park,
the old lady who drinks too much next door,
the window I use as a door, the million cats
that all have no home or all live with one lady,
the loud punk rock music you can hear down the
block,
the fuck with me one more time and I will show you
just how trailer park I can truly be.
The fake blond, Virginia slims, Peppermint
Schnapps,
flip-flops, white girl from the trailer park.

--Arian Campbell

Here are other poems that we wrote in Juan's workshop:

Origins of Darkness

Darkness leaves you wondering... why, where & how

Darkness leaves you scared and cold

Darkness leaves you... alone in a zone

Darkness leaves you... breathless and blue

Darkness leaves you... to stare at death.

--Dawn Richburg

Every day I sit in my room and

Pace the floor.

I hate this place I don't want to

Be here any more.

These people suck, and their stories

All sound the same.

There's no accountability – always looking for someone else to blame.

I'm so sick of hearing everyone's lies

I promise I won't cry when I say my goodbyes.

I can't stand the way that these people treat me, I don't know what's worse – them or the man

That beat me. I go back

And forth from the streets

To a cell – Tell me why God do I live in this hell.

--Tiffany Weaver

Pomegranate

Pomegranates are very beautiful and red

They are juicy and healthy

There are a lot of seeds I can put in my mouth

Pomegranates are fun

You can cook with pomegranates.

--Pamela Branson

The Origins of Women

They come from the power deep inside

The earth, where everything else dies.

They come from the strength when you're at your weakest.

From where you find courage in fear.

They come from within us.

They show up when least expected

To stand up, to strengthen, to empower, to love, to care, to heal

... Women.

--Arian Campbell

Overtaken

I was lost in hell, when I looked

Into your eyes they were black,

You were cold, every breath I

Breathed into you, Death watched

As he quietly stole your sole.

Sorry I couldn't save you.

RIP J.R.

--Dawn Richburg

Shades

Shades of stone

Speaks hard languages

Into city rushes.

Sirens shriek,

One less voice fades

Into spots of red pavement

Sucking flesh that once heaved on

Bones where eyes lived

Blocks of cement have crushed breath

From dim street corners, lungs shrivel

In heaps of ash on the C.O. time

Shades of stone rest

Bristles with death as one less voice whispers

Hold the moment captive

A shade of stone is pulled down.

--Pamela Branson

Water-eaten armored ocean treasures wreck

innocently flooded oxygen.

--Aryan Campbell

The Wreck

You had so many treasures to show.

Yet innocently laying by the ocean,

Armored, water eaten, you're flooded

And you look a wreck. You've lost

All your oxygen as I try to

Revive life into your still-less body.

--Dawn Richburg

You push me to the floor
Blacked my eye and covered my mouth
You tore my clothes and stole my
Womanhood. You followed your
Peers and ignored my tears, you left me in
Shame for all these years. You left me
With no strength, all fear, sheer terror.
Eyes dug out, mouth glued shut, couldn't
Scream yet I couldn't cry. Those angels
Cried when my newborn baby died. Over
Time the pain shall subside.

--Dawn Richburg

Mother

You're so far, yet so near.
I wish I could have you here
You're so dear I hope you hear
I love you. We're in a place
Where we can't show emotion,
But everyone has depression and oppression
Yet I'd like you to show you
Expression and remember you're dear and near.

--Dawn Richburg



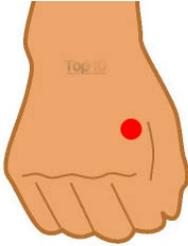
Top 10 Acupressure Points for Pain Relief & Other Problems

Acupressure therapy, sometimes called pressure acupuncture, has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years. It involves applying pressure to acupressure points that lie along meridians in your body to **promote relaxation and treat illnesses**. There are more than 400 acupressure points on the body. It is believed that vital energy called qi (chi) flows through these meridians or energy pathways. There are 12 major meridians that connect specific organs, thus organizing a system of communication throughout the body. Illness occurs when one or more of these meridians are blocked or out of balance. Most Western practitioners, however, attribute the benefits of acupressure to factors like reduced muscle tension, improved circulation and stimulation of brain chemicals called endorphins that act as natural pain relievers. Irrespective of the underlying reason for its effectiveness, **several studies have found this alternative therapy beneficial for relieving certain aches and pains**. The acupressure points are to be pressed with moderate pressure for a few seconds up to a couple of minutes and then released. For best results, take slow, deep breaths as you hold the acupressure points.

Here are the top 10 acupressure points for relieving pains and other problems.

