

## Introduction

This manual was created to serve as a support for those who wish to facilitate groups based on the book *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom*. At a time when many prisons have cut back on treatment and counseling services, it is particularly important to find ways to offer help to those who want it. It is estimated that 95% of all prisoners will be released at some point. Yet, far too many men and women will return to the community without being offered opportunities to face and heal some of the core issues that led them to prison in the first place. As a sheriff noted, "incarceration is too precious an intervention opportunity to waste". Of course no one can (re)habilitate another person; each person must do that for himself or herself. But everyone needs guidance and inspiration along the way. A course based on *Houses of Healing (HOH)* can provide the support and motivation that facilitates personal insight and genuine emotional rehabilitation. The book *Houses of Healing*, in conjunction with this manual, provides the framework for a course in emotional literacy skill-building. Participants are equipped with the skills to read, understand, and manage the emotions that motivate their choices, perceptions, and feelings about themselves and others. The goal of the intervention is to increase the emotional competency of participants significantly enough to alter their life course. More than simply reducing recidivism, HOH is designed to educate in the truest sense of the word – to help uncover and reinforce the dignity, strength and wisdom that individuals innately possess.

*At its core, HOH is an emotional competency program, equipping individuals with the tools to effectively manage emotions so that they might heal and go on to live responsible, decent, and dignified lives.*

## Who Can Facilitate HOH Groups?

As you will read in the rationale of each session, Houses of Healing is based on research-informed approaches to behavior change such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness meditation. Houses of Healing courses have been integrated into hundreds of prisons and jails throughout the United States and beyond. They are designed to be led by individuals with a wide range of backgrounds such as prison psychologists and other mental health staff, substance abuse counselors, chaplains, and prison volunteers. In an increasing number of prisons, Houses of Healing programs are facilitated by prisoners themselves. While many prison administrators do not allow the incarcerated men and women under their supervision to facilitate programs, others support prisoner-led classes. These are usually conducted by older inmates who demonstrate maturity, discipline, and good judgment. Prior to teaching the course, these individuals embraced the opportunity to use their time in prison for emotional and spiritual growth and development. I know of instances in which prisoners have served as outstanding facilitators and, as naturally follows, very positive role models.

## Presenting the Material

Even if you are not drawn to facilitate the course laid out in this manual, the con-

cepts, self-regulation techniques, and reflective exercises in *Houses of Healing* lend themselves well to augmenting any existing group – whether it is geared to addiction recovery, anger management, specific offenses such as battering or sexual assault, or groups addressing the broader issues of emotional or spiritual growth. You can broaden existing groups by guiding participants through some of the relevant “Pause and Reflects” and self-reflective exercises in *Houses of Healing*. If participants have the requisite reading skills, you may find it useful to duplicate and distribute some of the handouts that are included in this manual. You can, for example, give out the directions on “how to relax” or “how to meditate”, the “Emotional Weather Report”, “Cool Thoughts and Good Moves”, or handouts that help participants reflect on anger issues.

As an alternative to the program presented in this manual, a small group of retired school teachers who facilitate Houses of Healing groups in a state prison, do the following: First, before signing up for the program, potential participants agree that if they are in the program, they will complete a reading and writing assignment for each class. They ask participants to read the *Houses of Healing* book between sessions, choose one of the first-person prisoner writings in the assigned chapter, and write a page about how their life is similar or different from the prisoner’s experience that they chose. If time allows, participants speak about other writing in the book that was particularly meaningful to them. The sessions start with a brief meditation. Then participants break into groups of four to share their writing. Participants then act out a role-play that they are encouraged to work on during the week. The facilitators pay close attention to the time allotted for each activity as they have just one hour to meet.

There are, undoubtedly, as many ways to facilitate a course based on the book *Houses of Healing* as there are people to facilitate it. Use the material in whatever way suits you best. This facilitator’s manual provides an approach to conducting a 13-session course that has empowered thousands of incarcerated men and women to heal emotional wounds, manage their emotions, and ultimately change their lives. This manual offers the basic structure that has been used in Houses of Healing programs for more than twenty years expanded with (1) material from *Power Source: Taking Charge of Your Life*, The Lionheart Foundation’s social-emotional curriculum for highly at-risk adolescents and (2) exercises and suggestions provided by other experienced Houses of Healing facilitators.

