

# FS news: Spring Training Edition

Q1 2025

Greetings everyone ~

I'm wishing you all the best in 2025. It's sure starting out to be a wild ride!

Throughout our lives we have been trained to seek security...whether through money, stuff, relationships, or employment. The tumultuous times we are now entering will be unmooring for many...esp. people who work for, are under the control of, or receive money from, the federal government. Most lives will be touched as this will create a wide ripple effect! And will make a lot of folks feel less secure. (Many already do.)

But liminal times open up spaces for opportunities, too...especially for folks who are patient yet ready, and can keep their eyes and ears open. It's valuable during these times to remember that we see things as we are, not as they are. With that knowledge, we can keep our eyes open for opportunities, our ears open to learn from others, and our hearts open to co-construct the future with everyone...from children to elders. Turing wild times, we can increase opportunities exponentially! And it's during these times that being our authentic selves will provide the best access to our free will and our unique contributions so we can make better decisions and respond effectively.

Disorienting times also provide a break in our routines....they shake us out of 'auto-pilot'...so we can get out of the rut of 'this is how we do things' to take a different approach! We can even imagine new ideas more clearly, because the old ways of doing things are no longer an option.

The time has come to more fully understand our emotions, 'liminal thinking', seeding our brain, and ubuntu. No matter what we're doing we can make an

impact...even if it's just in our attitude! Remember Viktor Frankl's "Man's Search for Meaning"? It might be time to read it again, or for the first time!, to know how powerful simply changing our attitude can be.

As always, I want to shout out to the folks whose attitudes extend beyond themselves to reach others! I always thank the Fair Shake donors here (Thank you, amazing donors!), but this time I want to extend my thanks to include anyone who reaches out to support others: thank you to the folks who help people around you: preparing for release, in educational pursuits or letter writing or preparing for work or self-employment... for those who send gratitude and support for parents, partners, caregivers and children, for making life sweeter...and a big thank you to those who donate items or funds to people they don't know and never will know, including knitters and crocheters, who send blankets and warm clothes to children in need. This is how we will feel that security we seek. This is how we'll build the future. By helping others, we help ourselves. Isn't that right, donors?!?!

On to the news:

Massachusetts Resources are growing...fast! I found a thread to a reentry resource in MA, and by tugging on the thread, I've discovered a lot of resources for the state and for cities and regions. I'll be adding a lot of information in the coming weeks, I will also reach out to the DOC to let them know about the Fair Shake App.

In WI, school-superintendent-turned-governor, Tony Evers, has created a

proposal to improve the WI corrections department through an elaborate plan that involves moving the state's incarcerated youth at Lincoln Hills to Madison, moving the folks in the crumbling Green Bay Prison to Stanley (and making it a max), moving more people through 'work release,' moving adults to Lincoln Hills, and more. "This plan is as good as plans get," he said. "There is not an alternative to my plan that is safer, faster and cheaper." (Quotes in The WI Examiner) I wonder what could happen if he would say: "I'm putting this plan on the table to get our state's youth out of hell and to start a conversation about improving our state DOC. What do our state's elected representatives think?"

Also in WI, there is good news for men returning to Milwaukee: Project Return is opening an apartment building for returning citizens! You can write to them for more information here:

Project RETURN 2821 Vel R Phillips Ave, Suite 223 Milwaukee, WI 53212

**BOP news** is fuzzy, too: Presently there is a note on the BOP website from Wm Lothrop, now Acting Director, that says Director Colette Peters has 'separated' from the BOP. Wow. That's 4 directors in 6 years. With the massive federal shake up, a new Attorney General, private prison contractors lining up, and surprises that we can't even imagine right now, we don't need a clairvoyant to tell us that big changes are coming.

Hopefully, the INMATE NETWORK, is coming, too. Do any of you have access to it now? If so, would you let me know how it's working out for you?

Finally, LEONARD PELTIER has safely transitioned to home confinement. After nearly 50 years in the BOP, enduring various ailments and conditions through many of them, 80 year old Peltier will again

live within Turtle Mountain Chippewa community in northern North Dakota.

### **GOOD NEWS: Costco will raise hourly pay for most US store workers to over \$30**

The company will increase hourly pay over the next three years, with the pay rising by \$1 to \$30.20 in the first year and an extra \$1 each in the subsequent two years. The lowest paid employees will get an increase to \$20. "We believe our hourly wages and benefits will continue to far outpace others in the retail industry," the company said in the memo signed by CEO Ron Vachris. The Costco Teamsters union represents more than 18,000 workers. (quotes from Reuters news 1.31.25)

### **SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET** by Cheryl Robinson in Forbes | 2.23.25

(heavily edited by me) College degrees are becoming obsolete. Employers are prioritizing hands-on experience, technical expertise and problem-solving skills. They recognize that requiring a degree shrinks their talent pool and excludes highly skilled candidates. This shift is especially noticeable in technology, healthcare and renewable energy. Large corporations like Google, IBM and Tesla have already removed degree requirements for many of their positions. Job-seekers would do well to focus on acquiring in-demand skills such as: digital and technology skills, and artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) skills, for industries from healthcare to finance. To develop these skills you can take online courses, work on open-source projects, and learn to use AI tools. Here are the authors recommendations:

\*\* CYBERSECURITY for all industries. Earn security certifications online and study ethical hacking techniques through online labs.

