

ADVANCING CORRECTIONS

Journal of the International Corrections and Prisons Association

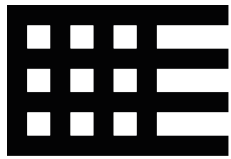


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Designing a Humane Corrections: Possibilities and Challenges

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ADVANCING CORRECTIONS

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Cover Page:

Main Image: Prisoner in Cell, Norwegian Prison Service

Top-Right: Unlocked Graduates Programme, HMPPS, England and Wales (UK)

Bottom-Right: Little Scandinavia Project in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, USA

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PROJECT REKINDLE: MENDING BROKEN TIES¹

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Abstract

This paper introduces Project Rekindle, a ground-up initiative by Singapore Prison Service, Lutheran Community Care Services Ltd, and The Salvation Army, to mend and re-establish relationships between incarcerated individuals and their families to foster motivation for change. Project Rekindle adopts a restorative approach to provide a safe space for incarcerated individuals and their families to process the impact of harm and identify the expectations for change. Case illustrations and feedback were gathered from respective stakeholders to highlight the empowering process of authentic conversations amongst affected parties in safe spaces. The paper concludes by reaffirming humaneness in corrections, by recognizing the dignity and worth of incarcerated individuals, and emphasizing that supporting one's rehabilitation is the responsibility of all.

Keywords: restorative practices, shame, ground-up, harm, family circle, support

¹ *Author Note: The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of fellow practitioners in this project. They are Mr. Jason Wong from The Salvation Army and Mr. Kelvin Tan from Lutheran Community Care Services Ltd. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Viknesswari Nadarajan, Institution A3, 982C Upper Changi Road North, Changi Prison Complex, Singapore 506980; e-mail: Viknesswari_Nadarajan@pris.gov.sg*

Introduction

Imprisonment comes with deprivation of liberty and access to the community and the outside world only while living in a controlled environment. This paper examines how applying a restorative approach to family work within the correctional context can provide greater level of humaneness to incarcerated individuals, their family members, staff and the people working within the Singapore Prison Service (SPS).

In November 1999, SPS adopted a new vision to be 'Captains of Lives'. Concurrently, its mission included steering incarcerated individuals "towards being responsible citizens with the help of the families and the community" (Chua, 2012, p. 30). Taking a person-centric approach, SPS keeps Singapore safe by ensuring the secure custody of incarcerated individuals in a fair and humane manner, while providing rehabilitation opportunities to them. SPS has transformed over the years from prisons being just a physical space for individuals to serve their time behind bars, to being a transformational environment that seeks to provide a throughcare approach in the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals, where the change process begins in prison and continues as incarcerated individuals return to society (Tan & Sim, 2021).

Incarcerated individuals face multiple challenges in reintegration such as accommodation, financial and/or employment, as well as staying away from a life of crime, drugs, and antisocial peers. A safe throughcare ecosystem with community acceptance and pro-social support are critical in providing incarcerated individuals with structured support and supervision to prevent re-offending. Successful reintegration relies on good support from families, community partners, employers, and acceptance from the broader community. SPS collaborates with other government agencies such as the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and actively works with community partners and volunteers to increase touchpoints to support and strengthen families impacted by incarceration.

While the above works well for incarcerated individuals with family support, those whose relationships with their loved ones have been strained due to multiple or prolonged incarcerations present a different level of need. Despite the best efforts of many incarcerated individuals who want to turn over a new leaf, reintegration challenges, discrimination and stigmatisation remain a reality to be grappled with. The lack of family support further inhibits their rehabilitation and successful transition to society.

Most incarcerated individuals participate in various rehabilitation programs that address their criminogenic needs and strengthen their relationship with their loved ones. However, there will always be a group of incarcerated individuals who lack family support. During incarceration, the absence of family support is often reflected in the absence of visits from family members, letters, or phone calls. Undoubtedly, this group of incarcerated individuals face greater odds of reintegrating successfully upon their release. To help such individuals rebuild their family ties, SPS piloted a program, Project Rekindle, to help repair estranged familial relationships and restore connections with family members. Project Rekindle is anchored on the concept of Restorative Practice (RP), which focuses on creating safe spaces for real conversations, including conversations to address harm, needs and obligations to facilitate repairing and deepening of relationships (Vander Venne, 2016, as cited in O'Connell, 2017; Zehr, 2002). It is a way of working with conflict that puts the focus on repairing the harm that has been done.