## **The Importance of Reading the Book**

If you have not already read through *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner’s Guide to Inner Power and Freedom*, you are encouraged to stop here and explore the book carefully before proceeding. Reading the book will help you determine whether facilitating a course based on *Houses of Healing* is right for you. If you have read it and would like to facilitate a course, then welcome to what I fully expect will be an extremely rewarding experience.

If you are an experienced facilitator, the introductory material about setting up a group may appear elementary or obvious and you have probably developed an approach that works well. Some of the “basics” are written primarily for those of you who may be facilitating a group for the first time.

## **The Medium is the Message**

My experience with this kind of work has been that the most important thing you can do to be an optimally effective facilitator is “practice what you preach.” Needless to say, if you are “practicing forgiveness,” relaxing, and meditating on a regular basis then just your presence alone is likely to create the context of respect and emotional safety that is needed to help facilitate the inner work you will be encouraging participants to do. As I stress to participants over and over, “you will not find the time to do these things (i.e. relax, meditate, pray, read inspirational literature, etc.), you have to *create* the time.” If you do not already have some type of regular routine for centering in your daily life, I strongly encourage you to create the time to befriend yourself in this way.

If you don’t take the time to nurture your inner life, it is unlikely that you will be a powerful inspiration for others to do this. This certainly doesn’t mean that you can’t still be effective, but it does mean you won’t be optimally effective. In a course of this nature, the most important thing you bring to it is yourself. Quite simply, the medium is a vital part of the message.

## **Inmate Facilitators and PALS (Peer Assistant Leaders)**

Peer assistant leaders (PALS) are inmates who have taken the Houses of Healing course, demonstrated leadership, maturity, and a seriousness of purpose, and who are then invited by the facilitator to assist in future Houses of Healing courses. PALS are individuals who have the capacity to express their role of authority with graciousness versus an authoritarian manner. If you choose to work with PALS it is important to take some time out of class to go over the class content, nurture leadership skills, and offer feedback and coaching.

## **Length of Course and Sessions**

As with most aspects of this course, the length of the sessions and duration of the program is flexible. The course that is offered in this manual is presented as 13 sessions that run approximately two hours in length. However, I recently facilitated a course with the revised manual and walked away thinking that under ideal circumstances, the class would have met two times a week for two hours per session in order to fully explore the course content. Such a schedule, though appealing in terms of the benefits participants would experience, is rarely possible given limitations on inmates’ schedules and the busy workloads of most professionals and volunteers. Therefore, if time is limited and the population you are working with is likely to have significant attrition, you may need to combine or shorten sessions, choosing exercises that best meet the needs of the participants in your group. It is better to select fewer exercises and explore these in depth than to rush through as many as possible. In order for participants to truly benefit from the material, they need time to process and reflect on the work they are doing. If most of the participants are long-term inmates, the number of sessions could easily be extended by integrating the supplemental exercises that are offered at the end of each session.

## **In Therapeutic Communities**

In many jails and prisons, classroom or group space is at a premium. It can be a chal-

lenge to identify a room to hold just one class a week. But in therapeutic communities where inmates often live together 24/7 and there is more time allotted for programming, the possibility of meeting more than once a week is much greater. Even when a classroom is not available, meeting in small groups in a common space may be possible. Although not necessary, a second class, if only for 45 minutes or an hour, can be a powerful addition to the program. Here participants can meditate together and read from the book aloud. These “Read and Relax” groups create greater momentum for the program, reinforcing the meditation, and giving participants who are reluctant or deficient readers the benefit of silently reading along while those with stronger reading skills read aloud. The responsibility for facilitating the “Read and Relax” groups can be assigned to a PAL if staff or community volunteers are not available.

### **Course Description for Prison Administration**

If prison administrators request an overview of the course content, the following description can serve this purpose. A copy of *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner’s Guide to Inner Power and Freedom* and this manual could also be offered for review. A more detailed explanation of the theory underlying the program content as well as numerous research references can be found in the rationales that serve as an introduction to each of the 13 sessions.



### **Houses of Healing: A 13-Session Program in Emotional Literacy**

The Houses of Healing Program is a course in emotional literacy skill-building based on a belief in the intrinsic dignity and worth of each person. The course is designed to teach emotional regulation techniques, foster emotional and spiritual growth, and encourage responsibility and accountability for oneself and toward others.

The courses have been highly successful in giving inmates the opportunity to participate in the healing process that is fundamental to any significant rehabilitation and lasting change.

