

FS News: Spring Forward Edition

Happy Spring!

And welcome new subscribers! More than 100 people signed up this month.

The poor robin keeps getting snow on it's tail, but there's no stopping the warmer temps from bringing winter to an end.

Thank you, donors for making sure Fair Shake can continue...including a big shout out to the amazing envelope donors! I was down to the last 5 donated envelopes when a cascade of new ones fell from the post office into the Fair Shake mail room. Wanna hear something crazy? I have not purchased stamps to send Fair Shake information to folks around the country in 10 months! That's about 1000 letters that you donors have carried to people looking for reentry support. One year ago, I would not have believed this could be possible. I love it when my beliefs are shattered and I can get new ones!

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

RELIEF TO INCARCERATED STUDENT BORROWERS:

"Fresh Start," allows federal loan borrowers in default to get out of default status to become eligible to borrow money and, if eligible, participate in the Pell program.

How to request a "fresh start" via mail: The Education Department suggests including your name, social security number, date of birth, and the following: "I would like to use Fresh Start to bring my loans back into good standing." The National Consumer Law Center also advises incarcerated borrowers to note that they are incarcerated in their communication with the Education Department since the department doesn't have that information on file.

FRESH START

Federal Student Aid – FRESH START

P.O. Box 5609

Greenville, TX 75403

<https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/default-fresh-start> Pell

Fresh Start applies to these loans: * Federal Family Education Loans (FFEL) - which include Federal Stafford, Federal Consolidation, and Federal PLUS loans. * Direct Loans - which includes Federal Stafford, Consolidation and PLUS loans that are offered through the William D. Ford Direct Loan Program. This includes TEACH Grants that have been converted to Direct Unsubsidized Loans. * Federal Perkins Loans - When placed in default, Perkins Loans may remain with the school or are assigned to the Department for collection. * Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), Academic Competitiveness Grants, National SMART Grants, and TEACH Grants. In certain instances, you may have to repay part of a Federal grant awarded to you.

Still no word from the Supreme Court about the Student Debt Relief program....

PELL UPDATE [Guidance issued 12/14/2022]

I have only a little news today: The federal aid can be used only at prisons that have Pell-eligible college programs. Only 2% of US prisoners (state and federal) will be able to participate this fall. (about 26,000 people; many of whom were involved in the pilot program) and the opportunities will vary widely by state.

An incarcerated individual who is enrolled in a correspondence course could be eligible for a Pell Grant, as long as the standards for student, program, and institutional eligibility are met. A postsecondary institution may offer Prison Education Programs in states other than where its main campus is located if the prison education program is offered through correspondence courses. Classes offered to confined or incarcerated individuals through an eligible PEP may be offered in any format.

Latest Pell update: <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2023-03-29/eligibility-confined-or-incarcerated-individuals-receive-pell-grants>

** A few encouraging words about correspondence courses, anyway. I'll let you know when I hear more!

APOLOGY

In the last newsletter I shared the latest BJS recidivism rate and several readers shared their concerns about that number. I want to first apologize for upsetting people. I did not want anyone to take this personally. I saw that awful number (82%, 10 years after release) not as a reflection of people's abilities or determination, but as proof that institutional efforts are thwarting - and not improving - reentry success.

When I started thinking about Fair Shake in 2003, I was shocked that the recidivism rate at that time was around 63% (3 years after release). I used my outrage to create a huge reentry library that could be accessed by everyone for free. I was hoping that by sharing that shameful number, that we might be able to imagine...and brainstorm and wonder and think together about how we can improve reentry possibilities despite the best efforts to make sure people return. When I saw the 82% rate my heart sank. I realized we were losing the war on humanity. I certainly won't stop doing my small part...but I'm wondering if we could imagine something better together.

Last month I also shared ideas about Limiting Beliefs and Liminal Thinking. Both authors gave us ideas to ponder about seeing our own blind spots, faulty assumptions and self-sealing logic. Could it be that our culture that is suffering from faulty assumptions and limiting beliefs?

