

Recommendations for Correctional Educators

by Ned Rollo

- To best survive and prosper, assume the mind-set of a cultural anthropologist: be a professional observer -- look, listen and learn.
- As a teacher, recidivism is NOT your measure of success -- long-term human development is your goal, so do not base your self-worth or job satisfaction on "classroom conversions."
- Instead, acknowledge your true function as a "seed planter" and work within your short and long-term limits and capabilities.
- Adopt the goal of "five years of arrest-free living."
- Build constructive, trust-based relationships but -- maintain appropriate limits & boundaries -- expect to make mistakes.
- Reflect the values and behavior (choices and responsibility) you espouse -- consistency and continuity are essential.
- Expect resistance and frustration from the facility and staff. Remember that, in fact, "knowledge is power" and the function of inmate "empowerment" is often threatening to prison management.
- Stand up for what is reasonable and right: education and treatment directly enhance prison management and public safety. Therefore, you are NOT the ugly step-child of security.
- Strive to introduce fresh energy and beauty because you may well be the ONLY source of "life" -- you must constantly recharge!
- Accept the fact that your students need different things at different times; seek to deliver "the right intervention at the right time."
- You are BOTH teacher and counselor -- the functions merge in correctional education. LEARN GRIEF COUNSELING!
- Acknowledge that you are under great stress -- and that it is cumulative! Thus you must take good care of yourself and at the first sign of trouble, GET HELP!
- Strive to stimulate hope and the vision of a better world. Perceive your potential influence as a lighthouse in a storm.
- Encourage and acknowledge positive self-change: increase your awareness of, sensitivity to and ability to respond to "the signs."
- Constantly reexamine and strive to purify your motives: this is your foundation! Spend time on psychosocial "house cleaning."
- Be honest and honorable: if you do, you will be a good teacher and your efforts will be rewarded with constructive responses.
- Push yourself beyond your creative limits: do what you cannot do! The first time you must screw it up -- so always try a new initiative three times before you critically assess it!
- LEARN and GROW: expand your skills relative to adult parenting, adult education, grief counseling, and the dynamics of PTSD.
- This job demands a strong heart: you will survive and prosper ONLY by way of spiritual commitment and emotional well being -- nothing else will work and it requires constant attention.
- Maintain ABSOLUTE FAITH in the law of cause and effect -- an unshakable belief that bread cast upon the water MUST come back!
- And, independent of the pathology of the punishment industry, take pride and satisfaction in what you do: you are a teacher and there is no higher calling!!

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