Project Rekindle is a ground-up initiative and a collaboration between Institution A3¹ and The Salvation Army (TSA) and Lutheran Community Care Services (LCCS). This initiative proactively seeks out incarcerated individuals who do not have family visits or letter correspondence during their incarceration and targets to repair the relationships in support of their rehabilitation and reintegration.

Intent of Project Rekindle

Project Rekindle seeks to enhance the relational capacity of adult incarcerated individuals and reconnect them with their family to build their circle of support and increase or sustain their motivation for change. We defined relational capacity as the ability to connect with self and others to build, nurture, and repair relationships through self-awareness, trust, and empathy.

Incarcerated individuals often experience deterioration in relationships with their spouse and children. The family may also experience practical challenges such as a loss of income, insufficient support in caregiving and need for practical help. For the non-incarcerated wives, this can translate to them having to take on additional responsibilities to maintain the family. This can cause stress and result in marital stress and strain. The responsibilities of having to provide and care for the children and aging parents also make it challenging for wives to visit their husbands in prison. The lack of contact can result in distancing in marital relationships. When the sentences are long, wives may grow weary of waiting and divorce may happen (Murray, 2005).

Contact between children and incarcerated individuals happens when caregivers, often spouses or ex-partners, bring them for visitation. These spouses or ex-partners can be considered 'gatekeepers' of children's contact with the incarcerated parent. Besides the lack of time availability, disappointment with the incarcerated spouse for getting into trouble with the law and marital conflict can prevent children from visiting their parents in prison (Shlafera & Poehlmann, 2010). One participant of Project Rekindle was divorced whilst serving his sentence. His former wife subsequently remarried and prevented her children from visiting their father. The teenage daughter only managed to visit her father again through Project Rekindle after reconnecting with her paternal uncle.

Parental involvement in crime and subsequent incarceration can also be a predictor of negative outcomes on children's well-being. In their meta-analysis, Murray and Farrington (2008) found that children with incarcerated parents are three times more likely to engage in antisocial behaviours compared to their peers. Their study also highlighted an association between parental incarceration and children's mental health, unemployment, and school failure. In a study conducted with a Singaporean sample, it was found that intergenerational transmission of criminality is evident in families where at least one parent is involved in the criminal justice system (Loh E H et al., 2020). One key finding is that children with incarcerated parents are 3.9 times more likely to get into trouble with the law, compared to children of parents with non-custodial convictions (Ministry of Social and Family Development & National Council of Social Service, 2020).

In Duwe and Clark (2011)'s study of 16,420 individuals released from Minnesota prisons between 2003 and 2007, it was found that prison visitations by family and relatives contributed to the formerly incarcerated individuals' successful transition from prison to the community. There was a reduction

¹ *Institution A3 is a medium-security facility that houses male incarcerated individuals serving a mixed category of sentences and detention orders.*

in the risk of recidivism when individuals received family visits during incarceration. In their study of males on parole, Berg and Hurbner (2011) found that men who had positive relationships with family and relatives were more likely to be employed and less likely to re-offend. Folk et al. (2019) found that increased frequency of family contacts during incarceration contribute to strengthening of family connectedness, which has a positive impact on individuals' mental health after their release. All these studies illustrate the importance of families in helping individuals adjust to community life after incarceration.

Project Rekindle provides a platform for the family members to talk through the harm and impact of the incarceration. In the endeavour to rebuild and strengthen the connection with family members, the project attempts to enhance relational capacity through individual engagements, group sessions and family circles. Through these components, the participants gain awareness of their thoughts and emotions, develop empathy for themselves and others, and identify areas of growth to build interpersonal relationships. It provides opportunities for participants to be courageous and authentic when relating to self and others and seeking their family's support for change to break the possible intergenerational transmission of criminality.

