

# Y.E.T. Youth Education Team

The following pages are an example of some of the handouts that are provided to the parents and participating students in the YET program. \*

- I. Poem - I WENT TO A PARTY, MOM
- II. Letter from Prisoner in Canon City Penitentiary
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I WENT TO A PARTY, MOM. .

\* Please read all the way to the bottom and sign your name \*

I went to a party,  
And remembered what you said.  
You told me not to drink, Mom  
So I had a sprite instead.

I felt proud of myself,  
The way you said I would,  
That I didn't drink and drive,  
Though some friends said I should.

I made a healthy choice,  
And your advice to me was right,  
The party finally ended,  
And the kids drove out of sight.

I got into my car,  
Sure to get home in one piece,  
I never knew what was coming, Mom  
Something I expected least.

Now I'm lying on the pavement,  
And I hear the policeman say,  
The kid that caused this wreck was drunk, Mom,  
his voice seems far away.

My own blood's all around me,  
As I try hard not to cry.  
I can hear the paramedic say,  
This girl is going to die.

I'm sure the guy had no idea,  
While he was flying high,  
Because he chose to drink and drive,  
Now I would have to die.

So why do people do it, Mom  
Knowing that it ruins lives?  
And now the pain is cutting me,  
Like a hundred stabbing knives.

Tell sister not to be afraid, Mom  
Tell daddy to be brave,  
And when I go to heaven,  
"Daddy's Girl" is on my grave.

Someone should have taught him,  
That it's wrong to drink and drive.  
Maybe if his parents had,  
I'd still be alive.

My breath is getting shorter, Mom  
I'm getting really scared.  
These are my final moments,  
And I'm so unprepared.

I wish that you could hold me Mom,  
As I lie here and die.  
I wish that I could say, "I love you, Mom!"  
So I love you and good-bye.

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John,

As I was thinking of stories from other inmates of the impossible situations this prison life puts you in, I thought about writing of my own recent situation that you can pass on to the kids and their parents.

As you know, another inmate recent came at me with a knife and stabbed me. He and I then struggled. I got the knife and stuck him. He died and I received a conviction for involuntary manslaughter that resulted in me getting more time. I realize that is a harsh reality and that it paints a vivid picture. But think of this for a moment: you're in prison. Whether you want to participate or not, a man stabs you. You're lucky enough to get the knife from him, but what do you do? If you walk away he's just going to get another knife and come at you again. Do you go to the guards? They can't help you. If you "snitch" you got the entire facility full of guys wanting to stick you. So what do you do: It is a harsh reality. But you have to stop this individual from walking away. I'm not saying it's right, nor am I trying to sound innocent of like I am a victim. All I am trying to point out is that the reality of how quickly things can erupt in our environment. In less than thirty seconds a man was dead, behind what began as just a verbal disagreement. I got lucky. It could have just as easily been me. I was stabbed first. Although not everyone can understand the decision I made, how do they know they wouldn't make the same one? When someone is stabbing you, you don't have time to think and weigh out options. You simply react. I don't think anybody can "predict" how they would react. I'm not saying I was right or wrong. All I am saying is, in here, you don't get to pick and choose how you want a situation to unfold. You only get to be in it sometime. It's like I told the Judge "Your Honor, all I can say is this ... sometimes in here, an individual is put in a situation whether he wants to be in it or not. And in these situations the outcome is NEVER predictable."

David

## PRISON IS A PLACE

Prison is a place where the first prisoner you see looks like an All-American college boy and you are surprised. Later, you are disgusted because people on the outside still have the same prejudices about prisoners that you used to have.

Prison is a place where you write letters and cannot think of anything to say. Where you gradually write fewer and fewer letters and finally stop writing altogether.

Prison is a place where you find gray hairs in your head, or where you find your hair starting to disappear. It is a place where you get false teeth, stronger glasses and aches and pains you never felt before. It is a place where you grow old and worry about it.