"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." - R. Buckminster Fuller

Any lemonade stand proprietor knows that you can't fail 82% of the time and make it in business. People need access to housing and other vital resources BEFORE they leave prison. Do you think this simple gesture could contribute to reentry success? The only way to improve this situation for you, and for everyone, is to build the new model together.

My apologies, again, to those whom I have upset.

SELF-AWARENESS BY Mark Manson

Meta-cognition is more casually known as "self-awareness" and is tied to all sorts of positive outcomes, from better emotional regulation to more focus and discipline and overall happiness and well-being. Self-awareness is at the root of all personal improvement. Until you're aware of your problems, there is little you can do to improve them.

We generally are good at recognizing certain thoughts and emotions within us and bad at others—i.e., we naturally recognize when we feel sad or guilty but get caught off guard by our anger or are in denial about our anxiety.

So, ask yourself: In what circumstances are you good at knowing how you are thinking and feeling? What circumstances are you bad at it?

Another way to think about it: What triggers you?

To increase meaning in our own lives, Mark Manson offers 3 questions for us to ask ourselves: What are the meaningful struggles in your life? What are the meaningless struggles in your life? What can you do to convert the meaningless struggles into meaningful ones?

<https://markmanson.net/breakthrough/014-the-mind-that-watches-itself>

5 MINUTES OF BREATHWORK TO REDUCE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

Most of us don't think about our breathing, but breathing with intention can make us feel better. Breathing is a way for both the mind and body to work together to help regulate our emotions. Just five minutes of breathwork each day could improve mood and reduce anxiety. "We're always busy doing...instead of just being," said David Spiegel, author of a recent study on breathwork. Here are 4 techniques to try:

1 cyclic sighing: Slowly inhale through the nose to expand the lungs, and inhale again to maximally fill the lungs. Then slowly and fully exhale the breath through the mouth.

2: box breathing: spend the same amount of time slowly inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling and holding, before repeating the sequence.

3. cyclic hyperventilation: which emphasizes inhalation rather than exhalation. Take one deep inhalation through the nose, exhale passively and then let the air "fall out from the mouth". Every 30 cycles, hold the breath after passive exhalation for 15 seconds.

4. mindfulness meditation; being aware of breathing and your body - as opposed to actively controlling your breathing. Mindfulness can increase positive feelings and reduce negative ones.

"Taking just five minutes each day," Spiegel said. "it seems that practicing control over your respiration is a kind of entry into one way of controlling your autonomic activity." Our autonomic system regulates key physiological processes such as heart rate, blood pressure and breathing.

When we feel anxious, we tend to breathe faster. Breathwork exercises allow us to consciously slow down our breathing. Research shows it can not only affect mood but also physiology by inducing a more relaxed physical state. These techniques seem to shift the balance away from the amped-up fight-or-flight mode toward the more relaxed rest-and-digest system.

Breathwork may also enforce our sense of agency, Spiegel said. "We like being in a situation where we can control not only what's happening in the world, but what's happening in our body, what we call interoception," he said. "So it feels good to know that you can do things that will help your body respond and feel more comfortable."

Use it where and when you need it. The beauty of breathing exercises is that you can employ them wherever you can breathe and whenever you need to de-stress and self-soothe. You can perform box breathing when walking down the street or even while swimming.

"A small, safe, easy-to-use intervention can have big effects," Spiegel said

QUOTES

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." - Alice Walker

"If you want to change the culture, you have to start discussing the undiscussable." - Dave Gray

"It's easy to confuse your beliefs with reality; that's what most people do." - Dave Gray

"Human beings have an inalienable right to reinvent themselves; when that right is pre-empted, it is called brain-washing." Germaine Greer

"All in all, though, my best day in there does not even compare to my worst day out here." - Gary Jamerson

"Any observant local knows more than any visiting scientist. Always. No exceptions." - Roger Payne

"Spring is when you feel like whistling, even with a shoe full of slush." — Doug Larson

To our successful transitions!

Ubuntu and gratitude!! ~ sue

As always, when you are released, remember to find support in your phone-gizmo:

2-1-1 Fairshake.net HelpYourselfTherapy.com FindHelp.org

Newsletters are available at FairShake.net for your family and friends to read or print.