

FS News: LIMINAL EDITION

May 2024

Happy Spring, Everyone!

I hope this newsletter finds folks in a better position than two months ago. I know that it won't be true for everyone, and for many we oscillate between optimism and pessimism, but the lack of harsh weather usually improves our perspective, even if we can change our situation.

May 2nd was Foster Care Day! Whether you were a foster child, or had foster children in your life, we would all do well to foster* care. (*foster: v: encourage development of) I was foster child (many times) so 'cheers' to all of my foster kin!

May 6th is Turn Off Your TV Day! (...which has become 'Screen Free Week') When we let our defenses down and actually believe what we're being told on the television, it's time for a break! Regardless of what you watch – news, 'programs', shows – every program has an agenda. One aspect of the agenda is to satisfy the sponsor or sponsors (ads, government grants, donors, etc). Another aspect is to homogenize us to a certain degree to attract more viewers and to sell more of whatever the sponsor is selling (not necessarily products...but rather a belief that we need more products or services to be happy). The final aspect that I'll mention here is that we should count on TV as a good source of information. It's very important to consider each of these aspects when you watch TV: What are they REALLY selling? How is this show or commercial trying to shape our beliefs about ourselves? How do commercials and TV shows attempt to appear believable and trustworthy?

The Fair Shake Ownership Manual has a document called "How to Watch TV." If you're interested in receiving this article, please start a new message to me with TV in the subject and I'll reply with the article!

Of course, Mother's Day is also coming up this month, as is Memorial Day at the end of the month. Whether your mom is known or unknown, with us or no longer with us, we can be grateful for the life she gave us.

Whether or not we know Veterans that lost their lives so that we could be free, it's important to reflect on their lives, sacrificed in service to our shared future.

Thank you so much, Fair Shake donors, who share stamps and financial support so that I can send flyers to the folks who don't have access to Corrlinks. FS receives close to 100 letters each month. Your donations make sure I can send the flyers, and I mention your generosity on the first page, so they know we work together to get information to them! Thank you!! Ubuntu!

FAIR SHAKE YOUTUBE CHANNEL!

Do you watch TED talks? Other online videos on occasion? I'm posting videos about how Fair Shake works. Four are currently available here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXJ64I_5uw_shexjk2YILLg Let teachers, case managers reentry coordinators etc know that you could watch portions of my presentation whenever the time works best for everyone!

FLYERS are now available, too!

If the reentry staff are struggling to find information, they can print the Fair Shake flyers to send with folks as they transition to home, a halfway house or wherever. I have 6 basic pages, and then additional state and national resources for a total of 5 or 6 double-sided pages. The link to that page is <https://www.fairshake.net/fair-shake-brochures/>.

FS Ownership Manual in Project Gutenberg?

Thanks for the great idea! But, according to their website, "Project Gutenberg's collection is focused on older literary works for which copyright in the US has expired. Contemporary works are not being accepted for the collection." In a prison in Missouri, a case manager is so excited about the Ownership Manual that he put the document on all of the tablets / computers in the institution. Maybe this is possible in all institutions?

READ! And help others read!

In 2019, 35 year old Oliver James was functionally illiterate. In 2020, he picked up a book of quotes and started sounding out words. His partner helped him learn and they read together every evening. He would read the same quote for a week because it was so difficult. After a few months, he was reading books: short stories at first, and then novels. He found that the more he read, the more he wanted to read! He's shared his story on Tic Toc and now has 300,000 followers...and won the Barabara Bush National Literacy Honors Award last fall. He now delights in reading his son bedtime stories.

"One glance at a book and you hear the voice of another person, perhaps someone dead for 1,000 years. To read is to voyage through time." - Carl Sagan

Helping another person learn to read will lift your spirits, too!

WRITE! If you want to!

