



Sharing *My Guide Inside* in Chicago's Juvenile Temporary Detention Center

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I developed and facilitated a course called '*Art and Expression from the Inside-Out*' to stimulate detained juveniles' insights into *the essence of self*. The class met one hour for each of 10 weeks. Certificates of Completion were awarded during the last session.

The Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, JTDC, staff members report many of the youth present their Certificate-of-Completion to the judge to show what they have accomplished during their time at the JTDC.

Class Structure:

The first 30 minutes of the workshop, I facilitate a Restorative Justice 'Check-in'. Each participant shares a 'high' and a 'low' from their week. They can also choose to share an insight from the week before on any topic that was discussed earlier. The second half of the hour is dedicated to an art project.

Each week through conversations and art projects I help the youth uncover their *innate health* by sharing the *understanding* of how we function psychologically as human beings through our *Thoughts*. I help the youth get out of their heads and open their mind to see and hear something new that just might change their course in life.

Through discussion and artmaking, participants learn to ignore their thoughts as having any special meaning. This is one of

the key components to making healthier decisions and having a healthier life. The teachable moments come through the participant's sharing and personal insights from what they understand or from what they have experienced in the moment in each session. Once an 'aha' moment happens it is theirs forever.

The goal of enhancing a participants' natural ability to be well-grounded, resilient, and 'feel good' is something as a facilitator I strive to do during each 10-week course.

To assist me with the teachable moments throughout the course, I use the 2016 '*My Guide Inside-Knowing Myself and Understanding My World, Book III & Book II*'. I always start the first class by saying:

"Your 'Guide Inside' is your personal blueprint for life. How you see and understand the world is key. You are not the situation or the circumstances that brought you to the JTDC."

Also, during the first session, I read and discuss Mavis L. Karn's '*The Secret*'. These resources are beautiful starting places for the youth.

The sections from MGI that I refer to often, and that are my favorites are:

- The first discussion on each chapter page
- Let's Revisit What You Know!
- Handy Reminders

- The Pre-Assessment and the Post Assessment (when I can)
*The assessments can be challenging to complete because the turnover of participants is high during the 10-weeks at the JTDC.
- Lesson Reminders

Each section of the book has brought deeper listening between the participants, more relaxed and open sharing, and a more profound understanding of each Universal Principle over time.

The stories I find are the most successful in generating insightful discussions are:

- Lee's story and Lenny's Story
- Changing Your Mind
- Koa's Story
- Kailani's Story
- Lilianna's Story

The youth relate well to the big brother and overcoming your thinking while surfing in Kao's Story; over-coming negative thinking, and self-doubt in Lee's Story, and experiencing an overbearing boss in Kailani's Story etc. There is always a lot to unpack in each story, and they hold the youth's attention well.

The exercises I love using from MGI are:

- Red Light, Yellow Light, and Green Light
- Appreciating Separate Realities
- Mental Health: Your State of Well-Being
- Come on Along!
- The wonderful poems and writings throughout MGI Books I, II & III

Fond Memories from using MGI:

I have written and shared several lovely experiences with using MGI over the years. My best moments have been:

- Brown Paint
- Separate Realities discussion with (3) \$100 dollar bills, a sacred eagle feather,

and a homemade classic Pennington Teddy Bear that my mother made years ago.

- A Red Light, Yellow Light, and Green Light listening exercise where each youth had to repeat the personal story of their partner when he/she used all three moments to affect a better outcome in a situation. I am usually blown away by their storytelling and insight.

I especially like to emphasize that my work with youth using art and 'My Guide Inside' is helping juveniles in important ways to:

- Understand that their own thinking is creating their own reality and helps them feel less stuck and less pressure.
- Be able to see their way out of whatever circumstances they are in.
- See that they can change their thinking and change their outcomes.
- See that they can learn (to choose) to listen and trust their inner wisdom and innate state-of-wellbeing. And when they do that wisdom will lead them to more balanced decisions.
- See that they can learn to recognize when their thinking is not serving them and is instead leading them to a state of anxiety, stress, depression, violence and or poor decision making.

Post Note: I worked with MGI III from 2019-2023. In that time, I conducted 3 to 4 groups per year. For each session there were approximately nine youth in each class for a total of 108 in five years. An estimated seventy-five adults supervising the youth sometimes participated in the sessions. I am taking a break in 2024. I am happy to answer questions and connect.

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