

# THE LOOP

**JUST THIS MUCH**  
**INTELLIGENCE FOCUS FUN**  
**PASSION HUMILITY GRACE**  
**HONESTY LOVE PATIENCE**  
**COULD CHANGE THE**



**LEADERSHIP**



At Shining Light, we believe each one of us has the potential to shine light wherever we are, regardless of our circumstances. Through human connection, creativity, and mutual learning, we can unlock this potential in ourselves and maintain - even brighten - that light in ourselves and in our community. The more lights in the room, the brighter the collective light can shine, until the whole environment of prison is changed from the inside out.

The Loop is more than a magazine; it's how our community of light bearers communicates with each other. It's a source of belonging to something positive, creative inspiration, a reminder that we're not alone, a push to keep going, and a compass to guide the way. It can even be a touchpoint for meaningful connection with loved ones! (Every issue can be viewed online at [shining-light.com/theloop](http://shining-light.com/theloop))

If you are new to The Loop, we'd love to consider you part of the Shining Light community. One way is to "subscribe" by sending in the card on the back, so you can start receiving your own (free!) copy with your name on it. And when you're ready to join in the ongoing conversation of The Loop, know that we're always glad to hear from you!

Though we are unable to respond directly to the hundreds of letters we receive each month, it is you - the readers and contributors - who make The Loop so special. Your stories of engagement with exercises and the impact it is having, your creativity and insight, and your willingness to invite your peers to subscribe, is what keeps momentum going.

With limited space and a growing number of contributors, we are selective in what we publish. As a community focused on unlocking the potential for good in each other, and the environments and systems we find ourselves in, all content is filtered through the "Community Codes" we seek to live by. These codes are sent to everyone who requests a copy of The Loop, and we encourage readers to refer to them often.

In addition, please review these guidelines so you know what we're looking for:



## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- We will credit contributions with first name, last initial, and state, unless you clearly indicate otherwise.
- If you write anything in a letter that you do NOT want to be shared in The Loop or other Shining Light communications, please note that clearly.
- We reserve the right to edit your contribution as needed to fit space and/or theme.

### CONTENT

- Submissions should have a positive intention, which may include creative expression, encouraging words, or a constructive release of negative emotion.
- Remember to be inclusive of people of all faiths and backgrounds.
- Avoid details of your case and keep criticism of the institution/DOC constructive, focused on ways to create something better.

### FORMATTING

- Write as legibly as possible (or type) so we can all read what you wrote!
- If possible, submit artwork and writings on blank paper.
- Be concise. Featured writings must fit legibly on 1 page. Responses to activities, questions, prompts, etc should be limited to a short paragraph or two so we can include more people!

**PLEASE NOTE:** We are limited in the practical services we can provide at this time, and therefore cannot fulfill requests for legal or reentry support, penpal relationships, or assistance with publishing creative work.

## WELCOME, READERS!

Recently in an airport, I scanned a rack of overpriced books and found that at least half of them were on the subject of Leadership. Now I'm all for clear instruction or inspiration that can help me hone skills in this area. But in my experience, it seems most of these books speak to leadership as a position - and therefore have little relevance for those who are not granted such a position for whatever reason. It's much more difficult to find resources that speak to leadership as a universally human trait, a strength we can all develop, a way of relating with others in everyday life. We hope you'll find this issue to be just that - a helpful resource, whether you consider yourself a leader or not.



Kelly

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**IN THIS ISSUE:** Your insights and creative responses to the prompts in our last issue are what really drive this one. Once again, we were limited in how many submissions we could include and had to make some difficult decisions, but we hope you'll appreciate the range of ideas represented here.

On the community code page (p. 18), members of the Loop Group at Ross CI (Ohio) discuss the value of listening first when it comes to leading. Pages 13, 22 and 23 challenge our critical thinking about leadership with your answers to questions like: Is the practical or relational aspect more important? Are some people born leaders? On pages 16-17, Travis breaks down two defining components of leadership that when combined, distinguish it from other strengths. Kurt poses the idea of "reluctant leadership" (p. 15) and Dormen (p. 19) shares his passion for leaders to "recharge their batteries" through self-care. And page 8 includes some exciting program updates you won't want to miss!

Congratulations to **Milan Ross (AZ)** for his 1st place entry in our Cover Art Contest. As always many thanks to the 135 readers who shared your insights, artwork, and other great contributions through postal mail and tablets. Keep it coming!

*"As I was working on this drawing, I spent a great deal of time asking myself what words best describe a leader...As I tried to narrow my list down, I realized one of the most important traits a leader can have: [a willingness] to walk away from their leadership position if it is the best way forward for those they lead. All too often, some leaders are willing to do whatever they have to [do] to stay in power. Even to the demise of those they lead. Leadership should be about service."*

- Milan Ross, describing his cover art submission


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Look for the  that notes the various prompts and activities. Then write to us about your experience so we can keep the conversation going!

TO: **YOU**  
FROM: **JEFF**



Jeff

**FOUNDER &  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

### ***Greetings to the Shining Light community!***

One of our goals is to build communities that positively influence everyone around us, literally shining a light for others. Therefore, Leadership is an essential topic for us as a community. As Executive Director of this organization, a big part of my job is providing leadership to move innovative but simple ideas forward among people whom I may never see or meet and who live in a system that is often very resistant to change. The Loop is an example of the kind of leadership we hope to inspire with its combination of ideas presented and support of everyone's valuable input and

engagement. Through this issue, we hope that you can have a deeper understanding of what leadership might mean for you and the people around you.

We are focusing on the basics of leadership as defined by (1) "the tendency to organize and encourage a group to get things done while maintaining good relations within the group" and (2) "positively influencing others."

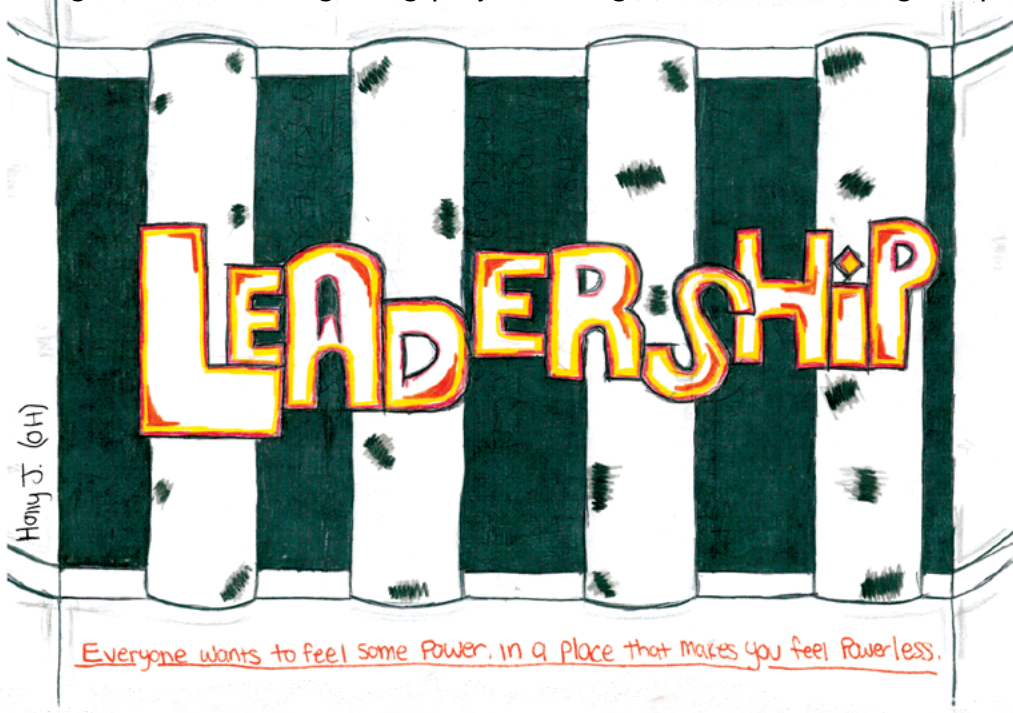
Notice this definition does not mention a title or position. Every one of us can use this strength; we can provide leadership wherever we are. However, organizational structures give others the authority and responsibility to make decisions. That can sometimes lead to a sense of helplessness or frustration, especially in an environment like prison. Still, I have seen people show strong leadership despite how challenging the situation might be. It starts with how you choose to respond to the world around you. As Ms. Naomi always says, "You can make your bed soft, or you can make your bed hard." I have seen that when someone makes their bed soft, they often influence and encourage others. They demonstrate other important character strengths, like Perspective, Kindness, and Perseverance. They use Social Intelligence to help others do the same.

People who positively influence others remind me of what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called "thermostats versus thermometers." A thermometer goes wherever the room's temperature goes, but a thermostat sets and holds the temperature in a room. A thermostat gently resists undesirable conditions, causing the room to heat up or cool down to maintain a suitable environment in which to live. In a stressful environment, negativity can be allowed to grow, or people can help each other find meaning and joy despite the situation. While you might not be leading a big project or organization, there is great potential and importance in encouraging

others, making the days a little more pleasant, the relationships a little more gracious, and the environment a little better for everyone.