A journal called MEND celebrates the lives and creative work of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. This annual publication showcases writing of all types, including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Authors may submit pieces that describe their experiences with incarceration or on any topic. The annual publication showcases writing of all types, including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis and can be submitted at the mailing address below:

MEND c/o Patrick W. Berry
Syracuse University
239 H.B. Crouse Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244

Legible handwritten submissions are welcome. They accept only previously unpublished material. You can submit up to 5 pieces of writing, which should be no more than 6 pages / 1,800 words. Be sure to include your contact information and a 50 word (max) bio, and a brief note confirming that you have been, or are currently, incarcerated.

FOUNTAIN FUND

If you are returning to Charlottesville or Richmond, VA; New Orleans, LA or Philadelphia, PA (and soon Boston and other cities) you may be eligible for low-interest loans, financial coaching and community support to help you reach your goals! The loans are created specifically for formerly incarcerated people to build credit and to build successful lives. Loan funds can be used to pay court-imposed debt, job-related expenses, transportation, securing rental housing, child support or to start a business. I don't know if they respond to letters or email, but here's their info:

Fountain Fund – Jefferson School City Center
233 4th St, NW Box Z
Charlottesville, VA 22903 [434-234-3600](tel:434-234-3600)

If you have outside support, they can find out more here: <https://www.fountainfund.org/>

FRESH START Student Loan Consolidation

If you are not currently a student, and wish to consolidate students loans, you can do so through FRESH START. The last day to apply for this opportunity is Sept. 30· 2024. In your letter include: Your name, SSN, Date of Birth and this phrase: “I would like to use Fresh Start to bring my loans back into good standing.” For more information write to: Fresh Start P.O Box 5609 Greenville, TX 75403

Entrepreneurs! Have you heard of SCORE? <https://www.score.org/>

SCORE is an organization where successful current and retired business owners and managers (who are all volunteers) connect with current and future small business owners to help them achieve success. To find support near you, let your supporters know they will find local information on the SCORE website: www.score.org

SCORE 712 H St NE PMB 98848 Washington, DC 20002 1-800-634-0245

If you need help writing a business plan, start a new message to me with Business Plan in the subject line and I'll reply with an outline!

OUTSIDE WHICH BOX?

We are often told to “think outside the box” when we may be surprised to consider that we might be thinking ‘in’ one. Or we’re in box which is in a bigger box. The phrase, of course, means ‘don’t accept the obvious solutions’ but knowing how to question our assumptions can be very hard. In outside-the-box thinking, we will reframe and re-state a problem to be solved with a “tolerance for possibilities.” The BOX becomes the constraints and restrictions that we accept when we are using our “auto-pilot” thinking...for example: assuming that employers don’t hire formerly incarcerated people. This was once true, but it’s not true today!

According to Dave Gray, author of the short but powerful book LIMINAL THINKING, “in order to get a holistic view of a problem, you’ll need to explore its edges:

- +Focus on overlooked aspects of a situation/problem.
- + Challenge assumptions – about any aspect of the problem
- +Seek alternatives – not just alternative potential solutions, but alternative ways of thinking about problems.

Then, reframe the problem and:

- +Understand what’s constraining you and why.
- + Find new strategies to solutions and places/angles to start exploring.
- + Find the apparent edges and push beyond them – to reveal the bigger picture.

Some things to try:

- + Provocations, where you make deliberately false statements about an aspect of the problem/situation. This could be to question the norms through contradiction, distortion, reversal (i.e., of assumptions), wishful thinking or escapism
- + Bad Ideas: to clarify toward the GOOD
- + Curiosity, questioning, discussion, openness to unusual sounding solutions: all foster dialogue!

Possibilitarians know there are never only two ways to do something. There are always a few, and often there are many. With more options, we have more opportunities.

Outside-of-the-Box thinking will be a critical skill for our liminal times!

I’m wishing you all the best in building upon your knowledge, and expanding your possibilities!

Ubuntu, ~ sue

As always, remember to find support in your phone-gizmo: Fairshake.net & National Reentry Helpline (24/7): 844-916-2577

FREE REENTRY BOOK: "Mapping Your Future" Write to: Education Justice Project 1001 South Wright Street Champaign, IL 61820

Newsletters are available at FairShake.net for your family and friends to read or print.

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