

SYNERGISTIC REHABILITATION

There are two primary responsibilities that every criminal justice system must attempt to balance in meeting the health and safety responsibilities they have to the public: First is the arrest, prosecution and incarceration of criminal offenders; and second is the successful return of ex-offenders to the social community. The incarceration or punitive side of criminal justice is a combination of confinement, deterrence, and incapacitation of the criminals' ability to impact society. Rehabilitation and retribution previously thought of as components of punishment, have in recent times come under the headings of 'correction,' and 'restorative justice,' or the effort to successfully bring the offender back into the social community as a non-criminal.

The logic of locking up offenders clearly serves the governmental responsibility for public safety and security. The application of rigorous and strict security policies within the criminal justice system insures that this responsibility extends to inmates, system staff and volunteers as well. The success of the system in meeting security responsibilities is evidenced by the low numbers of escapes and incidents of violence against unit personnel. The difficult balance of both policy and resources lies between security concerns, and the successful return of ex-offenders to the social community.

Over the last fifty years a number of rehabilitative programs have been implemented to decrease the rate of recidivism, the re-arrest and re-incarceration of ex-offenders in response to the high rate of occurrence and the staggering social and financial costs involved. Conservative analysis indicates that 50% to 75% of all ex-offenders are back in prison within five years with an average social and criminal justice cost of \$500,000 each. This sends a strong message that simple incarceration is not serving as a deterrent to continuing the criminal lifestyle. However, there is strong evidence that offender participation in specific well-designed rehabilitation programs significantly reduces recidivism.

There are four types of programs that have enjoyed the greatest success: Education, Faith-based or Spiritual Practices, Recovery (substance abuse treatment) and Vocational Skills. Countless studies show that any one of these programs makes a difference in how the offender sees themselves in prison, and their social and economic options upon release. The single most successful programs, worldwide, are spiritual. Any combination of the above, if well implemented, serves to increase the likelihood of effectiveness in reaching the broadest population of offenders.

Learning is both complex and subtle, and we learn best when there is both an interest and a motivation. For this reason, the use of forced recovery and rehabilitation programs has a very low rate of success. Different offenders have different learning styles. Some learn best by listening, others by reading, yet others react better to graphical or iconic presentation of ideas, while yet others prefer to learn by direct experience. By tailoring education and vocational courses to the learning style best suited to the individual offender, better results can be expected.

To be successful, it is necessary for inmate rehabilitation to have a multi-dimensional approach that is both synergistic and adaptable. The best results are obtained with the integration of an in-depth program of spiritual practice that will effectively allow the offender to take greater personal responsibility for their actions and provide the basis for life-long spiritual growth.

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