Guiding Principles on Identification of Participants for the Program

Correctional Unit Officers (CUO) in Institution A3 identified six male incarcerated individuals who were struggling with deeply strained relationships, based on lack of pro-social support from their loved ones – evident from poor or no correspondence (i.e., visits and letters) from their loved ones. These participants were subsequently engaged to determine their interest in rekindling relationship with their loved ones. All participants were serving sentences of between 8 to 22 years. Their average age was 40 years old, with the youngest being 24 years old and the oldest being 50 years old.

Our Practice

The concept of shame is central in Project Rekindle. Tomkins (2008) had postulated the concept of the nine affects in relation to individuals' response to their environment. Here, affects are defined as



Figure 1: The Nine Affects (Source: Costello et al., 2019, p.68)



the innate biological (universal) responses to various stimuli. Tomkins categorized the range of affects into positive affect and negative affect, and shame is classified as a negative affect. Refer to Figure 1 for the nine affects postulated by Tomkins.

According to Tomkins, shame inhibits a person's continuing experience of interest and enjoyment (i.e., positive affect); it is the affect of "indignity, of defeat, of transgression and of alienation" (Tomkins, 2008, p.351). Shame also brings into awareness what individuals do not desire to know about themselves. Finally, shame serves as a governing function to how one relates to another (Nathanson, 1992).

Being arrested and imprisoned can cause individuals to feel a sense of shame. They are more likely to feel negative about themselves, perceive themselves as losers, and unlovable by others (Nathanson, 1992). In Project Rekindle, participants worked through their shame experience and reconnect with their family to effect personal change to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Our Practice Assumptions

The development and design of Project Rekindle is guided by the following practice assumptions:

1. People are innately wired to connect

Humans are inherently relational beings, deeply wired to seek and maintain meaningful connections with others (Pranis, 2007). In a social experiment – a virtual ball tossing game where participants were ultimately excluded from the game, it was revealed that rejection leaves people with negative emotions. This neuroscience research confirmed that social connections is a fundamental human need, that everyone longs to be accepted into a community (Lieberman, 2013).

2. Voice, agency and belongingness are universal human needs

All human beings inherently yearn for dignity. Bailie (2019) posits that the innate desire to be treated with dignity exhibits as three areas of universal human needs. They are the need to belong, to have a voice, and to exercise agency. Belongingness is found when one experiences connectedness and meaningful relationships. The lack of sense of belonging can result in dysfunction in individuals, families, and communities (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Zehr (2002) opined that everyone has the innate need to be heard and understood. Having a voice to express one's feelings and thoughts can foster mutual understanding and affirm each other's dignity. Having agency implies a sense of autonomy and responsibility for one's actions and their consequences, in contrast to being passive or controlled by external forces (Frith, 2014).

3. All symptoms and/or behaviours are adaptations to meet needs

Symptoms and behaviours exhibited by individuals can serve a purpose or fulfil a need for them (Wilcox, 2012). For example, symptoms such as hypervigilance or emotional numbing may develop as adaptive responses, though often labelled as maladaptive, to help one manage their emotions or protect themselves from further harm. Reframing these symptoms and behaviours as adaptive responses encourages individuals to adopt a non-judgmental lens and seeks to understand another person's experiences and challenges.

4. Change happens with and through relationships

According to McNeill (2012), social bonds and supportive networks are crucial for facilitating the desistance process. It is critical to recognise the significant impact of relationships, social support, and encouragement for individuals to desist from criminal behaviour. Strengthening and leveraging positive relationships can support the reduction in recidivism and promote long-term desistance. Through supportive networks and positive social bonds, access to resources can potentially surface and enable individuals to build new and pro-social identities, and lifestyles (Jardine, 2014).

5. Shame impedes relationships

Building on Tomkins’ work in the field of affect, Nathanson (1992) devised a framework for understanding how individuals respond to shame which affects one’s interactions with others. In Nathanson’s (1992) Compass of Shame, four distinct ways individuals respond to shame, namely ‘withdrawal’, ‘attack self’, ‘avoidance’ and ‘attack others’ are illustrated. These responses cause a disconnect with self and others. Therefore, individuals need a process that allows them to acknowledge the harm caused and its impact on affected parties to start rebuilding relationships.