As a community, we want to equip and encourage people to use the strength of leadership to positively influence other individuals and groups, helping them realize their value as human beings and become the people they are capable of becoming.

***Enjoy this issue!***



*Everyone wants to feel some power. In a place that makes you feel powerless.*

At Shining Light, we want to be a community that helps each other focus on the positive in the midst of the challenges and painful situations we can't avoid. (We're not ignoring the bad; we're just finding a way to rise above it!) This page is all about celebrating accomplishments and good news, so tell us...

## WHATWENTRIGHT?

- ① I got a book in the mail I was looking forward to getting
  - ② I enjoyed the lunch we had today.
  - ③ I did some positive legal research for my case.
- MARK O. (NC)

We have started a small writers support group in my cottage! The accountability & encouragement has been great help for me. I share strategies, resources & submission platforms and we are excited to add "Light" to the loop on EDovo!

📧 HLTARA (OH)

"Another person and I are working on a new program for incarcerated expecting mothers, new born mothers and grieving mothers. We have the proposal wrote and in the higher ups hands, we are just waiting for the sign off on it to get the ball rolling! The idea is to help each other know that we are not alone and we are still mothers!"

- Courtney B. (SC)

- What's something you're grateful for, outside of yourself?
- What accomplishment(s) are you proud of?

"Hopefully getting time served and released...I get to see my son, who was born while I was locked up, and my daughter, who was only 1yr 11 months old when I [went] in. Believe me guys, joy comes after the mourning and better days are ahead keep your heads above the water..."

-Kingsley I. (OK)

The hot water got turned back on today which is a good thing so we can take showers tonight. -Christina L-T (IL)

"I recently received a disciplinary that landed me in the SHU. I have decided to use this time and seclusion as an "inner monestary" like "The Art of Soul-Making" speaks on through Edovo. (I highly recommend this program! It has given me hope and positive refining I need as a woman and mother!)"

- Whitney H. (NC)

I woke up in a Good mood Because I have another day to Live and my kids are in the best of Health -Viviana N. (IL)

I am proud that im still living. I have a lung disease and my heart isn't that good. I went to the doctors at the right time. -EUGENE (PA)

I started college today and it felt good to continue my education by taking my first steps in doing so.

-Brenton Stuart B. (CA)

One piece of good news I recently got is the fact I've gotten no bad news. I'm accomplishing maintaining my positivity by staying aware and in control of emotions. I look forward to continuing this positive behavior."

- Ernest W. (OH)

I JUST HAD 2 OF MY SONGS/POEMS, PUBLISHED IN THE USC PEP READERS CIRCLE. IT WAS VERY COOL TO GET ADVICE AND CRITICISM FROM A COLLEGE ENGLISH MAJOR. I AM FEELING VERY POSITIVE LATELY, AND I ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO WORK ON THEIR ORIGINAL WORKS, WHETHER ITS POETRY, ART, SONGWRITING, OR WRITING.

-EDWARD G. (PA)

MY 9 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER JUST MOVED TO A NEW SCHOOL AND SHE JUST MADE STUDENT OF THE MONTH OUT OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL. IM SUPER PROUD OF HER!! IM IN THE MIDDLE OF TESTING, BY THE END OF THIS SEMESTER, ILL BE GETTING MY BRED. "woot woot" -V. YAN (PA)

"Recently, I received some beautiful pics of my daughter's twentieth birthday. And a copy of a letter addressed to her from making the Dean's List. It's a blessing to know that she is excelling despite my absence."

- Johnny B. (NC)

"My daughter wants to play sports - basketball and gymnastics - which I also take a liking to. So I look forward to her growing her interests in sports considering that's what I did for a living."

- Scott T. (OH)

I'm grateful for the experience I had while being incarcerated, the good and the bad, because that makes me who I am today as a woman.

-Brenda V. (CA)

"I finally have a date of release."

- Chaimara W. - (AZ)

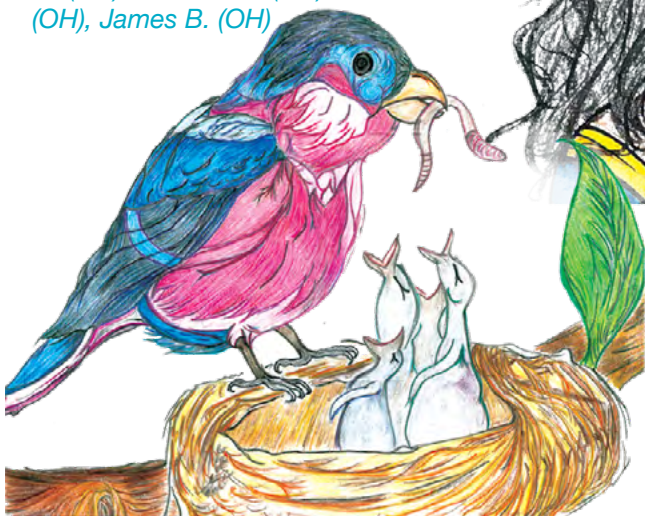


Logo Idea from Gary F. (SC)

(Clockwise) Submissions by:  
A. Dayvault (SC), Debbie S. (PA), James  
W. (NC), Jaime M-S (NC), Demetrius H.  
(OH), James B. (OH)



Leadership is the art of  
*Creating*  
greatness in other  
people.

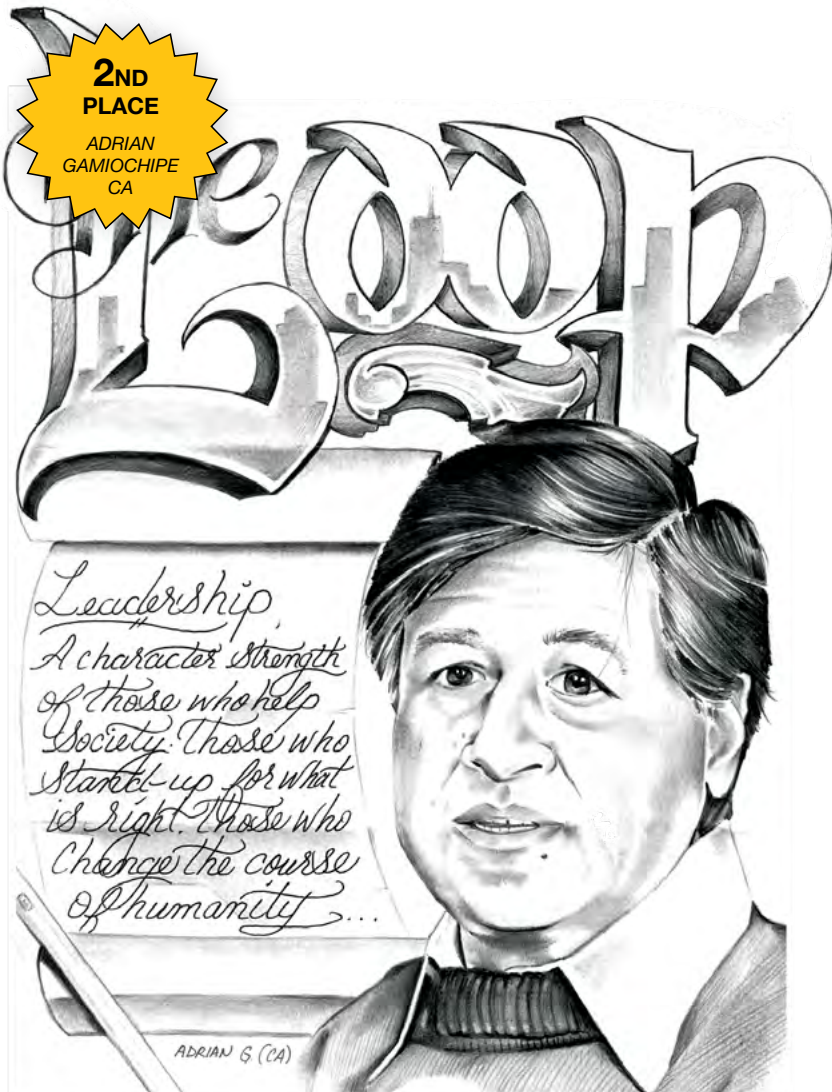


2024  
James W. (NC)  
1089074

James B. (OH)  
2/12/24

## COVER ART CONTEST

This is a chance to share your artistic creativity & help The Loop make a strong first impression across the country!



"César E. Chávez - He was a true labor leader, and he helped many poor people get the rights that all humans deserve. His leadership qualities rose above and beyond the fields of California. He was a civil rights leader who helped bring about change." - Adrian GamiochiPE



"A lion, the 'King of the Jungle', has always been known for standing proud & fighting for the survival of itself & its pride. A king also leads with love, love for himself & love for his people...love for all." - Michael Buchalla II

## PRIZES

- 1st Place - \$50 // 2nd Place - \$35 // 3rd Place - \$15 (All winners receive a Certificate of Excellence)
- Prized pieces and honorable mentions will be published in the "Creative Expressions From The Loop" collection on tablets and in our online Art Gallery at [www.shining-light.com/showcase](http://www.shining-light.com/showcase).