The course draws from a variety of personal growth modalities. Various aspects of the course include:

#### **PRACTICING MEDITATION, SELF-REGULATION AND STRESS-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

Participants learn a variety of stress-management techniques such as meditation, relaxation, and visualization. These techniques, if practiced regularly, often have immense physical and psychological benefits including improved self-regulation and more positive emotional states. The course places a strong emphasis on the daily practice of meditation. As a result of these interventions, many participants report that they are less anxious and depressed, as well as less prone to violent and angry reactions. Participants also express that they experience significantly greater choice and control in how they respond to potentially stressful situations.

## **LEARNING COGNITIVE REFRAMING AND CREATING ATTITUDINAL CHANGE**

The course offers psychological models and perspectives on human nature that inspire understanding and self-knowledge. Drawing from cognitive-behavioral therapy, Houses of Healing offers participants alternative ways of perceiving people and circumstances and teaches effective social problem-solving skills that empower them to choose peaceful, non-aggressive responses to challenging situations.

## **ACKNOWLEDGING, WORKING WITH, AND HEALING FROM CHILDHOOD TRAUMA**

In order to break the cycle of abuse and violence, childhood trauma and the personal wounding that often fuel violence and criminal behavior must be addressed. To this end, participants are provided the opportunity to recognize childhood trauma, become aware of its impact in adulthood, and participate in healing unresolved emotional pain. "Inner child work" is the focus of this aspect of the program.

## **TRANSFORMING ANGER, RESENTMENT, AND UNHEALTHY GUILT AND SHAME / WORKING WITH FORGIVENESS**

The course encourages participants to learn constructive ways to transform anger, resentment, and unhealthy guilt and shame. There is a focus on forgiveness as a key to emotional well-being. The forgiveness aspect of the course focuses on both self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others. Clear distinctions are made between "healthy guilt" which demands that one be totally accountable for any and all acts that were hurtful and lacked integrity versus "unhealthy guilt" and shame which lead to a sense of unworthiness and low self-esteem.

## **ACKNOWLEDGING AND WORKING WITH GRIEF, THE SILENCED EMOTION**

Unresolved grief, which is pervasive in the prison population, often propels addiction, depression, and aggression. This aspect of the training deals with honoring loss and explores the four tasks of dealing with loss (based on the work of grief and loss specialist, Dr. William Worden).

## **NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

The course promotes a psycho-spiritual awareness and enables inmates, often for the first time, to discover a self-image different from that of the stereotype in which they are cast. It nurtures kindness, compassion, respect, wisdom, and an inner peace founded on greater faith and trust.

## **THE COURSE CONTEXT**

The course offers an accepting, respectful, and non-judgmental context in which participants are safe to learn, feel, and tell the truth. The fundamentals of cultivating dignity are woven into every aspect of every class.



## Creating Change: Core Elements of the Houses of Healing Program

- Bibliotherapy
- Mindfulness Meditation Practices
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

### Bibliotherapy

Therapy through books or “bibliotherapy” is a core aspect of The Houses of Healing Program. As noted earlier, the *Houses of Healing* book plays a central part in a Houses of Healing course. Although every prisoner coming into the system could benefit from high quality psychoeducational programming, availability is often very limited. Facilitators have told us that there are sometimes hundreds of prisoners on a waiting list to participate in HOH programs. In institutions where programs are not available, a therapeutic book such as *Houses of Healing* can be extremely valuable and, in some instances quite literally, a life-saver. It also gives individuals who might not gravitate to a prison program the opportunity to use their time constructively.

Bibliotherapy is one of the oldest vehicles for personal transformation. The written word in many forms offers the opportunity for reflection and learning. Religious texts, self-help books, and great literature provide a look into human nature and can help us create a path of growth and change. Some of the benefits that educators and psychologists have identified include bibliotherapy’s ability to normalize problems by reading of others’ similar experiences, to offer a range of solutions, and to be used adjunctively with other treatment approaches. Bibliotherapy is inexpensive, portable, and revisitable, meaning it can be reviewed repeatedly until it is understood or returned to during times of emotional distress. Because of its standardized format, it is delivered exactly as the author intended across time and setting. Bibliotherapy has been shown to impact a wide range of values and attitudes, as well as depression, anxiety, and social skills problems. (For a review, see Jack & Ronan, 2008).

Houses of Healing helped me to gain a greater perspective on myself and how I’ve contributed to my situation and my life... The book reached a place in my head that before was pretty buried and unreachable. I came away with a sense of hope for myself and my life that before I had definitely been without...I realize I’m valuable, worth saving and worth the continued effort.