Our Approach

In Project Rekindle, the concept of working ‘with’ focuses on journeying alongside individuals by respecting all voices, acknowledging the harm caused, and promoting active participation of affected parties to decide on ways to repair the harm and to support the individual for change. With reference to figure 2, the ‘with’ domain embodies a collaborative approach of ‘high challenge’ and ‘high support’. Challenge refers to expectations, and setting of boundaries, while support refers to the encouragement and nurturance to help one to meet the expectations. According to Wachtel (2005), people are more likely to make changes in their behaviour when authority functions in the restorative domain as compared to punitive or permissive domains.

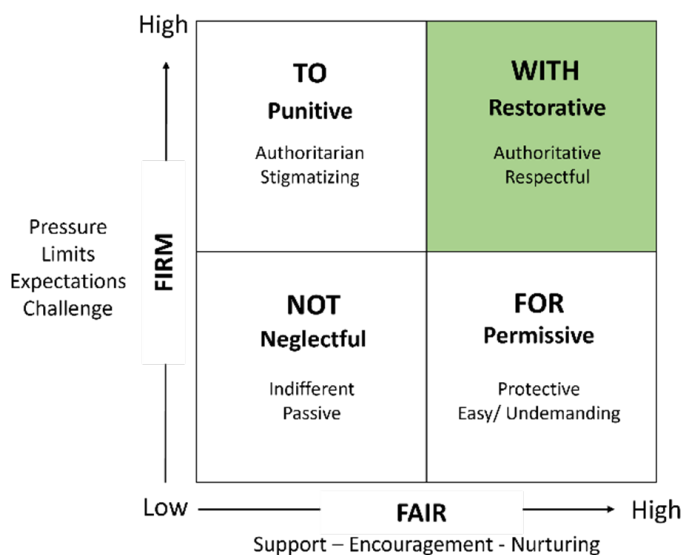


Figure 2: Practice Domains (Source: O’Connell, 2018, p.434)

Recognising the importance of relationship and the impact of shame, our approach adopts Braithwaite (1989)'s notion of reintegrative shaming with its focus on the 'deed' and not the 'doer'. This contrasts with stigmatising shaming which emphasises labelling and exclusion. Stigmatising shaming perpetuates the cycle of isolation and degradation while reintegrative shaming maintains the dignity and worth of wrong doers while holding them accountable for their actions within a community of care.

The concepts of working 'with' and reintegrative shaming serve as the approach for Project Rekindle to facilitate the reconnecting of incarcerated individuals with their community and provide opportunities for rebuilding of relationships. Lutheran Community Care Services' (LCCS) principles for practice (Refer to Annex A for the principles and their descriptions) inform practitioners on how to operate from the 'with' domain. For example, the principle of 'cultivating empathy with engagement' informs practitioners to facilitate individuals' self-reflection and encourage exchange of perspectives to promote mutual empathy.

Project Rekindle Model & Content

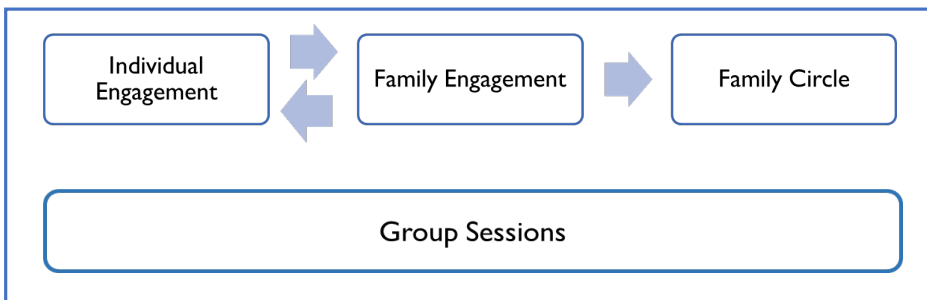


Figure 3: Project Rekindle Model

Project Rekindle comprises 3 components: individual engagements, family engagements, and groupwork. Both individual and group sessions are meant to prepare the incarcerated individuals to connect with their family. The emphasis of this project is on family engagement through a facilitated family circle.

Individual Engagements

The individual engagement component, of approximately four to five sessions, aims to enable practitioners to connect with the participants by getting them to share their story. Practitioners seek to find out what led to their incarceration, the state of their relationship with their family or significant others and what matters to them. Through these individual engagements, practitioners also help participants to process the impact of harm caused to their family and significant others, the change they hope to see and what they are willing to do for change.