## CRITERIA

- Originality, artistry, and connection to the theme. Include 1-3 sentences describing your piece.
- Positive, appropriate, affirming imagery (see *general Submission Guidelines p. 2*)
- Must be portrait format (**Keep in mind The Loop logo will be added at the top**)

## UPCOMING THEMES

- **Fairness (Justice for all, without bias or prejudice) DEADLINE: July 10, 2024**
- **Prudence (Acting with caution, keeping the future in mind) DEADLINE: Sept. 25, 2024**

## PLEASE INCLUDE

- Your state-recognized name and ID#
- Your name as you would like to be recognized in The Loop or online, should your work be published
- Clear instructions on how to send funds directly to you should your piece be awarded a prize AND the name and contact information of an outside designee in case we are unable to send funds directly to you

All mediums are welcome, though SL and DOC facilities cannot be responsible for providing supplies. Please note that we are not able to return original artwork. To send a digital copy, email [TheLoop@shining-light.com](mailto:TheLoop@shining-light.com).

Artists retain all rights to their work, and no proceeds will be received from their display.

(By submitting artwork, you are granting SL permission to publish in The Loop, on our website, and other related SL publications.)



**LOOP SECTION LOGOS** - Do you like graphic design? Sketching logos? We want your help redesigning the section logos for The Loop! So if you have a logo idea for **any** of the sections, send it in! (i.e. *What Went Right, SL Community Spotlight, Strength Spotting, Real Talk, etc.*)

## PROGRAM UPDATES



Shout out to the **8 men at Missouri River Correctional Center in North Dakota** - the first to bravely embark on the Foundations Course in that facility! With the support of staff and a seasoned Academy Assistant who transferred from James River, the men express their zest in continuing their journeys of self-exploration throughout their Academy experience. They anticipate a graduation date of July 2024.

State	Facilities w/ Active Academies	# of Graduates (to date)	# of Current Participants
North Dakota	Heart River CC, James River CC, Missouri River CC, NDSP	130	47
Ohio	Belmont CI, Noble CI	51	10
Pennsylvania	SCI Coal Twp, SCI Dallas (VSU), SCI Waymart	50	32

**Five women of HRCC celebrated their own graduation in May of 2024!** While completing the modules, the women experienced all the Academy had to offer - discovering their strengths, new ways to offer support and share vulnerabilities with one another, and each creating their own action plan for wellness going forward. A few graduates are moving on to release, taking components of the Academy with them, while others are offering guidance for new participants interested in Shining Light programming.

*"Leadership to me isn't just a person of authority or someone teaching/directing a group. Being a good leader can be as simple as setting a good example for my peers, following through with my word, and supporting my peers. A lot of people possess leadership skills even when they don't think so. 'Helping Others Positively Evolve.'"*

- Amelia K. / Academy Graduate, HRCC

**Love, Respect, and Loyalty  
Brings Harmony and Harmony  
Bring Innerpeace.  
Share your shine.  
Shout out to the Shining Light Academy  
I've Learned a lot from this group.**

- Breezy M. -  
Academy Graduate, HRCC



The five graduates of SL's first Academy in a women's facility (top row), with strong support from the Warden and other staff (bottom row)

*\*The SL Academy includes 50 hours of SL-facilitated interactions through video-conference and requires full support from the hosting facility. We are not able to offer this program everywhere, and the process for getting set up can take months, even years. But if you are interested in having this program at your facility, the first step is to ask a staff person or administrator to reach out to us for more information.*





*All across the country, groups of readers (“Loopers”) are getting together to discuss the content of *The Loop* and encouraging each other to respond in ways that are meaningful to them. Formally or informally, these gatherings are having positive ripple effects throughout the facility and beyond.*

Each Loop Group (LG) has the common foundation that is provided by the magazine and our core values, but it’s up to you what your group does from there. **If you are part of a formal or informal Loop Group, please tell us!** Especially if there is a staff member involved, ask them to contact us so we can support you and your peers in the best way possible.

If you’d like to see a Loop Group at your facility and don’t know where to begin, start simple:

1. Set a regular time to meet with a few friends to read, discuss and/or create together
2. Explore new ways to make your gathering more meaningful, based on common interests
3. Gauge interest among peers for participation in a formal group
4. Find a supportive staff member who might supervise/ provide space for a formal group
5. Work with the staff member to devise a plan that meets the requirements of your facility - and contact us so we can support your start-up!

*Shining Light’s Start-up Guide is available upon request.*



edovo

## BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

CREATIONS OF A CAGED BIRD - VOL. 3  
“INFLUENCE: A FILM IN VERSE”

**NOW AVAILABLE ON TABLETS!**

“Influence” is now on tablets through Edovo! **We will also be sending DVDs to all of our partnering prisons to be shown on the closed-circuit channels.** The 60-min film comes with a Companion Guide which includes a reflection question for each of the 13 pieces represented.

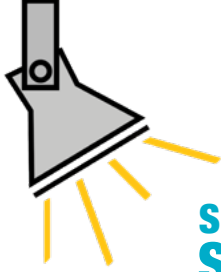
There are three ways to engage with the film on your tablet: watch the trailer (3,248 views), watch the full film (2,602 views), or join the +600 people who’ve completed the Influence course that splits the film into five parts and includes the companion guide questions.

If possible, we encourage you to consider working with staff to organize a “watch party” - perhaps with a small group discussion from the Companion Guide. What an opportunity to introduce new folks to the community of Shining Light!

*NOTE: Unless we have a staff contact at your facility, unfortunately your only option to view or engage is through Edovo. If you know a staff person or admin who’d be willing to put this film on the channel, they are welcome to contact us at [theloop@shining-light.com](mailto:theloop@shining-light.com)*

*This year we hope to start getting our tablet content on more platforms, so more of you have access. If your tablet has an education app other than Edovo, please let us know what it is so we can look into it!*





## SL COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

### HEATHER JARVIS

SL Alumni, Writer & Activist



Heather (far right) with Senator Lang and other presenters from ARCH

Heather first contacted SL in late 2021 when she discovered “The Loop” on her tablet. As an impassioned and accomplished writer - winner of two PEN America awards and published in a variety of other platforms - the opportunity to participate in our first-ever Writer’s CoLab caught her attention. With the guidance of her professional mentor, Heather wanted to stretch her writing skills by crafting her first play. Through the writing process, she also allowed her vulnerabilities to be stretched, which brought another dimension to her healing journey. Heather’s play, “Kool-aid Stains,” imagines a dialogue between her current and younger self. The script is included in our 2021-22 Winter CoLab collection on Edovo. You can also see her piece represented in our brand new “Influence” film! (More info on p. 9)

Cycles of incarceration and generational addiction are unfortunately all too familiar to Heather. And while she knows these patterns are not easily broken, she is determined to not only see change, but to be the change. She often says, “If the truth hurts others, yourself, or the world - change it.” During her 9.5 years in the Ohio prison system, Heather sought out a variety of groups, programs and classes that would equip and empower a new mindset and way of life that she’d be proud to model for her two children. She took advantage of opportunities to develop her communication and advocacy skills, and even completed an associate’s degree in Correctional Rehabilitation from Sinclair College.

Since her release from prison in fall 2023, after 6 months of transitional control, Heather is thrilled to finally begin applying these skills and new mindsets to life outside. For her, this looks like reunification with her daughters, public speaking & advocacy, working part-time, and studying full-time at Ohio State University towards a bachelor’s degree in Social Work. Most recently, Heather joined the team at ARCH (Accompanying Returning Citizens with Hope) to testify before the state house in Ohio, advocating for Senate Bill 198.

We asked Heather a few questions about her transition. Here’s what she had to say...

**Q: What surprised you the most about returning to society?**

A: The emotional decompression. I finally felt safe in my home. I haven’t felt safe in 10 years, so I just wanted to nest inside and not leave.

**Q: What is one thing you learned inside that is helping you now?**

A: “Atomic Habits” (book by James Clear) - always looking to learn something new or take an opportunity to get 1% better at something everyday. For me, I want to doubt myself 1% less everyday. Because of my time inside, I have more self-discipline. I know what I need to do and do it. I also have more patience to tolerate not getting everything I want when I want it.

**Q: Is there anything specific you’re glad you did as you prepared for your reentry?**

A: I’m glad I thought out all of the steps. My preparation helped me know where to go for things, and also to have compassion on myself when things weren’t going the way I wanted them to.

When asked for a final word of encouragement, Heather wanted to simply say:

***“Leadership, if done right, is the most selfless thing you will ever do.”***



## STRENGTH SPOTTING

## HUMILITY

“Strength spotting” is the intentional act of noticing when someone uses one of the character strengths. It can be a helpful way to become more aware of strengths in both oneself and others, and especially when it is shared with the person using the strength, that can be incredibly encouraging.

“There are several men here that have been down for many years now and have a ton of sway over others here, however when you speak to them all they ever seem to want is to help others find themselves and navigate life here in prison. These men truly show what humility is to me.”