\*\* DATA, DATA, DATA: If this area interests you, you could learn SQL, Python and R.

You could take courses to learn to work with data sets and to build predictive models.

**\*\* CLOUD COMPUTING:** software is evolving into subscription services which means businesses must stay online and connected to 'the cloud'. You can get certificates for cloud computing, cloud architecture and security and you can practice using cloud services.

**\*\* PROJECT MANAGEMENT** never goes out of style. Learn to oversee and/or manage multiple projects at once. There are project management certificates and software applications, and you can gain experience putting them to use to support a non-profit!

**\*\* SALES AND NEGOTIATION** Businesses want these skills for development, profit and growth. Business courses and books are readily available on this topic. Practice new techniques through role-playing with colleagues.

**\*\* PUBLIC SPEAKING** is always in demand, too! Clear, confident communication is essential. Practice giving a prepared speech to a small group, then a larger group and work your way up to a large room or a community event. You could join Toastmasters or use AI tools for feedback.

**\*\* EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:** These buzzwords simply mean: listen, care and pay attention in all of your relationships, including workplace dynamics. There are plenty of books and courses on this topic. You can also reflect on your experience when you feel respected and cared about. Offer that feeling to the employer during your interview, and to all employees, customers and suppliers wherever you work.

My final two cents on this is: **FLEXIBILITY** is key! Learn skills and prepare to modify them and re-group them for a variety of applications. If you can, learn and practice as much as you can right now, then engage with groups (in person and online) after release to gain experience and references!

## REENTRY, SOBRIETY AND AA/NA/CA

A lot of folks who attend meetings feel the 12 step model, and the group dynamics of meetings, is crucial for their well-being. Nay-sayers often claim they don't care for the 'higher power' or GOD aspect of the program. This perspective can prevent them from achieving what the supporters find so satisfying: a life of sobriety, and the open doors that go with it.

Recently, I met a veteran who served time in prison and is actively involved in AA/NA/CA. I asked him how people who do not consider themselves religious can still engage a "higher power." This is his reply:

"The sad reality for most of us is that the biggest barrier to re-entry is ourselves. In addiction recovery there's a period of time for all of us where we don't fit in our old lives anymore, but we have no idea how to fit in our new lives either. The problem is compounded by the guilt we feel about who we hurt, an overwhelming sense of fear and uncertainty, or a sense that our dreams of a good life are over. We relied on a power greater than ourselves for years, it was called alcohol/drugs. What that higher power teaches us is how to lie to ourselves and others. How to manipulate and live in fear. How to stew in self-pity, anger and hate. Or how to blame everything and everyone else for the position we put ourselves in. Prison doesn't fix this. It usually compounds the issue.

What a lot of people do is use Good Orderly Direction. To be honest, AA/NA/CA is like a Build-A-Bear for your own higher power. Whether you believe in GOD or not, only an act of love can restore you to sanity. Self-love where you accept yourself completely and start having compassion for who you were. Accountability, honesty, forgiveness, amends, self-care, open mindedness, humility.... are all acts of self-love that will radiate from the individual if you start

applying these principals. What helps even more is a network of people who continue to practice these principals daily and believe in the principals of Good Orderly Direction or GOD.”

We’re writing an article for the new Ownership Manual and I’ll let you know when it’s ready to share!

#### SHAME vs. GUILT

I experienced a tough transition recently, one that reopened wounds of guilt and shame. I have plenty of both. To find meaning in my pain, I did a little digging to find out why these feelings can be debilitating and/or invigorating, and how I could use what I put in my head to get the message to the “heart” of my feelings. Here are some important basic ideas:

**GUILT** means: You did something wrong. You messed up. You can fix it. It doesn’t feel good, but it’s a useful feeling because you can use what you learn to correct the problem.

**SHAME** means: You **ARE** the problem. You don’t want to do anything or see anyone because you are wrong. Everything you do cannot be trusted...even by you.

I will be writing an article on this, too...esp. since the information can be very difficult to find. If you’re interested in reading the

article when it’s finished, please reply with the word SHAME or GUILT and I’ll let you know when to expect the article/

#### Quotes

“Nothing ever goes away until it has taught us what we need to know.” ~ Pema Chödrön

“Your goal is not to find love, but to remove all barriers which are preventing you from receiving it.” – Rumi

“If we can get the language right, we can think better.” Anil Seth

“Hope is a muscle, a practice, a choice that actually propels new realities into being. And it’s a muscle we can strengthen.” - Krista Tippett

“Our only security is our ability to change.” – John Lilly

To our successful transitions ~

Ubuntu! ~ sue

I hope you’ll email me to reconnect after your release. And be sure to check out the website!

Newsletters are available to read or print at [FairShake.net](http://FairShake.net).