Family Engagements

The family engagement component, of approximately four to five sessions, aims to enable practitioners to connect with the participant's identified family members by listening to their experiences relating to the incarceration. Practitioners seek to find out how incarceration had affected

them and their relationship with the incarcerated individuals. Practitioners also seek to discover what matters to the family members, the change they hope to see in their incarcerated loved ones, and how they can support their change.

Family Circle

Both the individual and family engagements prepare all members to gather in a family circle. The family circle seeks to re-connect the incarcerated individuals with their family. It provides a platform for all of them to talk through matters of concern, process the impact of harm and identify expectations for change. The premise of the family circle is to facilitate taking of responsibility and building relationships to foster desistance (Walker, 2010).

Group Sessions

The group sessions provide a space for the incarcerated individuals to develop an understanding of themselves, to be attuned with their body and feelings, manage emotions, and build prosocial skills. Through the eight topics, as shown in Annex B, it is hoped that the incarcerated individuals can experience restoration and healing within themselves, as well as restoring, building and/ or strengthening their relationships with their loved ones.

Feedback from Families and Participants

After the program, the team administered a feedback form to the participants and family members to find out their experience of the family circles and changes in their familial relationships. Four themes emerged from the feedback gathered:

1. Openness to share feelings and thoughts
2. Reconnecting with loved ones
3. Better understanding of one another
4. Hopeful about the future

Theme 1: Openness to share feelings and thoughts

The family circle provided a safe space for all parties to share their feelings and thoughts with one another by allowing all to have an equal chance to speak. This theme highlights how the use of RP can create a safe space for people to be vulnerable and engage in real conversations. Participants shared:

- After all the heartfelt messages and letting out whatever feelings I have to say to them, I feel more relieved. – Participant Z
- It really allowed us to open our feelings to each other. – Participant Z's Family
- [The family circle let us] have the opportunity to talk through our emotions in depth. – Participant J's mother

The above feedback illustrated how engaging in conversations that matter can result in a positive affective experience.

Theme 2: Reconnecting with loved ones

Incarcerated individuals were able to rebuild and strengthen their relationship with their family members and re-establish their connection through regular visits and/or letters subsequently, as



illustrated in the following comments:

- It really rekindled the feeling of brotherhood...The family circle helps to rebuild that relationship... the bond that I had with [my brother]. – Participant Z's Family
- I am also having regular visits with my brother now. – Participant A
- [The family circle] helped to connect A with my wife. We are closer to A than before... I share the visit pass with my niece so that we rotate to have tele-visit and physical visit. – Participant A's Family
- [An] opportunity to hug our loved ones, strengthen our bonds. – Participant J

These comments reiterate the innate need for individuals to connect. The reconnecting of relationships also supports the notion of reintegrative shaming that seeks to maintain the dignity and worth of wrongdoers while holding them accountable for their actions within a community of care.

Theme 3: Better understanding of one another

Having a platform for all to share allows for individuals to better understand one another. Family members and incarcerated individuals alike had the opportunity to hear from one another why they did what they did. This helped them to make sense of each other's actions as illustrated below:

- [The family circle] Helped to understand each other better. – Participant A's Family
- It gave us space and time to clear up some misunderstandings. – Participant J
- It gave me a different perspective. – Participant J's Family
- I managed to learn the real issues. – Participant A

The exchange of perspectives increases mutual understanding and generates mutual empathy. It is with empathy that one's interpersonal relationships are enhanced.

Theme 4: Hopeful about the future

Family members expressed their support and hope for a better future with the incarcerated individual. The family circles provide individuals the opportunity to take responsibility and share how they could repair the harm and make things right. At the same time, family members shared how they could contribute to support the incarcerated individual to enable smooth transition from prison to the community. This brings hope to both the participants and their families as illustrated in their comments:

- I look forward to meeting him in a different environment ... build a new future with him and to guide him. – Participant Z's Family
- I see [a person with] dreams and aspirations, which let me feel encouraged and hopeful. – Participant J's Family
- [The family circle] has enhanced the bonding between me and him and it definitely allows me to continue support him. – Participant R's family
- Can see A realized his mistake and needs [us] to give him a chance. – Participant A's family

Case Illustration

The impact of Project Rekindle is best highlighted through the narratives of one of the program participants. The narratives describe the family circle experience and its impact on the participant and his family after completing Project Rekindle program.