- Michael M. (CA)

Humility, like many character strengths, are learned and acquired. Here, at MacDougall CI, the Character Building Unit stresses not only self-improvement but extending a hand to the next man to raise him up as well. Humility is seen daily in the many classes facilitated by inmates who use their knowledge and skills, experience and care, to assist residents in the CBU. They don't "lord it over" or allow ego to put others down, but rather lift others up.

- Gary F (SC)

There is an old 60 years old guy in our unit, he is neither a pod orderly nor porter, but he always picks up trash and trays after chow, whenever trays are served in the pod. He stands there emptying left over food from trays into the trash bin for hours. His humility despite being one of the older guys in the unit is very exemplary and worthy of emulation. I am encouraged by him, I pick up any trash on the rec yard, on my way to chow or library and help push laundry carts or take trash carts to needed locations. I am inspired by the HUMILITY in this man.

Kingsley I. (OK)

“I live with a lifer who ALWAYS thinks of others ahead of herself and walks around with nothing but love in her heart for others.”

- Kesha G. (SC)

“I’ve watched my friend become refreshingly and brutally honest about her struggles and short comings as she realized she had to set her ego aside and hurt to heal. Her ability to do this and then rise up from the ashes with a can do, and you can too, mindset was so inspirational and powerful. Thank you my friend.”

- Alisha K. (NY)

I see humility everyday with my roommate. She has been locked up 1 1/2 years & is leaving in August. She doesn't boast or brag. All she does is try to help all the New girls & seg releases & give them some of her knowledge she has learned over the years. She is an inspiration to everyone!

- Danielle A. (TX)

“When things seem to get hard, instead of falling to the negative energy, that individual focused on the solution and went on with his day.” - Kwame J. (NC)



For the next issue, tell us where you spot people around you using **LEADERSHIP**



Joyce

PROGRAM FACILITATOR

### Inspirational Leadership

Leadership soars one  
to new heights,  
when it's right.  
Leaders who inspire  
are fair.  
Leaders who are  
vulnerable,  
compassionate,  
who care —  
This is the type  
of Leader one hopes for,  
to support them  
and open every door.  
A guide, a realist,  
tell it to you straight,  
a leader that guides  
and knows how to  
clean their own slate.

— HL TAPIA (OH)

### PREVIOUS PROMPT: “HUMBLE LEADERS”

*We asked: How can being honest about strengths and weaknesses help to make someone a good leader?*

As an arrogant, boastful youth,  
my façade was so far from the truth.  
But as a human I only chose to show my so-called good side.  
In reality, I'm hiding my faults,  
while trying to protect my good old pride.  
But once I saw myself in the mirror clearly,  
I've learned to embrace & love the real me...  
...As I've evolved and became humble, and aware of self.  
With my new found growth, it's only right I spread the wealth,  
With a great sense of balance and stability, which allows me  
to recognize the True Strength of Humility.  
- Ricardo W. (OH)

“The strong rules the weak, the wise rules the strong. The humble remains the wise, for she uses her sweet calm ears to listen to all sounds from the storm, but is able to sail through it all without panic and never giving up. The humble uses brains instead of force, carries others along instead of going it by herself.”

- Kingsley I. (OK)

*If one is both open and honest about both strengths and weaknesses, then he has no problem asking for help in both areas. A good humble leader is not afraid to ask for help from others more knowledgeable in areas of his own ignorance or lack of training; but neither is he afraid to delegate and take charge in areas of his expertise. -K. Daniel O. (AR)*

**\*Remember to check out more excellent poems and essays on the digital “Creative Expressions” collection on tablets through Edovo!**



### NEW PROMPT WHAT CAN I DO TO LEAD?

The world's problems can feel so huge and difficult; it's easy to decide that “there's nothing I can do.” But think about this for a minute: What **can** you do? As you'll see with the VIA definition (p.17), each of us has the ability to lead others by providing a positive vision or message that inspires them. To whom might you write a letter of concern or support to inspire positive change? How might you reach out to members of your family or to other people you know, young or old, to encourage and uphold them? Write a poem or brief letter to someone as a way to share “a positive vision or message” that might inspire them towards change.

*If you'd like your piece to be considered for publishing in The Loop, please keep it to 200 words or less. (Longer entries may be considered for our “Creative Expressions” collection on Edovo)*

*In the last issue, we asked,*

**“Which aspect of leadership - practical or interpersonal - is more important, in your opinion?”**

*“I think they are equally important, because without a good relationship, it makes it hard to organize and get back on track when discord happens among your team.” - Chaimara W. (AZ)*

**We had so many other great responses from our readers! Here are a few examples...**

### PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP // Organize & get things done

“If you just want to be liked by everyone, that's fine. But you will have a group of friends sitting around doing nothing.”

- Kenny E. (SC)

While they are both important to a degree, in my humble opinion the practical aspects of leadership in essence, outweighs the interpersonal. There's a quote by John Maxwell; "Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them," that puts the two into perspective for me. At the end of the day leadership is not about making friends, it's about empowering people and giving them the tools to succeed.

Peter S. (IL)

“Not all people are friends and some people may not like everything about another person but as long as mutual respect is there, anything can be done as a team, as long as things are organized and there is a great leader.” - Demarcus L. (IL)

“While it is commendable and in some cases needful, it is not practical and/or expedient to expect or even put oneself in the role of "peacekeeper" if the goal is to accomplish a specific task. As long as the leader can successfully motivate his group to accomplish the mission while putting differences aside, he has demonstrated his effectiveness as a leader. Part of "organizing" and "encouraging" others is the leader's ability to motivate his group to focus on the end game while simultaneously putting egos and emotions aside. If he/she can do that then he/she has proven his salt as a leader.” - M. Chuck J. (OH)

### INTERPERSONAL LEADERSHIP // Maintaining good relations

“People don't care how well you can lead until they know how well you care. If leaders don't care about their followers, encouraging others to get things done becomes more like trying to teach cats to perform tricks.” - Derek C. (SC)

“Without love and the ability to genuinely care for and connect with the people you're leading, the work being done will lack values and lack intent, complexity, abundance and love. It will be stripped down, mechanical and ineffective. This is why peer to peer leadership is so effective. Witnessing someone who has walked in your shoes and truly knows your struggle, who's taking action through leadership, reminds us who we really are and helps us begin to trust ourselves again.” - Ashley K. (NY)

“When you're camping along a river and have a lot of garbage or waste you need to get rid of before you leave, you think about those downstream and how you want to be treated by those upstream from you. As you lead and interact, do so with respect and kindness.” - Harvey E. (SD)

LET'S TALK LEADERSHIP -  
 JESUS WAS A GREAT LEADER - WAS HIS MEANS OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICAL OR INTERPERSONAL? MOSES WAS TOO, AS WAS MUHAMMAD, BUT I WASN'T AROUND FOR THEM. HOWEVER, I CAN TELL YOU ABOUT A GREAT LEADER, WHOM I HAD THE PLEASURE TO BE WITH ON 3 DIFFERENT OCCASIONS, NORMAN SCHWARTZKOFF. EVERYWHERE HIS COMMAND WENT, HE TOUCHED SOLDIERS LIVES FOR THE BETTER. HE TALKED TO THE ORDINARY SOLDIER LIKE YOU WERE HIS BUDDY. HIS INTERPERSONAL "TOUCH" NOT ONLY MADE YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF, BUT IT MADE YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOUR MISSION. THAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP INSPIRES MEN TO CHARGE HEAD LONG INTO A HAIL OF FIRE TO COMPLETE YOUR MISSION. THAT'S A LEAD BY EXAMPLE I'D LIKE TO EMULATE.  
 - EDWARD S. (PA)

## Real Talk



Naomi

PROGRAM FACILITATOR

COMMUTED LIFER & ACTIVIST

My name is Naomi Wilson and I am 73 years young! In 1982, caught up in a drug and alcohol addiction, I found myself sentenced to die in prison by the state of Pennsylvania. (No, I didn't kill anyone but I was with someone who did, and at the time, that automatically meant LWOP - life w/o the possibility of parole.) I served 37 years, keeping myself educated as the laws began to change. And finally, in 2019, after five different attempts - and the grace of God - I made parole through commutation. Ever since, I've been working with Shining Light and other groups to help bring awareness about prison to people on the outside. While I was inside, I was called Aunt Naomi, Grandma, Mom, because I just love people and everyone knew that no matter who you are, if you come to me, I'm gonna give you the truth...with love.

*"A lot of people want to be, or think they are leaders. But that doesn't mean they're actually showing leadership. People watch people, and in prison, everybody watches somebody. Leaders are examples, and when you set that example of just being a decent human being, you don't have to ask people to follow you, they just will. You're not in the hole all the time, you're not disrespectful towards the officers and you're not unkind to other people. You don't talk about sensitive cases and gossip. You're just a positive person, and people are drawn to that. Especially here.*

*Look, everybody wants a little bit of something good. When people see how you walk, they know what you agree with and what you don't stand for, so keep being the good person you are. People who don't have that in common with you, they won't walk with you."*

### **ASK ANYTHING** And if I can't offer any advice, I'll ask someone who can!

*\*Please note that while we will maintain a professional level of confidentiality, we are legally required to report any information that involves a serious threat or existence of harm to yourself or others.*

**Q: I have served 35 years and had to make a 22-year journey through darkness to finally forgive myself for the death of my 7-week-old daughter. The self-hatred still grabs hold occasionally. How do I get to a point where I no longer feel like a monster?**

**MS. NAOMI:** I don't know the details, but I think with you asking this question it shows that you're forgiving yourself because you're not hiding it; you're not trying to keep it buried inside so that people don't find out. You sound like you're forgiving yourself right now, and it's going to be a process. But you asking for help and talking about it is improvement.