Prison is a place where you hate with clenched teeth, where you want to beat, kick and scratch and you wonder if the psychologists know what they are talking about when they say you actually hate yourself. Prison is a place where you learn that nobody needs you, that the outside world goes on without you.

Prison is a place where you can go for years without feeling the touch of a human hand, where you can go for years without hearing a kind word. It is a place where your friendships are shallow and you know it.

Prison is a place where you hear about a friend's divorce, and you didn't know he was married. It is a place where you hear about your neighbor's kid graduating from school and didn't even know they had started yet.

Prison is a place where you feel sorry for yourself. Then you get disgusted with yourself for feeling sorry for yourself; then you get mad for feeling disgusted and then try to mentally change the subject.

Prison is a place where you lose your respect for the law because you see it raw and naked, twisted and bent, and ignored and blown out of proportion to suit the people who enforce it.

Prison is a place where you are smarter than the parole board because you know which guys will go straight and which ones will not. You are wrong just as often as the board members are, but you never admit it and neither do they.

Prison is a place where you wait for a promised visit. When it does not come, you worry about a car accident. When you find out the reason your visitors did not come, you are glad because it was not serious...and disappointed because such a little thing could keep them from coming to see you.

Prison is a place where you forget the sound of a baby's cry. You forget the sound of a dog's bark or even the sound of the dial tone from the telephone.

Prison is a place where a letter from home or from a lawyer can be like a telegram from the War Department. When you see it lying on your bed, you are afraid to open it. But you do anyway and usually end up disappointed or angry.

Prison is a place where you see men you do not admire and wonder if you are like them. It is a place where you strive to remain civilized but where you lose ground and know it.

Prison is a place where, if you are married, you watch your marriage die. It is a place where you learn that absence does not make the heart grow fonder, and you stop blaming your wife for wanting to live with a real man instead of a fading memory.

Prison is a place where you go to bed before you are tired, where you pull the blankets over your head when you are not cold. It is a place where you escape...by reading, by playing cards, or by going mad.

Prison is a place where you fool yourself; where you promise yourself you will live a better life when you leave. Sometimes you do but more often do not.

Prison is a place where you get out someday. Then, you wonder how everyone else can be so calm when you are excited. Your bus driver does twenty five miles an hour, and you want to tell him to slow down, but don't because you now it is foolish.

Colorado State Penitentiary  
Posted Operational Rules

CELLS:

- A. Cells must be kept clean, sanitary, and orderly at all times. All beds will be made unless occupied.
- B. Homemade furniture, alterations to cell fixtures or unauthorized changes to fixtures are not allowed.
- C. Cell doors, lights, sprinkler heads, tray slot and window must not be covered and must be free from obstruction. Shelf and table liners are not allowed.
- D. Nothing, including personal pictures, is allowed on the walls or door of any cells. Window ledge must be kept clear.
- E. Laundry must not be done in any cell or shower and clothesline are prohibited.
- F. Wash basin drains shall not be covered to allow filling the wash basins.
- G. Televisions must utilize external headphones.
- H. Yelling, loud talking, whistling and kicking or hitting cell doors is prohibited.
- I. Food received from the food cart, with the exception of fresh (uncut) fruit must be eaten immediately and may not be stored. Special diets, medically approved, are allowed to be stored until eaten. (One Special Diet maximum) .
- J. All food trays and eating utensils must be returned after each meal.
- K. Inmates are not allowed to enter another inmate's cell.
- L. Electrical outlets shall be used only for their intended purposes.
- M. No "weather stripping" of any type is to be placed around the door edges.
- N. Razors (electric) – inmates are responsible to clean residue from the razor head with the furnished brush and return the razor to staff in the same condition in which they received it. Staff shall sanitize razors between each use.

## The Glass Barrier

Many of you parents and students may enjoy a very close relationship. Some of you may be having difficulty – may be distant and separate with a growing barrier between you. I'm going to ask you to take three seconds and go through a little exercise. I promise it won't hurt. Will parents and children please turn toward one another and look directly into each other's eyes for a few seconds?