Participant A:

A started serving his 15-year sentence when his daughter was 10 years old and his son was six years old. During his incarceration, his wife divorced him and subsequently remarried. He therefore desired to reconnect with his elder brother whom he had lost contact with for 12 years.

When engaged, A's elder brother expressed a strong desire to visit A in prison. He felt that he had "failed" as a brother by not keeping in contact with A. He hoped to help A settle down upon his release.

A's elder brother and his wife, together with A's daughter participated in the family circle. A's sister-in-law said that she was shocked and disappointed to know that A had committed a crime. To her, A was a "gentle" person who did not raise his voice when he spoke. She hoped that A would think about his children when making decisions. She also felt that A needed to spend time with his children upon his release. A's elder brother expressed his desire to reunite as a family, which was also their late mother's wish. He expressed his anger for A's action of selling drugs, thereby causing harm to others. He committed to supporting A to fulfill his duties as a father and contribute to society upon his release. A's daughter disclosed her difficulty in accepting that A had committed an offence. She missed A very much and that A's absence in her life was painful. She cried when she mentioned that she felt caught in between her parents' conflict.

A was visibly pleased to meet his family members. He acknowledged the hurt he caused to his family. He could feel the care and love from them. A shared his plans to upgrade himself while serving his sentence so that he can provide for his children upon his release. A's brother, sister-in-law and daughter expressed their confidence that A will change for the better, now that he understood the "value of relationships".

Following the family circle, program, A started having regular correspondence with his brother and daughter via visits and letters. He also pursued his tertiary education at the Prison School to a National Institute Technical Education Certificate (NITEC)².

Reflection from Practitioners and Prison Officers

The practitioners found it meaningful in providing the opportunity and space for the incarcerated individuals and their families to engage in real and honest conversations that were missing and for restoration in relationships to take place. The practitioners' reflections brought out two themes:

1. Storytelling matters
2. Relationship matters

Theme 1: Storytelling matters

The engagement process of every participant was centered on allowing incarcerated individuals to share their story. These stories were often untold due to the lack of opportunities or the reluctance of individuals to revisit their narratives. However, the following extracts from practitioners' reflections found that the sharing of one's story and experiences was crucial to foster connection:

- Having them (incarcerated individuals and family members) share their story and experiences had allowed them to communicate their narratives to others [and allowed] the family to

2 NITEC – The National ITE Certificate is one of the national vocational qualifications for students upon completion of GCE 'N' or 'O' levels.



experience the incarcerated individual from a different angle. – Kelvin

- Hearing the stories of the family members, I felt there were many stories untold. [The family circles help] to bring about connectedness as the parties heard from one another. – Nigel
- Connecting starts with the stance of curiosity rather than judgement, with the desire to know the person and his story. [The family circle] provides the opportunity to express how they felt about the situation, especially the impact caused by the incarceration of their loved ones. – Seow Ling

Every individual carries a story which bears personal unique experiences. The following extract reinforces the importance for one's narrative to be heard and understood by others around them to experience dignity:

- People feel connected to each other through engaging in conversations that matter, in a process that values their voice and agency.
- In this way, the participants' human dignity and worth can be restored. – Seow Ling

Theme 2: Relationship matters.

The relationships between the incarcerated individual and family members may have been strained due to the many negative experiences that happened over the years. Although it is challenging for all individuals to come together, practitioners could attest to the importance of relationships and their satisfaction having witnessed a positive shift in their relationships:

- Being able to witness incarcerated individuals and their family mending ties, getting back together or even having a change of perspective is a joyful position. – Kelvin
- Relationships were re-connected, and hope was restored evidently as the incarcerated individuals and their families are now more prepared to work at this difficult issue in their lives. – Jason
- Blood is always thicker than water. Relationship may have strained over certain incidents, but familial ties are hard to forgo. – Viknesswari

Every individual is hardwired to connect (Pranis, 2007), but circumstances often drive us towards disconnection and isolation. The above reflections indicate the importance of setting up and creating spaces that allow individuals to re-connect with one another through conversations.