**Q: What was the hardest thing you had to deal with internally when you got your date?**

**MS. NAOMI:** Well, believe it or not, getting my date was bittersweet. After being in there so many decades, you know, those women had become my family. There are some I still keep in touch with because in prison we had become very close. But I couldn't stay in touch with everyone and leaving the women behind was the hardest part. A lot of them were serving life sentences, too, and it's just been a matter of years, but more than a handful have passed away and it hurts my heart. But what I do now, I do for them. My heart is always with them and they drive me to do what I do.



## RELUCTANT LEADERSHIP



*Kurt*

**FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
TOMORROW'S NEIGHBORS**

SL ALUM '18-'20

**I am a reluctant leader.** That may sound odd coming from a man who runs a nonprofit organization, but it is true.

When I was younger, I thought I wanted to be a leader. At times, I believed I was one. But in retrospect, I was merely following from the front: I based just about every decision I made on how others would view it, not on what the best decision was. I had no real concept of direction, let alone leadership.

The concept of true leadership was first modeled to me by an Ol' Head Lifer that I did not particularly like. But I respected the heck out of him. He dedicated his life to preventing others from following in his footsteps. He didn't care about race, age, sexual preference, or criminal charges. He was a unifier, not a divider. He recognized how important it was to maintain personal relationships and positive group dynamics.

But the real reason I respected him was because he didn't actually WANT to be a leader - he merely tolerated it, choosing to use his leadership skills to achieve goals greater than himself.

I learned a lot from this man.

Today, I tolerate being a leader in my organization so that others are motivated and encouraged to succeed. I build and maintain coalitions to better educate the public about reentry. And I constantly educate myself so that I can lead in the best way possible.

But of course, the opportunity for leadership is not limited to business. It comes in many forms. Being a husband, father, supervisor, or coach are examples. Even in prison, there are many opportunities to lead. At work, on the block, in the education building, or even the yard, you can step up to encourage others to work toward a common goal. Maybe it's educational pursuits, physical health, mental health, or just making it through incarceration. Whatever the goal, there is always opportunity for leadership.

I learned one more lesson from that Ol' Head: People don't "follow" true leaders, they emulate them. And he was right, because here I am emulating him.



*Is there a situation or relationship where you know you could provide leadership but you've been reluctant to do so?*

*Even if you want the role you have, how might this article encourage you to use your strength of leadership to support others?*

# LEADERSHIP

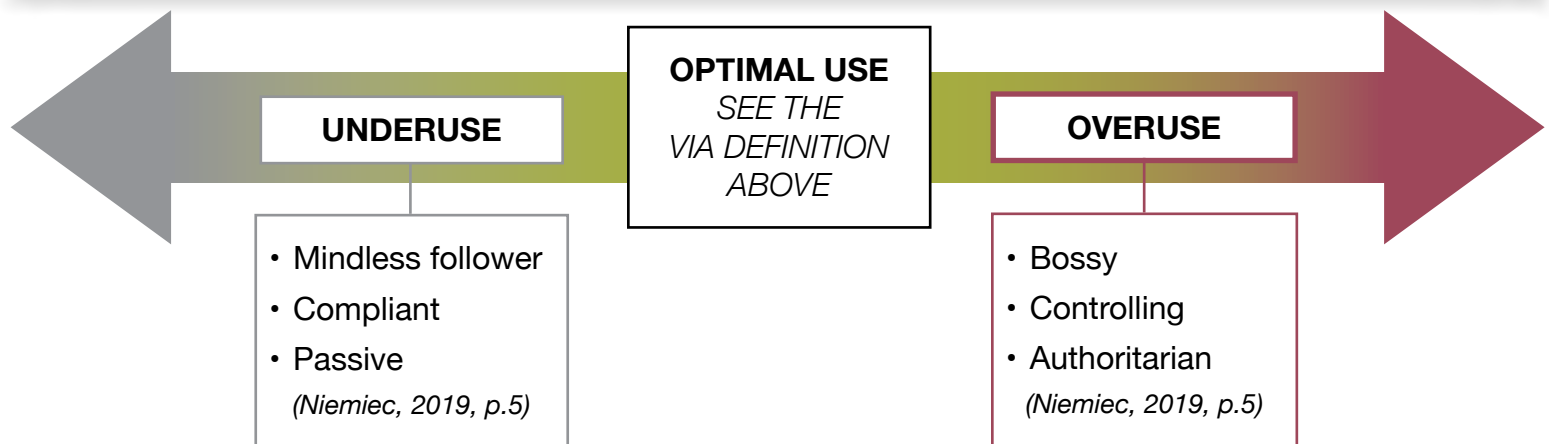
Artwork By Brandon S (PA)

Kurt entered the PA prison system at age 18 and served 24 years, committed to personal growth and the betterment of others. Today he is the Founder/Executive Director of a reentry nonprofit in central PA called "Tomorrow's Neighbors." For more information, call (717) 241-8375 or visit [www.tomorrowsneighbors.org](http://www.tomorrowsneighbors.org)

“Leadership can take on many forms. As a character strength, leadership refers to the tendency to organize and encourage a group to get things done, while maintaining good relations within the group. Like teamwork, leadership involves being committed to the goals of the group, but how that commitment manifests itself is very different. Leadership involves setting goals and accomplishing them, enlisting effective help, building coalitions, and smoothing ruffled feathers. Effective leaders are able to provide a positive vision or message that inspires dedicated followers who feel empowered and perhaps even inspired (VIA Institute on Character, n.d., para. 1).”

“There are two types of leaders:

- Transactional leaders: this type of leader clarifies responsibilities, expectations, and the tasks to be accomplished
- Transformational leaders: this leader motivates their followers to perform at an extremely high level, fostering a climate of trust and commitment to the organization and its goals (VIA Institute on Character, n.d., para. 3).”



Travis

PROGRAM DEVELOPER

One sentence in the definition states that “effective leaders offer a positive vision or message that inspires dedicated followers, making them feel empowered and perhaps even inspired (VIA Institute on Character, n.d., para. 1).” Let’s break this down. Effective leaders do two main things:

**Provide a Positive Vision or Message:** They offer a clear and uplifting direction for their team or organization. This vision gives people hope and perspective, guiding them toward shared goals.

**Inspire Dedicated Followers by Making Them Feel Empowered:** They not only motivate their followers but also empower them. This means giving them the tools, support, and confidence they need to succeed.

When we look at these two aspects separately, they can resemble other character strengths. Providing a positive vision might seem like offering hope or perspective, while making others feel empowered might seem like promoting teamwork or fairness. But it’s when these elements come together that the strength of leadership emerges.



- **Considering these aspects, what part of effective leadership comes more naturally to you: identifying the positive vision or message, or making others feel empowered?**
- **How might you improve the area that comes less naturally to you?**



Let's break down these two components of effective leadership to determine whether someone is actually demonstrating leadership, or not.

**To begin, think of someone you believe embodies the strength of leadership.**

## Step 1: Identify the Vision or Message

Consider the vision or message that this person stands for. Ask yourself:

- What is one core message or vision this person promotes?
- Why is this message considered positive?
- How does this vision or message benefit both yourself and others?
- Who might disagree with this message, and what are their reasons?

## Step 2: Evaluate How Others Feel in Their Presence

Reflect on how this person makes you and others feel. Consider:

- Do you and others feel empowered in this person's presence?
  - Consider the definition of empowerment: "having the knowledge, confidence, means, or ability to do things or make decisions for oneself (Merriam-Webster, n.d., para. 1)."
- Reflect on instances where you have felt empowered or disempowered by their actions or words.
- Be honest about both positive and negative experiences.

LEADER'S VISION/MESSAGE:



HOW THEY MAKE OTHERS FEEL

By breaking down effective leadership into these tangible steps, hopefully you can gain a clearer understanding of its components and how they manifest in real-life situations. Try practicing this exercise with different individuals to deepen your understanding. Consider also what others might say about your leadership using these steps!

*Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Empowered. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved May 6, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empowered>*

*"LEADERSHIP" - THIS IS DEDICATED TO THE "LEADERSHIP" IN CALIFORNIA'S PRISON SYSTEM. FOR MANY YEARS WE WERE LEADERS OF GANGS AND NEGATIVITY. LIFERS LOST IN THE CHAOS OF DECAY. ROTTING AWAY DECADE AFTER DECADE IN THE TOMBS OF MASS- INCARCERATION. BUT OUT OF THE DECAY, WE BECAME HEALED. NOW WE LEAD AS MENTORS, THE YOUTH OFFENDERS OF A NEW ERA IN INCARCERATION. WE'VE TRADED ANGER FOR HAPPINESS, VIOLENCE FOR PEACE, AND GANGS FOR JUSTICE REFORM. LEADERSHIP IN PRISON, IS A COMPLETE WAY OF LIFE.*

*- JOHN C. (CA)*

*The following is a collection of insights selected from the Loop Group at Ross CI in Ohio.*

“At RCI we have a core group of 12 individuals who meet weekly. We use the meetings as a safe space where we evolve into philosophers, cultural and behavioral analysts, as well as problem solvers. We utilize The Loop’s prompts and other content, Character Strengths and Community Codes to compose essays, hold debates and practice the art of spoken word. We discuss everyday problems that arise during incarceration, finding solutions that highlight the application of the codes and strengths. Our goal is the upliftment & elevation of our awareness, in the hopes of Shining that Light on the populace of RCI.”

- Maurice H. (LG peer facilitator)

**NEW**

## LISTEN & LEARN BEFORE OFFERING ADVICE

“One size does not fit all. Even if it is the correct size, the shoe might not be suitable for the task at hand. Speaking is only an important skill because others have ears, lest the vibrations we release would have no use. That is why a good leader listens first, then offers advice. Context is the universal key, because anyone who feels ignored is certain to lock you out.” - Jeremy M.

I have a question.  
Can you drive?  
I have an answer,  
Yes, You can!  
Now, where are we going?  
Can I give you directions?  
We can follow each other,  
Or, let life direct us down a path to success.  
What do you think?  
Learning as we retrace our paths, using innovation,  
because we're socially segregated!  
It's sad how some of us fight for rehabilitation,  
in a traumatized situation!  
Learning everyday, listening to & looking for,  
Universal signs.  
Offering younger brothers/sisters advice about  
everyday life,  
Even though their lives aren't my life!  
Whether you're Black, Light, Pale, or White  
You can teach me, just as I teach you!  
So let's lead each other right, by  
listening and learning before offering advice  
-Malik D.

“Leadership, effective leadership, is less about showing off to others your position, but more about your ability to inspire greatness in others. It is not about showing off your ability to speak; it's about your ability to listen, absorb and empower others to discover, embrace and optimally utilize their untapped potential. Some of the most effective leaders learned to follow before they learned to lead. Whether you lead or you follow, your greatest attribute is your ability to listen.” - Chuck J.

*Artwork by: Michael G. from the Ross CI Loop Group*

“A good leader must definitely be a good follower. Leadership hinges on the ability to follow the needs of your constituents and adhere to their silent as well as spoken pleas, therefore this code is essential to a good leader being effective. Another strength that we feel is imperative in effective leaders is Perspective. This strength, when optimally used, enables a leader to disseminate the gathered information into the different learning styles required by the different types of individuals they are leading.” - Maurice H.



**As you use this Community Code with the character strength of Leadership, what other strengths may manifest?**

### SHINING LIGHT COMMUNITY CODES

#### SELF-CARE

- Be open, Be curious
- Brush Off the Small Stuff
- Accept Non-Resolution
- Start Simple

#### CARE FOR OTHERS

- “Speak Life”
- One Mic
- Step Forward/Step Back
- Speak from the “I”
- Debate the Topic, Not the Person
- Listen & Learn Before Offering Advice
- Confidentiality



## What's up, my fellow Loopers!

*It's that time again, and this time we're talking about Leadership. When I think about Leadership, I think about the importance of self care - because if I'm not good to me, I'll be of little use to those I lead.*



*Dormen*

**PROGRAM FACILITATOR**  
SL ALUM '18-'20

Think about your tablet, if you have one. (For me, I can now compare it to my mobile device!) There comes a point in time when if you don't recharge the batteries, the tablet will cease to function at full capacity. The same will happen to a person.

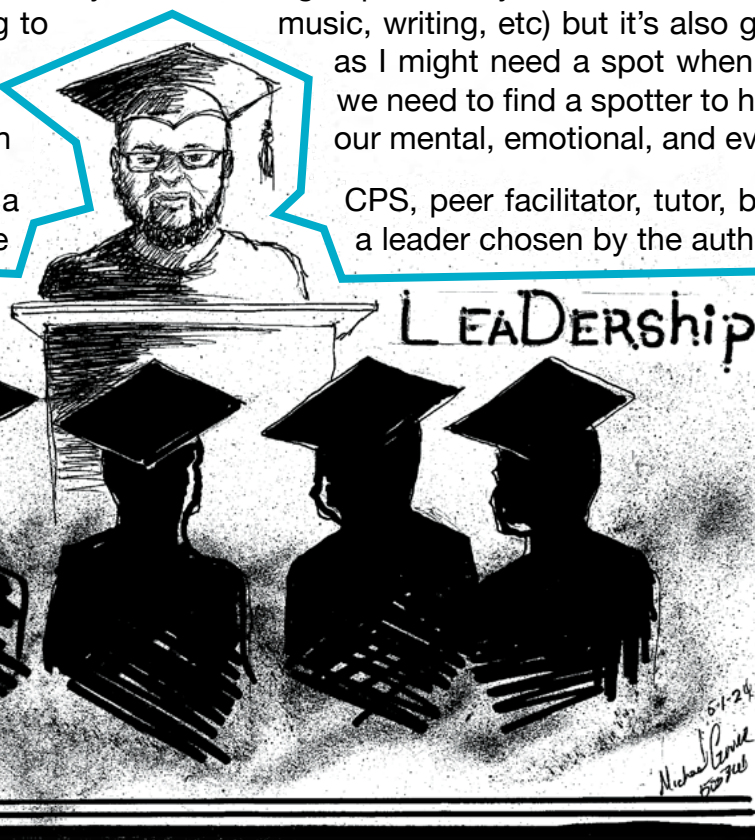
Oftentimes those in leadership roles, whether assigned or self-appointed, will give so much of themselves that they forget about themselves. While working as a CPSS, I was called upon more often than not, which I now realize was because I performed my role effectively to those I served. But being "good" at my job was a double edged sword. I worked more than I allowed myself to decompress. So much so that I had to eventually step away from what I loved. I was no good to those who leaned on me because I was burning the candle from both ends.

As humans we all come to a point of needing a break, a moment to recharge. This is especially true when we practice the strength of leadership, since doing it well involves pouring yourself out for others. My question then would be, "Who are you allowing to pour into you?" There are many ways to recharge within yourself (exercise, listening to music, writing, etc) but it's also good to have others around who can support you. Just as I might need a spot when I'm lifting hundreds of pounds on a bar, sometimes others can take on we need to find a spotter to help us bear the weight that caring for our mental, emotional, and even physical health.

Whether you're a  
- whether you are

CPS, peer facilitator, tutor, block rep or point person at your job  
a leader chosen by the authority or by the people - I want you to

know that we appreciate you and we see you. We know you choose to lead because of your love and kindness. You do it because you want better for yourselves and the people around you. You are doing a valuable service to your community, and if you haven't been told lately, let me say, "Thank You." And please, make sure you take care of yourself so that you'll be able to take care of those you are called to serve.



*Try This*

*Create a Self-Care Bank. List 3-5 activities that bring you peace or joy. (Try to have at least one that involves physical health, one that engages your mind, and one that is relational.) Remind yourself to do one of these activities next time you feel stress building up. Ideally, do one each day as a preventative vs reactive approach to your health - not just to recharge, but to stay charged. And let us know what's on your list so we can compile one to share!*

### DORMEN'S SELF-CARE BANK

- lifting weights
- painting
- reading the Bible
- phone call with my wife
- sipping a hot cup of tea

PREVIOUS PROMPT: **LEADERS WHO UNIFY**

We asked for a poem or brief essay about the art of bringing people together and helping them get along, starting with the line “This smoother of ruffled feathers is...”

**Leaders Who Unify**

This smoother of ruffled feathers is a unifier.  
 At their core they are a person of peace.  
 Any person that is about togetherness is a person to admire.  
 People think humility is a weakness but what's stronger than a humble beast?  
 This smoother of ruffled feathers is always willing to help  
 and knows that it's always best to put the word less behind self.  
 This smoother of ruffled feathers knows a good leader must learn to follow.  
 And when it comes to one's pride, it is a thing that must be swallowed.  
 This smoother of ruffled feathers knows unification is key for the world's success.  
 And this is why this smoother of ruffled feathers is a person God will continue to bless.  
 So, it's a fact, this smoother of ruffled feathers is tried and true.  
 And when you are ready to meet this person all you have to do is look inside of you!

- Christopher J. (OH)

This smoother of ruffled feathers is a reminder of better weather or a lesser life that one should treasure  
 cause we're all in this together and the goal is to make it better  
 it's easy to be disliked but harder to be respected,  
 a burden to be rejected, a joy to be protected.