1. Joining the Valley-for Headaches

The Joining the Valley (LI 4) acupressure point is popular for getting rid of headaches. It also helps relieve toothaches, neck pain, shoulder pain, arthritis, constipation and hangovers.



This point is located in the fleshy area between the thumb and index finger, at the highest spot of the muscle when both the thumb and finger are brought close together. Press and massage this point for a couple of minutes and then repeat on the other hand. Do this as needed.

Note: Do not press this acupressure point during pregnancy.

2. Pericardium- for Nausea and Vomiting



The Pericardium (P6) acupressure point is considered useful for getting rid of nausea and vomiting caused by a variety of reasons including motion sickness, pregnancy, post-surgery and post-chemotherapy. It also relieves upset stomach, headaches, chest pain, and carpal tunnel syndrome pain and discomfort.

It is located between the two large tendons on the inside of your wrist, about three finger-widths below the base of your palm. Press the point with your index and middle fingers for a couple of minutes. Repeat several times, as needed. You can also get acupressure wristbands from a drug or health food store and use them.

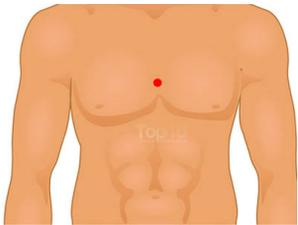
3. The Third Eye- for Chronic Fatigue and Eye Strain



The Third Eye acupressure point (GV 24.5) is good for calming your mind, improving memory, relieving stress, chronic fatigue, headaches, eye strain and insomnia. It also helps relieve sinus pain and congestion. This point is considered beneficial for spiritual and emotional imbalances as well.

Close your eyes and locate the Third Eye pressure point on the knobby spot on the bridge of your nose between your eyebrows. Using your middle finger, gently press it for a few seconds to 1 minute and then release. Repeat several times a week.

4. Sea of Tranquility- for Emotional Healing

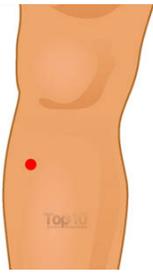


Also known as Conception Vessel 17 (CV 17), the Sea of Tranquility acupressure point helps restore a sense of calm and relieves anxiety, nervousness, depression, hysteria and other emotional imbalances. It also helps boost the immune system. It can be easily located on the center of the breastbone, about four finger-widths up from the base of the bone. You can press this point when you are in the prayer position with your palms joined, fingers pointing upward, and the knuckles of the

thumb pressing into the breastbone.

Make sure your spine is straight, preferably supported by a straight-back chair. Press it for a couple of minutes daily while taking slow, deep breaths. Continue for a few months.

5. Leg Three Miles- for Stomach Problems



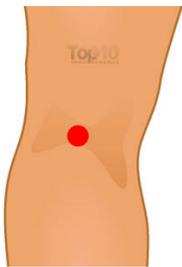
The Leg Three Miles (ST 36) acupressure point is commonly used to improve digestive disorders including indigestion, diarrhea, constipation, bloating, gas, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. Plus, it boosts the immune system, fights fatigue, strengthens the body and promotes general wellness.

Bend your leg and place your fingers just below the knee cap, beginning with the index finger at the base of the knee cap. You will find the Leg

Three Miles point at four finger-widths down from the base of the knee cap, where your little finger rests just to the outside of the shin bone.

Apply moderate to deep pressure on this point for a few seconds daily. You can press this point on both legs at the same time.

6. Commanding Middle- for Arthritis and Sciatica

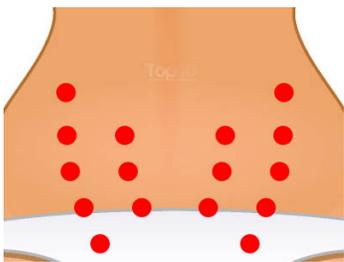


This knee back acupressure point (B 54) is beneficial for reducing knee and back pain; stiffness in the back; arthritis in the knee, back and hips; and sciatica pain.

A study published online by the British Medical Journal in 2006 noted that acupressure may be more effective than physical therapy for relieving low back pain. The researchers also found that the effects of the therapy were not short term because, in fact, they lasted for six months.

Commanding Middle acupressure point is situated at the center of the backside of the knee cap. Gently press it for about 1 minute and then repeat on the other leg. Do this daily, as needed.

7. Sacral Points- for Menstrual Pain



Sacral acupressure points are great for relaxing the uterus and relieving menstrual cramps. It also helps reduce sciatica and lower back pain. The bunch of sacral points is located on the sacrum, that is, the base of the spine directly above the tail bone. Simply lie down on your back with your hands under the base of your spine. Place one hand on top of the other so as to apply steady and firm pressure on the sacral points for a couple of minutes.