Now, image looking into those same eyes through a very thick, strong, invisible barrier – the cold glass wall that separates inmates from loved ones in our prison facilities. Imagine being intensely scrutinized, identified, questioned, and herded into an elevator with other visitors. Imagine how humiliating and demeaning that scrutiny makes you feel. Image seeing your loved one, your child in prison-issue jumpsuit of orange, blue or green being led towards you on the other side of the glass wall. Imagine a colorless young face. Dark-circled eyes, lined with fear and worry and uncertainty. Perhaps filled with tears. Imagine seeing and feeling his or her pain-add to it all of your own. And all of this shared through that thick glass barrier wall, with words haltingly shared through a telephone, which continually clicks and buzzes as it records difficult and limited conversation. You can't touch. You can't connect. You can't confront. And when you leave, after you tearfully blow a kiss through the glass and begin your long, lonely drive home, your pain, isolation and helplessness seem worsened for the time shared through the glass. Every part of you has been stirred up-ripped apart again. The word is "misery" – utterly complete and total.

That glass wall is what seemed most inhuman, most painful to me when I visited my son in jail, driving 6 hours to spend 20 minutes with him once a week. Most inhuman and cruel was the enforced separation of parent and child. He was my son – but there, he was not –he was confessed felon, an inmate in a county facility with a 4 to 8 year state prison sentence hanging over his head. He not only confessed to using cocaine – but worse to my horrified senses, he had actually "sold" this poison to others – for profit.

It was unbelievable. My honor student in his high school. My student who graduated with honors at his university. This bright, appealing, popular child of mine-into who, I had poured my life – to keep him healthy and whole- wanting to see him grow and develop and live a happy and productive life. He – deliberately ingesting poisonous chemicals into his body – to destroy his life. And perhaps even worse, he added to the destruction of others.

That's clearly what drugs and alcohol do – they blow apart the lives of people – and their families – everyone and everything they ever cared about – and their futures – and everyone they share their poison with. Suddenly nothing that they valued matters – only the drug matters.

Anger. Rage. Fear. Uncertainty. Sickness. Sleeplessness. Helplessness. And Love. All felt at the same time. An unending emotional roller-coasters ride.

How to get the attention of parents and young people before it's too late? Before lives are painfully fractured and shattered?

There is help. There are many people who care and who will help you. When this community, this school, this police department offer to help you - it is a sincere offer. Take advantage of it and accept the help. Get involved in one another's lives. Get involved in our school. Your community.

My son was given the most wonderful, the most generous of helps from this police chief and DARE officers. He accepted the offer of help and is now a real story of SUCCESS. This department offered him the opportunity to restore his sense of self-worth-to redeem himself to feel human and contributing and valuable again-to give back to a community – and to begin to face his demons and rebuild his life.

Please understand that this city is richly prepared to assist each and every family. You *absolutely are not alone*. All you have to do is to contact us. Young people matter. Parents matter. We all matter. And we can resolve so very much together. Please reach out to us as we reach out to you.

## FROM THE INSIDE. OUT: "A DAY IN THE LIFE ..."

Inmate, Male, Age 22 Colorado State Penitentiary,  
Canon City, Colorado  
Criminal History Began at Age 12  
Early Years In & Out of Juvenile Halls;  
Lookout Mountain, State Detention Facility;  
Jefferson County Jail;  
Ordway, Medium Security Prison;  
Centennial, Maximum Security Prison;  
Colorado State Penitentiary, Maximum Security Prison,  
("Lock Down" 23 out of 24 Hours a Day)

The young man, whose criminal history is described above, offers you the opportunity to spend a day with him in "lock down" at the new Colorado State Penitentiary. He is serving a 16-year sentence for violent assault and began serving this sentence when he was 19 years old. As is true with many individuals with a propensity toward violent behavior, this young man who we'll call David, also has a gentle, caring, and eloquent side. Attached to this "Day in the Life" are a few of David's poems, some written while awaiting sentencing in Jefferson County Jail, and the others while serving his sentence in the other above-listed facilities. In this letter Dave wants to reach you, to try to help you understand what it's like to lose all control of your life, to have every hour of your day controlled. This letter to you from David is his own very personal way of trying to reach you ... From the Inside.Out:

6:45 a.m.