- Dustin G. (NC)

This smoother of ruffled feathers is exactly what's gonna keep us all together.  
 If we can understand our true purpose, we should know that it's to make each other better.  
 The things we could build, the things we could accomplish goes hand in hand,  
 So it's our goal to help & provide for each child, woman & man.  
 With the proper leadership, we all gain our dose of humility,  
 With that aspect in place, we all prosper from the unlimited possibility.  
 Listen y'all, it's our moment, it's our time to try,  
 So let's focus on smoothing ruffled feathers & come together as Leaders Who Unify!

- Willie M. "Mo'Betta" (NC)



**Let's Get Free: The Women and Trans Prisoner Defense Committee** is an organization working “to end death by Incarceration (also known as life without parole sentencing), build a pathway out of the prisons back to our communities through commutation reform, support successful possibilities for people formerly and currently incarcerated, and shift to a culture of transformative justice.”

For their 7th fundraiser art show, to be held in Pittsburgh in November 2024, Let's Get Free is seeking visual art and poems on the theme “This Is Me.” All art mediums are welcome; please submit only one poem (maximum two pages in length). Prizes will be awarded, and works selected for the fundraiser will be auctioned and sold to raise money for Let's Get Free.

**A submission form and other information are available at**

**<https://creative-resistance.org/call-for-art-and-poems-for-lets-get-frees-2024-art-show/>**

Send  
Art & Poems  
To

Let's Get Free Art Show  
460 Melwood Avenue #300  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

They begin to argue, yell and bicker; the mood darkens and air grows thicker.  
He steps forward and draws their attention; they begin to watch, full of apprehension.  
He allows them each to share a feeling or desire, then acknowledges each and kindles the fire.  
Leaving everyone with a feeling of worth, all men sitting peacefully around our own special hearth.  
A family we are, with different views, he brought us together by wearing our shoes.

- Michael M. (CA)



### NEW PROMPT: **LEADING WITH FAIRNESS**

Leading well in any context - coaching a team, facilitating a group, teaching a class, parenting a child, or supporting a loved one - often includes making difficult decisions that affect the people we lead. Consider an area or situation in which you have the opportunity to lead, and write about what fairness might look like. Try using the American version of a poetic form called the cinquain: a form with 22 total syllables--two in the first line, four in the second, six in the third, eight in the fourth, and two again in the fifth and final line. Consider beginning or ending your cinquain with the word *Fairness*.

*Joyce*

2 syllables \_\_\_\_\_ Option 1 - start with the word "Fairness"

4 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

6 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

8 syllables \_\_\_\_\_

2 syllables \_\_\_\_\_ Option 2 - end with the word "Fairness"

ANGELIA  
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

## CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE

One sign of a healthy community or relationship is the ability to disagree respectfully. We want to provide a chance for you to share your differing ideas in a safe, constructive way and practice critical thinking, hearing different perspectives, and carefully crafting a respectful argument. Life throws us situations where we need these skills all the time, so think of this as your practice ground.



AGREE



IT'S COMPLICATED



DISAGREE

There is no leadership gene. People either make leadership roles for themselves or adopt the roles that society has created for them.  
— C. Santiago (sc)

I definitely agree with this statement. Some people are born to lead - they are strong, opinionated, good speakers & able to get people to follow them. While others are born followers - they are shy, timid, good listeners & wanting authority & direction.  
- Danielle A. (IL)

"Some people are seemingly born to be leaders, from the charismatic team leaders in the sports arena to those who positively shake the world's foundations, like Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and Martin Luther. Others aspire to be demigods and try to burn it down, the last century having more than its fair share of those. Events and opportunities may drive them to the fore, but there is no disputing the good and the harm a charismatic person can lead us into."

- Richard H. (PA)

*Last issue we proposed the statement...*

### "SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN TO BE LEADERS - SOME AREN'T."

"I 100% agree, not everyone is a "born leader" and that's okay, in fact it's beautiful. Just like leaders the same can be said that not everyone is a born writer, builder, or healer. We all lovingly enter this life with our own unique energy, talents, and skills. However, as I learned from my time in SL.A., with effort, determination, dedication and discipline we can all choose a character strength to enhance within ourselves and achieve whatever goals we set. So yes, while there are born leaders among us, we all have the option to become leaders with a degree of hard work accompanied by practice, patience and persistence." - Damen L. (PA)

"Everyone is born to lead, it's just up to you if you wanna be your own person and have goals on a great future or if you wanna be like everyone else around you because you're too scared to stand out and be somebody!"

- A. Gibson (OH)

I disagree with this only for the simple fact that DNA only passes so much, that I believe our birth has little to do with our ability to be a leader. (Good/bad) However I do believe with the proper upbringing, mentoring and leadership, we can grow to become leaders that are balanced in all aspects. One who speaks, but listens, Teaches, but is willing to learn, Strong, but compassionate. Being a leader is not forcing others to do what you want,  
- Brandon H (PA)

(please note: some answers have been abridged for space)

I disagree...I believe Everyone has the potential to be a leader. Being a leader is not something One is born with, (although some may wish it were that easy.) The reality is Leadership has to be developed...If you were fortunate and had the advantage to grow up around leaders then being a leader becomes instinctive. If you have never been exposed to leadership You can still become a leader by seeking out leaders who can help you develop into a leader. Leading is a serious responsibility which is why it takes hard work, honest reflection, and time but it is attainable to all who desire to influence others. Anyone can learn to be a leader.

- Michael G. (CA.)

"I disagree based on my own experience. You have to start at the bottom, you never just get a lead role. People you see as a team leader or manager, or supervisor, or Human Resources (HR) all started somewhere. You cannot just "be" a leader. It takes time and experience gained from being the underdog. But you can LEARN to be a leader if you are patient enough to take the steps required to reach it."

- Mark S. (OH)

"I don't believe anybody is a born leader. I think it is our life experience that shapes our character and gives us our own unique outlook and that is what creates leaders. Sometimes those not wishing to lead are the ones best suited to."

- Michael M. (CA)

No, I disagree with the statement about leaders. I believe everyone can become a leader if they are properly trained on how to be one or be given time to "shadow" an established leader to learn "on the job". -Thomas R. (Pa)

"There was a time when I would've fully agreed with the notion that some are born to lead while others are not, however, both time and experience has taught me that's just not true. What I've learned is we're all both teachers/leaders and students/followers. There is something that you can share with me that I can get from no other source but you and your unique life experiences. There is also something I can teach you that can only come from me. Even the most successful leaders of the world once followed someone."

- Milan R. (AZ)

I Agree! Some people are born with the ability to be a leader, it just depends on if we embrace it. Some people aren't, though that does not mean they don't have other strengths. Some people are meant to learn from leadership, but to all you leaders, keep it up...you're doing great.

♡summer S. (Pa)

"I agree. Some leaders are made. The same person that was born a leader might not be a great organizer. Everyone has a part to play. Everyone has a portion therefore it is possible for people to grow in understanding."

- Chris W. (NC)

For the next issue, do you agree or disagree about the following statement:



**"FAIRNESS IS TREATING EVERYONE EQUALLY"**

*Want to think ahead? Help us come up with our next debate prompt!  
In 10 words or less, what is a statement on PRUDENCE  
that could arguably have more than one opinion?*

## Spiritually Speaking...

*Spirituality is a character strength that has many dimensions, including a sense of meaning & purpose in life, the expression of values & virtues, and practices that connect us with “the sacred.” While this connection often involves religious experiences, it can also come from anything that causes a sense of awe or wonder beyond basic human understanding. In this section, we want to provide an opportunity to consider each character strength covered in the issue as it relates to your strength of Spirituality (VIA Institute on Character, n.d.).*



*Nina*

PROGRAM MANAGER

The following is adapted from elements of “A Leader’s Prayer” and will serve as our guide for reflection.

**Leadership is hard to define.  
Let us be the ones to define it with justice.**

**Leadership is like a handful of water.  
Let us be the people to share it with those who thirst.**

**Leadership is not about watching and correcting.  
Let us remember it is about listening and connecting.**

**Leadership is not about telling people what to do.  
Let us find out what people want.**

**Leadership is less about the love of power  
and more about the power of love.**

*You can see the full prayer at  
[www.parishrenewal.com.au/prayers-resources](http://www.parishrenewal.com.au/prayers-resources)*

### Reflection Questions:

- What is one line that sticks out to you? What is it about that line that resonates, and why do you think that is?
- Is there someone in your life who demonstrates this kind of leadership to you?
- Think of one relationship in your life where you may have an opportunity to lead another person or group with this kind of leadership.
- Now imagine a realistic scenario or future interaction - how are you using your strength of leadership to show love?
- Take a moment to connect with your ultimate Source of love for whatever it is you need to engage with others in this way next time the opportunity presents itself.

*VIA Institute on Character (n.d.). Spirituality. VIA Institute on Character. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths/spirituality>*







**JUNETEENTH & FOURTH OF JULY** - You may be wondering, “Why do we need both holidays?” Consider this: The Declaration of Independence (signed in 1776) led to the freedom of the American colonies from British rule - so as a nation, our “Independence Day” is July 4. However, half a million people continued to be enslaved in these colonies for nearly 90 years after that. Freedom for African American slaves wouldn’t legally be granted until their states recognized President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, which was finally completed in Texas on June 19, 1865. While the United States of America became an independent country nearly 250 years ago, freedom for individual citizens is perhaps a different story.