8. Shen Men- to Quit an Addiction

Acupressure and acupuncture can help you quit smoking, especially when used in conjunction with other points. Plus, it helps relieve stress, anxiety, inflammatory diseases. It is similar to a wider range of therapeutic benefits.



also help in getting rid of an addiction. It can make it easier for you to quit smoking in conjunction with other points. Plus, it helps relieve stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia and the heart meridian point HT 7 but has

The Shen Menpoint is located on the upper half of the ear, above the apex of the triangular fossa. Place your index finger on this point and your thumb behind the ear on the same point. Massage it by applying firm pressure. Do this a few times daily until you are satisfied with the results.

9. Heavenly Pillar- for Insomnia and Stress

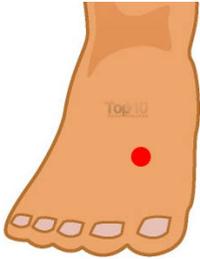


Heavenly Pillar (B 10) is a pair of acupressure points that are excellent for reducing stress, anxiety, exhaustion, burnout, headache or heaviness in the head, neck pain and insomnia. They are also good for relieving eye strain and a stiff neck.

These points are located at one finger-width below the base of the skull on each side, on the prominent neck muscles located 1/2 inch out from the spine. Just press these acupressure points for a couple of minutes daily for

several weeks.

10. Bigger Rushing- for Improving Concentration



Bigger Rushing (LV 3) acupressure point is good for improving memory and concentration. It encourages clarity of thought and focus.

Also, it helps relieve headaches, soothe tired eyes, fight fatigue, reduce hangovers, boost the immune system and prevent allergies as it keeps the body's energy flowing smoothly.

You can easily locate this point on the top of the foot, where the bones of the big toe and second toe meet. Press it gently for a couple of minutes and then release. Do this 2 or 3 times a day for a few weeks.

Warning: Although acupressure is generally considered safe, pregnant women should consult an expert before applying this therapy as some acupoints may stimulate uterine contractions. Plus, those suffering from arthritis, heart disease, cancer and other chronic conditions should consult their doctors before trying this or any other therapy involving muscles and joints. Avoid applying pressure on acupoints on an empty or full stomach. Do not apply acupressure on areas with broken skin or healing skin.

Theatre of the Oppressed (T.O.) by Dawn Richburg

Theatre of the Oppressed was founded by Augusto Boal. This method is done by acting rather than talking. It really lets you be aware of how oppressed our society has become. Oppression is said to be systemic and institutional abuse of power and it supports all the “isms” out there (i.e. sexism, racism, ageism, heterosexism, etc.). Moving forward, Theatre of the Oppressed examines the problem and uses the “spect-actors” in the work to transform a negative into a positive by using conflict resolution and community building. T.O. has been translated in 35 languages – originating from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, it is now used in England, India, Germany, the U.S. and Puerto Rico. It is used by some therapists, teachers, and others. As Plato states, “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” The tools used in T.O. can be powerful and even more if it's genuine. You can then hold the space with authenticity. Pass T.O. on; the knowledge of this method uses games and theatre (i.e. forum theatre, fill the space, red-handed, what are you doing). T.O. can show prisoners and guards that both sides are still people with families. We can learn from each other and this method provides changes in behavior and emotions with better knowledge and recognition. Don't battle the world while your senses suffer. Express (touch, feel, listen, and see) the use of T.O. Become a T.O. promoter; this facility needs it.

Here are some T.O. games you can play with others:

Name & Gesture

The group stands in a circle. The leader begins by introducing herself by her first name accompanied by a physical gesture. The whole group repeats the name and gesture. This process works around the group until everyone has said their name and performed a gesture. This process is then repeated but without the name this time. Then anyone who wishes takes a step forward and the rest of the group must say his or her name and perform that person's gesture.

Bombs & Shields

Groups spread out around the room. Each person chooses one other person without making their choice known; that person is their Bomb. Then choose another person - that one is their shield. The aim of the game is to keep your shield between yourself and your bomb. There will be a lot of frantic movement to begin with and the facilitator can count down from 10 to 1 as the bomb is about to explode. On the command freeze, the facilitator goes around the group asking if people managed to keep their shield between themselves and their bomb.

