

Prosocial Experiences: Creating a Loving Home and Family with Mercy Connections

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About Me



- Dartmouth College Undergrad
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- The first Justice & Mentoring Intern!

What Does Prosocial Mean?

- Parolees are allowed to engage in extracurricular activities if they are “prosocial” in nature... what does that mean?
- Partner Share:
 - What does prosocial mean?
 - How do we support its development?

Prosocial Defined

- Social scientists developed the term 'Prosocial' in the 1970s as an antonym for 'antisocial behavior'
- Altruism and feelings of empathy and concern for wellbeing of others
- Compassion, or the ability to understand the suffering of others, and feel gratified helping relieve that suffering, motivates prosocial behavior

The Prosocial Experiments

- Seven different variations on the same experiment
- Prosocial behavior as delayed gratification
- Social Behavior (Anti/Pro): Close relationship with TRUST in others or the society at large
 - Behaving pro-socially, where it has not become a common experience, requires extreme effort and sacrifice, and to behave such when rewards of reciprocated kindness and acceptance are not anticipated “would amount to foolishly allowing oneself to be exploited by others” (Twenge, 2007: p64).

Prosocial Development and the Incarcerated

- Adults support prosocial development in children and adolescents, guiding them toward social harmony and quality relationships in adulthood; if the lack of or opposite occurs during adolescence, antisocial behaviors develop
- Antisocial behavior development exacerbated in incarceration
 - Prison is isolating: silos where access to prosocial relationships become strained at best and relationships destroyed entirely at worst
 - "Prisonization"

Re-entering the Community - Further Isolation

- Absence of support systems
- Dealing with criminal past and associated stigmatization from family members and community
- Barriers to employment
- Fear of losing their children because of prior drug use and criminal record
- Barriers to low-income housing opportunities for individuals with felony or drug-related convictions
- Felony records can prevent formerly incarcerated women from securing certain professional licenses

Females Offenders


- Most painful aspects of imprisonment included being separated from their children/family and losing people while they were incarcerated
- Women seek to establish “Pseudo-Families”

Added Affect of Addiction

- Substance abuse is more highly correlated with arrests and crime rates for women
- Drug-dependent women are more likely to violate their parole and end up back in prison
- Parole officers identified substance abuse as one of the formidable barriers to reentry success for women
- reentry can be isolating (stigma associated with being a criminal, which is exacerbated further with associated drug-related crimes)

Added Effect of Addiction & Trauma

- A family member, inmate, or male partner often introduces a woman to drugs at a young age, or women seek drug use to medicate emotional wounds from abuse or trauma
- Trauma and Sexual Assault – people/society broke their trust and/or their faith that good things can happen



To exist in these spaces of social exclusion, an individual understandably becomes insensitive to pain, or starts to lose an emotional response.

The Popular Story of Hotel Reviews

- For every negative experience, you get ten negative reviews
- A positive experience will get one or even no reviews
- How do we work against this? Ten positive experiences to every one negative!
 - Exposure. Exposure. Exposure.
 - Model prosocial behaviors, and acquaint them with healthy relationships and outlets
 - And... don't give up!

How are we doing?



How Can We Support reentry Success?

Across the literature and studies reveal some programs have been proven to empower incarcerated women, reduce recidivism, and support successful reintegration into the community.

Underlying themes accredited to their success included:

- Establishing a sense of family
- Providing a place for women to process incredible emotional stress where they know they are not judged or shamed for their emotions, thoughts, and challenges
- Having people who believe in them
- Having others to support - to feel like they are making a difference in someone's life

It Only Takes One...

- One study revealed married people are more likely than single people to exhibit prosocial behaviors*

One stable relationship can promote prosocial acts!

*Harano et al., 1975, Harrington & McBride, 1970 and Richman, 1985, as cited in Twenge, 2007, p. 56₁₅
For a full overview of research and cited resources, [review my full "Letter to a Newly-Trained Mentor"](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Mx-nutVNDnf4c9QbmmyGAHyiTMBKdqDv)
(<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Mx-nutVNDnf4c9QbmmyGAHyiTMBKdqDv>)

How Can We Support reentry Success? Continued...

- Connecting with your mentee before release, when it's possible
 - As they are isolated and re-developing relationships/pseudo-family
 - Begin building trust, so connecting for social gatherings/experiences is more of a possibility as soon as they get out

Adult Prosocial Development

- Exposure to positive and healthy relationships
 - At the core of this program: you are wonderful – be authentic; be yourself.
 - Introduce your mentee to other compassionate, established, healthy individuals and experiences in the community
- Teaching compassion: for both self and others!
 - Yoga
 - Meditation
 - Modeling and exposure

The Demand

- We are called to apply superhuman patience and perseverance with our mentees
 - Mentees are overcoming nearly impossible odds
 - BUILDING TRUST TAKES TIME
 - We will probably face situations where we have no clue what to say/do/or how to respond

You are NOT in this alone.
And we have some tools for you...



Mercy Connections Mission

Mercy Connections is an educational values-driven non-profit organization living the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy with an enduring concern for women. By compassionately nurturing self-sufficiency through education, mentoring, entrepreneurship and community, people are empowered to make significant life changes.

<https://mercyconnections.org/about-us/>

Mercy Connections

- Make Mercy Connections Yours & Your Mentee's Pseudo-Family
 - Mercy Connections Spirit & Mission
 - Mercy Connections Programming
 - The People of Mercy Connection
- Kelley & Jo

Each Other!

- Support Groups
 - In-person Group
 - Facebook Group



Facebook interface showing the "Mercy Connections Justice & Mentoring: Mentor Support Corner" group page. The browser address bar displays the URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mercyconnectionsmentorsupport/>.

The group name is "Mercy Connections Justice & Mentoring: Mentor Support Corner", marked as a "Closed Group". The group cover photo features the "mercy connections" logo with the text "Justice & Mentoring Programs".

The left sidebar includes navigation links: About, Discussion (selected), Members, Events, Photos, and Manage Group. A search bar for the group is also present.

The main content area shows options to "Write Post", "Add Photo/Video", "Live Video", and "More". Below these are input fields for "Write something..." and buttons for "Photo/Video", "Poll", "Feeling/Activ...", and "More".

On the right, the "ADD MEMBERS" section includes a search bar and a list of "MEMBERS" (23 Members). Below this is a "SUGGESTED MEMBERS" section with a "Hide" link.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/mercyconnectionsmentorsupport/>

Tech Tools

- New Mentor Activities Resources
 - Facebook Events
 - Prosocial Calendar
 - Shared "Living Document" of Potential Activities

[Mentor Tools/Resources with Links...](#)

(https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Is_IrWL4uqOCUHwUqx_SaBg_HaaH-qrL)



The Win

- Mentor-Mentee relationships are mutually beneficial
- Potential for incredible personal growth
- We could change a person's life (ours, our mentee's, our mentee's children/families)

Questions? Hugs? Supportive High Fives?



Please [review my full "Letter to a Newly-Trained Mentor"](#) for a complete overview of presentation research and sources...