[\(https://time.com/6188744/juneteenth-independence-day/\)](https://time.com/6188744/juneteenth-independence-day/)

On July 4th, 1969, this illustration of **César Chávez**, by Manuel Gregorio Acosta, was published on the cover of Time Magazine. With no money, no political connections, and no public speaking experience, Chávez led the first successful farm workers union in American history, helping thousands still to this day. *(Check out Adrian G.’s tribute on p. 7!)*



WHAT WE’RE READING

BIOGRAPHY

**CAN’T HURT ME: MASTER YOUR MIND & DEFY THE ODDS**

by: DAVID COGGINS

“My new favorite book for motivation and inspiration.... A ex-Navy Seal who had to overcome many of the obstacles many incarcerated individuals have had to face...but the difference is that he used the negatives to be his fuel to succeed without EXCUSES! A must read reality check!!!” - Daniel M. (MI) & “I will never look at myself, life experiences, and life in general the same ever again.” - Peter S. (IL)

FICTION

**THE OVERSTORY** // by: RICHARD POWERS

“This book will demonstrate bravery, courage, perseverance...[qualities] that are important to us in our present situation.” - Rashad J. / NC  
 “Winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize, it unfolds in concentric rings of interlocking fables that range from antebellum New York to the late 20th century timber wars of the pacific northwest.” (Amazon)

NONFICTION

**EMBRACE THE CHAOS, ENJOY THE JOURNEY**

by: WILLIAM MCKENZIE

“What I like about it is that it is a book for people who want to become successful leaders in anything they do, whether it is sports or business related. It includes a lot of quotes from Buddha, to Nick Saban of Alabama football, to Confucius of Rome, to Oprah Winfrey, to the Ancient Spartans of Greece, to Shakespeare. Just to name a few.” - Chris “vette” F. (PA)



# MATCHSTICK MATH

(mindyourlogic.com)

Each of the math equations below are wrong. But they can be made right by moving one of the matchsticks. Here's an example:

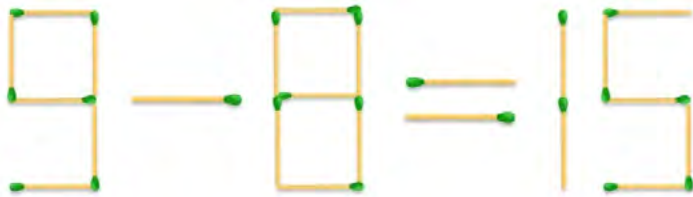


This isn't true...

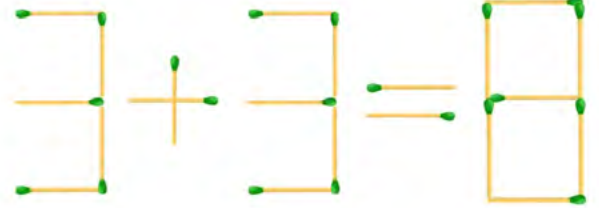


but now it is!

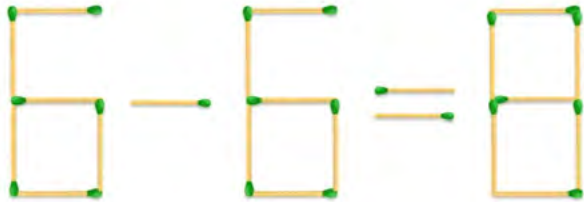
[1]



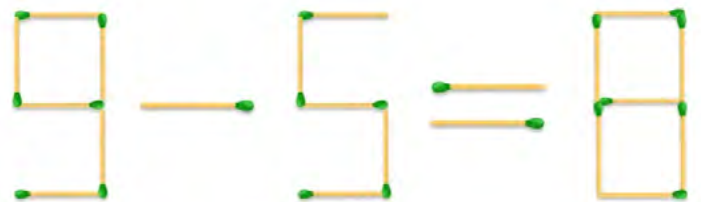
[2]



[3]



[4]



**REBUS PUZZLES** // “Also known as word picture puzzles or picture riddles, these use a combination of images and words to convey a phrase or message, typically a common idiom or expression. Just like challenging riddles, these visual puzzles can be pretty tricky. To help you solve these tough brainteasers, make sure to look at word placement, size, color and quantity. Take your time—and don't give up!”  
 (Puzzles taken from Reader's Digest)

mil 1 lion

S S S S  
 B B B B  
 A A A A  
 R R R R  
 G G G G

META META  
 META META

BUT  
 THOUGHT THOUGHT

gsge gsge  
 egsg egsg  
 gges gges  
 esgg esgg

WHAT  
 MUST

I FELL  
 I FELL  
 I FELL  
 I FELL  
 I FELL  
 I FELL  
 I FELL

SOUP

TRAVEL  
 CCCCCC

## FRUIT SALAD RECIPE:

- 1 orange
- 1 banana
- 1 red and/or green apple
- 1 fruit cocktail
- 1 can pineapple and/or peaches (as available)
- 1 pack of cream cheese
- 1 pack instant oatmeal (any flavor)
- 1 granola bar
- 1 pack of trail mix

Chop one each of orange, banana & red and green apple. Add fruit cocktail, canned pineapple & canned peaches. Combine with one pack of cream cheese. Add any flavor instant oatmeal. Crush & add granola bar. Sprinkle with any variety of trail mix.

Delicious as a meal! Serves 2.

Submitted by  
Michelle T. (NC)

JUST

FOR

FUN

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## KIDS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS

In honor of Mothers & Fathers Day, here's a collection of some funny things kids say...

"Am I five now? I don't feel any different. Oh, except for my back. My back feels like six."  
- Maia, age 5

"My tummy does growl sometimes. It's a soft sound, like a cloud getting mad." - Kailey, age 5

"Mom, I need a Samsung Galaxy phone."  
"Who are you going to call?"  
"Well...Ghostbusters." - Erik

"The pterodactyl's nose protects him from creditors!" - Andrew, age 4

"I was not kicking Brady. I was just loving him with my boot."  
- Claire, age 4

"That water in the bathtub turned my fingers into little brains."  
- Riverlyn, age 4

(Taken from LittleHoots via Huffpost.com)

THE FAMILY CIRCUS® By Bil Keane



"I want to talk to Grandma, but PJ won't stop hugging her."

## HEALTHY RECIPES

Keeeeeeep 'em comin'! It's summertime, so what's something light and refreshing to get you through those hot days? Share your ideas!

## MS. NAOMI'S CORNY CORNER

WE KNOW YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELVES

I bought my wife a big fan for her birthday.

**She was blown away!** - Edward G. (PA)

Joe: There's a new documentary out on clocks.

Ed: **It's about time.** - Witty & Wise Publication

Laura: I haven't forgiven you for putting super glue on my pen.

Denise: **20 years later & you still can't let that go.**

- Witty & Wise Publication

Why was Cinderella so bad at soccer?

**She kept running away from the ball.**

- Good Housekeeping

Why can't you hear a pterodactyl going to the bathroom?

**The "P" is silent.**

- Good Housekeeping



## SPECIAL THANKS TO THESE 71 CONTRIBUTORS:

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*Thank you to everyone else who submitted work we weren't able to include. Please keep writing in!  
We are encouraged and inspired by all of the letters, artwork and other expressions that come our  
way, and we hope that you find something meaningful in the process, too!*

## NEXT ISSUE'S THEME FAIRNESS

## REMEMBER TO SEND US YOUR BEST COVER ART!

See p.7 for more information



## FIRSTIMPRESSIONS

According to the VIA Institute on Character, "Fairness is treating people justly, not letting your personal feelings bias your decisions about others." Now that you've explored the strength of Leadership in this issue, how do you think the use of Fairness could contribute to someone's effectiveness as a leader? (Remember, leadership can be used in any context - work, family, friendships, groups, etc)



**ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE DUE BY JULY 10, 2024**



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Through **edovo** more and more people are accessing *The Loop* and engaging in other video content, too. If you have Edovo on your tablets, be sure to check out our channel and tell your friends!



## IF YOU ENJOYED THIS ISSUE OF THE LOOP, HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO NEXT...

- **Tell your friends!!!**
- **Write to us with your feedback, responses, writing, or artwork**
- **Find more creative inspiration through our "Creations of a Caged Bird" videos or our new Writer's CoLab Anthology.**
- **Hone your own creative writing skills through video-based courses like Playwriting and Intro to Spoken Word.**
- **Continue developing your character through our Learn Your Strengths and Apply Your Strengths video courses.**
- **Share your experience with loved ones on the outside and invite them to read *The Loop* online at [shining-light.com/theloop](http://shining-light.com/theloop)**

... "The materials and content made available on the GTL tablets has inspired great positive change in my life and the lives of others as I share the 'Learn Your Strengths' program as well as 'The Loop' magazine. Each week, I'm sharing the definitions provided in the index with my two sons about the 24 character traits and using them to teach my sons while I'm incarcerated. Thank you so much! It makes me feel better about myself in many ways.... Thank you!" - Joshua D. (NC)