Tangles & Knots

The group stands in a circle. Each person must remember who is standing on his left and his right. The leader then asks the group to spread out around the room and begin to walk freely about. The leader will then call out instructions - walk with those with the same colored hair as you or walk with those with the same colored eyes or walk with those who are similar height. Then the leader will give more instructions - create 3 circles, or 4 squares or 2 triangles or one star and individuals must form themselves into groups to make this happen. The leader will then ask everyone to freeze where they are stood; to locate the person who originally stood to their right, and to their left and then point at them both, without moving. Very slowly, people will then begin to stretch and then move towards their two neighbors until the entire group are holding hands. This will be a tangle. The group must then try to untangle themselves, without letting go of their neighbors' hands. Nine times out of 10 it does work!

Columbian Hypnosis

Groups divide into pairs - choosing A & B. A will "hypnotize" B with her hand - B must keep her face just a few inches from A's hand at all times - always an equal distance. A should try to manipulate B into all sorts of positions, using forgotten muscles, in order to use her body in a different way. A & B swap around. Variation: Group divides into 3's. A hypnotizes B & C using two hands which may do entirely different movements at any time.

Variation: One person (A) stands in the center of the rest of the group who is standing in a circle. Each person silently chooses a part of A to be hypnotized by. "A" then begins to move about very slowly and the whole circle must follow their chosen part.



Rhythm with Chairs

5 actors have a chair and each creates a frozen image using the chair. The facilitator numbers each image 1 - 5. The rest of the group then moves around the space and at any time the facilitator will call out one of those numbers, which the group must then replicate.

Variation: The facilitator calls out more than one number at a time.

Cat & Mouse

Divide into pairs, linking arms and standing side by side. Pairs spread out around space. One pair is nominated Cat & Mouse. The cat chases the mouse around the room; if he catches her, they swap roles. The mouse has an alternative to being caught - if she links arms with any pair (thus becoming a trio) the partner furthest from her becomes the mouse and must run away from the cat.

Variation: When the mouse joins a pair, the partner becomes dog who proceeds to chase the cat, etc.

Two by Three by Bradford

In pairs begin counting: 1, 2, 3 - each partner saying one number at a time. Once this has been mastered, replace the count number 1 with a sound. Then replace count number 2 with a physical action. Then replace count number 3 with a sound and a physical action.

Variation: Run the exercise with the whole group standing in a circle.

Carnival at Rio

The group stands in a circle. One person begins by creating a rhythmic sound and movement; they can move inside the circle for a while until they are clear on it. They then move over to face the person to their left, with whom they share their sound and movement. Once that person has mastered it, the original person moves on to the next person in the circle and so on until they have worked their way around the whole circle and are back at the starting point. Once the second person has mastered the original sound and movement, they then create their own and begin to journey it around the group, etc. There will be a huge noise of sounds and rhythms once this is under way!

Push Not to Win

This exercise is the perfect example of training for Forum Theatre! It is about using all one's strength and still not winning. During a Forum session, an actor must neither give way to the intervening spect-actor, not overwhelm him, but help him apply his strength.

Divide into pairs. Imagine a line is drawn between each pair. Pairs put their hands against one another's shoulders and begin to push. To push your opponent and cross over the line into their territory would be to win the game - in this game, you do not want to win. Give in to your partner's strength; support one another's weight, sometimes pushing harder, sometimes allowing your partner to push you harder.

Variation: Back to back (from sitting to standing)

Variation: Shoulder to shoulder

Variation: Seesaw

Boal's Ball

Choose a ball; play with it making sure your entire body is involved.

Create a regular, repetitive, rhythmic action and sound to accompany your ball. Practice this while walking around the room. Find a partner, continue playing but observe every detail of your partner's

movements and sound. “Exchange Balls” - adopt that person’s movement and sound exactly. Find another partner - repeat exchange. Find another partner - repeat exchange. Now get your original ball back....

Blind Cars

Divide into pairs. One person stands in front of the other and closes his eyes - he is the blind car. The person behind is the driver who gives directions by touching the “car’s” back with his hand;
Touch left shoulder = turn left; touch right shoulder = turn right; press center of back = move forward (pressure denotes speed); no touch = stop.

The Soldiers and the Skipper

Four volunteers are asked to march in line from one side of the room to the other. Their objective is to keep marching at all costs. A fifth person, the skipper, begins to skip and dance around the marchers after they have been marching a couple of minutes. As the skipper gets in their way, the marchers beat her onto the ground, and, leaving her for dead, continue their marching. The marchers represent the oppressors and the skipper, the protagonist. Having watch this model once (or twice for clarification), the audience are invited to take the place of the protagonist to try to prevent the oppression from being repeated.



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:
Justice Now
1322 Webster St. #210
Oakland, CA 94612