Conclusion

Since the inception of Captains of Lives, the role of the Prison Officer has evolved from a custodial role to an aspirational one of steering incarcerated individuals towards a life without crime. This involves engaging incarcerated individuals in providing genuine care to understand their need and transforming the rehabilitative environment to one that fosters change. SPS recognises that this work can only be achieved together with community partners, to facilitate timely interventions for family through information and referral, structured family programs and increased touchpoints to support families so that they can be stabilised in the community. Other than providing opportunities to pursue academic studies and vocational skills, SPS places a focus to uplift and strengthen families impacted by incarceration, and this can be demonstrated through programs such as Project Rekindle where incarcerated individuals are able to have better chances of reintegration through rekindled kinships and restored relationships.

Project Rekindle has served to fill a gap within the correctional setting, particularly for incarcerated individuals whose relationship with their family members have been fractured and estranged. Our view is that the project had also proven to be a success in terms of meeting its original intent and goals. All participants in Project Rekindle had their loved ones visiting them after the program. Two incarcerated individuals enjoy regular visits of two times a month from their family members. One of them receives letters on a regularly basis from his daughter. The remaining three men received two to five visits from their parents and siblings.

As Fergus McNeill mentioned in his closing plenary address at the 2017 British Criminology Conference: "We have to accept, embody and practice mutual responsibility for creating community through solidarity and subsidiarity. In this sense, my rehabilitation is your rehabilitation and yours is mine." Project Rekindle's adoption of a restorative lens centres the focus on creating change with and through relationships. This is exemplified through the restorative principles of providing voice, space, and agency to affected parties to address the harm caused by incarceration and promote accountability and support to facilitate rebuilding of relationships. Through Project Rekindle, participants were reconnected to their families and able to mend broken relationships. In the process, they regained their identity as a father and/ or son which would significantly help them in their desistance journey (Rocque, Posick & Paternoster, 2014).

*Annex A: Lutheran Community Care Services
Principles for Practice*

Principle	Description
Willing Participation	Creates conditions for people to make an informed choice to participate in a dialogue that builds trust to work with vulnerabilities
Active Responsibility	Guides people to demonstrate responsibility through taking actions for the well-being of the community, including making efforts to repair harm with the support of the community
Respect each individual's 'voice space'	Creates conditions for a safe environment to enable each person the opportunity to speak and be listened to with focused attentiveness
Leverage Individuals' Innate Gifts	Leverages on individuals' capacity for change and their innate gifts to collaboratively contribute to generate solutions to solve issues and/or build community
Relational Inclusion	Works with individuals to widen their circle of support and build connectedness in the community
Cultivate Empathy with Engagement	Facilitates self-reflection and encourages exchange of perspectives, courses of action or emotions, which nurtures and develops individuals' capacity for empathy
Build Positive Affective Experience	Engages people in a process that maximises positive affect, including facilitating emotional shift from negative to positive affect to build relational capacity

Annex B: Topics for Group Sessions

Session	Topic	Key Message & Intent
1	Recognising Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To create self-awareness for each participant - To identify their coping mechanism
2	Difficult emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To gain insights of their distress tolerance and recognize how emotions and thoughts influence behaviours - Develop skills to tolerate effectively and reduce ineffective coping mechanisms - Identify harmful and helpful ways to deal with difficult emotions
3	Dealing with shame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To have an awareness of shame and how it affects them - To identify ways of dealing with shame - To experience release of shame
4	Developing meaningful relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship building through communications and social engagement
5	Mindful communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To practice listening and helpful communication skills to strengthen relationship and heal conflicts
6	Making peace with the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To acknowledge hurt and harm done - To gain insight of the hurt, anger, stress that they are experiencing
7	Helpful choices and decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop skills to make wise choices and manage behavior
8	Renewal & celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To accept oneself and others - To celebrate similarity and differences with people around them