Woke up to the sounds of squeaking wheels from the food carts being pushed past my door, along the tier, to set up for breakfast. The sound is seemingly intensified by the numerous guards who seem to always as forget to put their keys in their pockets. Rather, they allow them to dangle freely and thus the noise that awakens me each day is probably five times that of an alarm.

6:46 a.m.

My tray slot in the door of my cell opens and my food is handed to me. This morning's breakfast is two slices of French toast, a cup of juice, a cup of coffee, a small carton of milk, two small sugar packs, two syrup packs, a handful of cheerios, and a plastic fork and spoon.

I'm not allowed a stereo, so I can't turn on music so I decide to watch what's left of "Sportscenter" on ESPN while I eat.

7:00 a.m.

"Sportscenter" is going off and here comes the noise again because the guards are coming back to pickup our food trays. I hand the guard my tray and he counts two cups, two plastic utensils, and two trays. If any of these are gone, the guards will come in my cell and tear up whatever property I have, looking for whatever's missing.

7:10 a.m.

Guards and food carts leave. On Friday, Saturday, and Monday, shower time is in the a.m. Today is Tuesday and on Tuesday and Wednesday, shower time is p.m.. Since today is a p.m. shower day, I think I'll go back to sleep since nothing on TV is worth watching and I have nothing else to do.

10:50 a.m.

I'm awakened by the Intercom yelling "Ten minute to count!" which is a daily thing also. Guards must count all inmates at 11:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m. 9:30 p.m., 2:00 a.m., and 6:00 a.m.. So I get up and go to my sink to wash up.

11:00 a.m.

Guards count. When they leave I try to find something interesting on TV, but no luck.

11:30 a.m.

After sitting for half an hour, I find a stock care race on TV. I'm a race fan so that interest me.

11:35 a.m.

Lunch, and all the noise, is served in the same manner as breakfast. Lunch is a cup of juice, fries, two cookies, Sloppy Joes, and two plastic utensils. I only eat the fries and drink the juice because the Sloppy Joes are too greasy and the cookies could be used for hockey pucks.

12:00 noon

Noise again to pick up trays. Guards count to make sure all lunch items are turned in again.

12:05 p.m.

I'm tired of watching TV so I work out for an hour.

1:00 p.m.

Once again I wash up from the sweat of working out.

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Basically just sit around and do nothing because there's nothing to do. My room consists of a bed, desk, four shelves, a stool, a toilet, and a sink. My property is limited to what I can fit in a box two feet square and is only papers, letters, photos, and a deck of cards.

2:00 p.m.

Watch "Max-Out" on ESPN because it plays music for half an hour.

2:20 p.m.

Time for my shower. Two guards handcuff me through my door and escort me to the shower stall. I get locked in and my cuffs are removed.

2:35 p.m.

Back in my cell after being cuffed in the shower and escorted back to my cell.

2:35 – 5:00 p.m.

Basically do nothing but channel click and sit around.

5:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Dinner and noise again. I eat and guards pick up trays and complete the utensil count.

5:30 – 6:00 p.m.

I talk to my neighbor through the crack in my door.

6:00 p.m.

Basketball game on TNT. We don't pick up TNT but there's a way to modify the TV to receive it, but I only can get a picture and no sound on TNT, so I watch the game until 9:30 p.m..

9:30 p.m.

I go to sleep because there's nothing else to do.

Tomorrow: same story! Please. Reread this letter. Think hard about the choices you are making. I don't want you to be the neighbor I whisper to through the crack in my cell door.