

It's time to choose to change

by Thomas Miller-T
Wynne Unit



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I am 57 years old and have been in prison 23 of those years. I recently received a three year set-off from the parole board. Twenty of my past 23 years were spent on Texas Death Row, where I was prepared for death by execution 11 times.

Can you imagine someone preparing themselves and their family for their own death 11 times? Well, we sincerely hope not, and we hope that you never, ever have to.

I am presently taking Cognitive Intervention from Windham School District. Through this program, we are being offered a choice, an opportunity to decide between two or more options in our life. One option could be to change our behavior, improve our grades and live our lives in a way which respects and is respectful of the whole human race. Another option is to continue our current behavior and end up in prison, on death row or an early death through violence or some kind of sexually transmitted disease.

Self-hatred and self-destructive behavior in our lives will lead us into the worse possible experiences we can imagine. Each of us has a choice. We can start practicing a behavior pattern that makes our teachers and mentors proud, that provides a positive example for friends and family, and makes something positive out of our lives. Or we can continue trying to be the class clown, the tuff boy or girl, the uninvolved problem child and then wind up in a place and in a position like many of us in prison have, where there is little choice available, where someone else makes our choices for us.

Our choices have limited our freedom so that we can't even choose when we will go home, when we'll use the rest room, when we'll shower or eat, or what we'll eat. The list goes on.

There are three things we must learn to do and do well if we wish to be successful in life and in freedom.

- 1) Learn to think before we act.
- 2) Learn how to solve problems

effectively.

- 3) Learn how to take conscious control of our lives.

First of all, we must realize that each and every single one of us is a special individual, and that each individual has his or her own unique character. Each character has freedom to make personal acts, which then determine their destiny. One negative act can determine whether you live or die, whether you go to prison for the rest of your life or whether you are addicted to drugs or alcohol. That is why every choice or alternative which we have to make is critical to our well-being and success.

Before we act, we must ask ourselves: Is this a positive act? Will it have positive consequences?

We must recognize that positive acts result in positive results, and positive results along with a consistent practice of positive acts come from positive thoughts. Positive thoughts encourage us to look up in life. Uphill climbs are often a struggle, but uphill thoughts lead us uphill — to stand on higher ground. We start by thinking clearly before acting and making sure our thoughts are in alignment with that which is good and positive.

So how do we solve our problems effectively?

The first step is to recognize a problem exists in our behavior. If we fail to recognize we are the ones that have the problem, then we spend our energy and time focusing outward, when change must come from within. We cannot change much of the world around us, but we can always change the world within.

You solve the problems by learning how to take conscious control of your life. This means once you recognize you are the class clown, making it a conscious understanding of yourself, you begin to shape the thoughts and acts that change that behavior. The following is a list of how you develop yourself over time to change behavior:

- a) exercise self-control

- b) this develops self-discipline
- c) self-discipline helps us believe in ourselves

d) as we believe in ourselves, we learn to love ourselves

e) this increases our desire to improve ourselves

f) and then we learn how to control and determine our destiny by thinking before we act

Clothes do not make you a better person, a good person. Money does not make you a better person, a good person. Attention does not make you a better person, a good person. Drugs do not make you a better person, a good person. Letting someone with negative thoughts and negative behavior think for you does not make you a better person.

What makes you a better person? Replacing self-destructive thoughts with self-developing thoughts. Replacing self-hating thoughts with self-lovin thoughts. Replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts.

Believe in yourself and in the fact that acts unfolding from your positive thoughts can and will lead to your success in life.

Human beings make clothes, money, drugs, positive or negative actions. Human beings do not make you. God made you, and it is only through your God-given ability to make your choices and alternatives positive that you actually grow and evolve as a human being.

Be patient with yourself, love yourself, believe in yourself and take complete responsibility for your own thoughts and actions. Don't allow someone else to determine what you think and how you act — especially when that someone is a negative thinker or actor who practices negative behaviors. Don't be children all your life; be men and women who lead by example.

Maintain uphill thoughts and keep climbing.