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About the Authors

Kek Seow Ling

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Seow Ling is a co-Executive Director of Lutheran Community Care Services (LCCS). LCCS is a social service agency in Singapore that advances the use of restorative practice in education institutions, community, and corrections to break the cycle of bullying, financial distress, criminal behaviours, and interpersonal violence to bring about healing and growth. Seow Ling had obtained a Master of Science (Community Service Management) from the University of Wales, Swansea, and a Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) in Social Work from the National University of Singapore. Seow Ling is also trained in restorative practices by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) and Asset-Based Community-Driven Development by Nurture Development, Ireland. She designed a training curriculum for 'Family Group Decision Making' to promote a relational practice that respects family power and leadership and the 'Building Relational Capacity' course to strengthen relational engagement of individuals in their professional and personal spheres. Seow Ling had presented at regional and international conferences on "Restorative Justice and Social Work in Singapore". She wrote an article on "Restorative Justice and Social Work Practice" for Social Dimension, an e-Newsletter published by the Singapore Association of Social Workers. She also contributed an article on "Working with Men Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence: A Restorative Justice Perspective" in The Karyawan, a magazine by the Association of Muslim Professionals, Singapore. Most recently, she co-authored chapter titled "Imagining Restorative Justice for Intimate Partner Violence" in Gendered Perspectives of Restorative Justice, Violence and Resilience: An International Framework. Seow Ling is part of the team that designed Project Rekindle program. She also provided practice supervision for the LCCS team to support their engagement with the incarcerated persons and their families. Seow Ling is a member of the IIRP Board of Trustees. She is also a member of the Society Against Family Violence (SAFV) in Singapore. She is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Restorative Justice from Vermont Law School, USA



Nigel Lee

Manager (Community), Lutheran Community Care Services

Nigel Lee is a manager of the Community team at Lutheran Community Care Services (LCCS). He leads a team of social workers and community workers to enhance the community's social and emotional resilience. Nigel also leads the team in Project Up, an initiative that supports aspiring families who are in financial distress to increase social mobility through building their assets. Nigel obtained a Bachelor of Social Work from Singapore University of Social Sciences. He received his training in restorative practices from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) in 2012 and has since been actively involved in building restorative cultures and facilitating restorative processes in various contexts. Nigel is a member of the Project Rekindle program, who provided oversight to ensure program delivery. He is also involved in training incarcerated individuals and desistors (i.e. individuals out of custody) to equip them to be peer supporters to address the needs of their peers to reduce recidivism. Being passionate about correctional work and mending broken relationships, Nigel is keen to explore ways to enhance the relational capacity of incarcerated individuals and to reconnect them with significant others to increase their motivation for change.



Viknesswari Nadarajan

Team Leader Correctional Unit, Singapore Prisons Service (SPS)

Viknesswari has more than 14 years of experience working within the Singapore Prison Service. She has carried out her duties over the years under several portfolios which include internal financial and operational audits, training and staff welfare. Currently she holds the position of team leader overseeing the operational activities in a correctional unit which houses about 300 incarcerated individuals. She is also actively involved in the reintegration and rehabilitation needs of these individuals. Driven by the deep understanding of the pain caused by estrangement, Viknesswari spearheaded the creation of a program called "Project Rekindle". This initiative aims to support incarcerated individuals yearning to heal fractured relationships with their families. She strongly believes that family plays a pivotal role in providing a strong pro-social support for these individuals in their rehabilitation journey.



Chua Shi Qin

Staff Officer (Family Policy), Rehabilitation and Reintegration Division, Singapore Prison Service

Shi Qin has close to 20 years of experience working within the Singapore Prison Service. She held several portfolios over the years, which include the management and programming for female offenders, corporate service, and supervision of youth offenders in the community. As a Staff Officer (Family Policy), Shi Qin works closely with community partners to develop and deliver programs and services to support the inmates to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration with the family. More notably, through a collaboration with the Ministry of Social and Family Development, she helped implement initiatives to proactively triage family needs to ensure that they are well supported during the early phases of incarceration. In this way, these families can be stabilized in the community and the inmate focus on their rehabilitation. In line with the future plans of Corrections 2030, SPS envisions to strengthen and uplift inmates' families so they can in turn be a pillar to support the inmates toward a journey of desistance. Shi Qin worked with institutions and community partners to develop and pilot Project Rekindle. The programme seeks to reconcile relationships, especially those who are strained with multiple incarcerations, allowing them to mend the hurt that was caused through the use of restorative practice. She believes that through such programs, inmates will be able to unite with their family and play a contributing role in the society.



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