*Robin, State Prison for Women, Goffstown, NH*

For the first time in my life I see progress and that has never been a fact ever before. The book is my only escape to find comfort. When I have emotions that I don’t understand, I simply pick up your book and read myself into better understanding my problems.

*Robert, State Prison, Riverhead, NY*

I have just finished reading Houses of Healing for the third time and am very excited about it. I am seeing the results of the applications used in the book...When I first read Houses of Healing, I was skeptical. However, the more I read and the more honest I became with myself, the more I realized I could change.

*Larry, AR DOC, Calico Rock, AR*

I read Houses of Healing and loved it. I was overwhelmed with a sense that you believe in us ... in our ability to change our damaged selves into thoughtful, mature, compassionate people.

*Ruth, MCI Framingham, Framingham, MA*

## **The Role of Mindfulness Skills in HOH**

The Houses of Healing program draws heavily from the field of mindfulness as a means of improving emotional and behavioral regulation. The benefits of mindfulness meditation have received considerable attention in recent years. Mindfulness meditation has been associated with lowered depression relapse (Segal et al., 2002); reductions in substance abuse (Bowen et al., 2006); reduction in anxiety and panic (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992); improvements in attention (Tang et al., 2007) and a wide range of other cognitive and emotional outcomes. The new body of work from hundreds of studies suggests that mindfulness training is an effective approach in helping people gain control of their behavior (Singh et al., 2007; Zylowaka et al., 2008; Semple et al., 2005).

### **A Definition of Mindfulness**

“paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally”

*Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4*

Mindfulness is paying attention to one’s thoughts, feelings and body sensations in the present moment, without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). For many incarcerated men and women who have challenges regulating their emotions, mindfulness meditation provides an opportunity to “step back” from the thoughts and feelings that are intertwined with hasty and impulsive reactions and relate to them in a novel way. With practice, mindfulness leads to a shift in the relationship with one’s environment by allowing for a disengagement from habitual or reactive thought patterns. By simply observing one’s thoughts and feelings, individuals respond to internal and external events more reflectively. They are less locked on autopilot and have access to a wider range of adaptive responses.

In one HOH group, a young man told us how every time he saw a particular Correctional Officer (CO), he would become triggered, flying into a rage inwardly and seething for hours. Initially, whenever he encountered the CO, he would react on autopilot, cursing under his breath with his blood pressure spiking – often becoming abusive

to fellow inmates because he didn't want to deal with the repercussions of acting out on the CO. *In his experience, there was no other possible reaction – it arose naturally.* His mood and behavior drew negative consequences from staff and drove others away to the point that no one could stand to be around him. After learning mindfulness techniques in HOH such as “Break...Breathe...And Choose”, he was able to step back from his thoughts and create distance between the trigger and his response. For the first time in his life, he was able to slow the chain of events (situational trigger, cognitions, emotions, and behavioral response) and shift his role from “thought victim” to “thought observer/participant.” The space provided by the breathing exercises helped calm him physically and enabled him to better regulate his emotions. Finally, he was able to respond to the circumstance with greater intentionality and choice.

In this manual there are different types of mindfulness skills, but all of them have the same underlying purpose – to increase participants' awareness of their emotions and thoughts and encourage an understanding of how these experiences impact their lives. And perhaps most importantly, mindfulness training creates a quiet and powerful platform from which cognitive-behavioral strategies can be launched.

### **Developing a Mindfulness Practice**

Unlike other interventions, programs that incorporate mindfulness ask facilitators to “practice what they propose”. Without having firsthand experience of a mindfulness practice, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to inspire another to develop one. Therefore all HOH facilitators are encouraged to engage in an ongoing meditation practice. This is a good idea even when not running a HOH group as the payoffs of a regular practice are well-documented in terms of mental and physical well-being. By having a practice, you become a walking ambassador for meditation – a model of the benefits of slowing down, paying attention, and showing up with more patience and compassion. Personally, I have never been inspired to meditate by people telling me to do it, only by people who were doing it themselves.

### **Cognitive-Behavior Therapy**

Cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT), an integral part of the HOH program, has been shown to be effective at treating a wide variety of behaviors and mental health problems. These interventions typically teach non-violent, problem-solving skills to manage psychosocial issues. CBT specifically addresses maladaptive thoughts and cognitive biases while providing guided opportunities to generate increasingly prosocial and viable solutions to potentially conflictual situations. It is present-focused and involves rehearsal of strategies and skills. CBT has been found to impact substance abusing behavior (see McHugh, Hearon, & Otto, 2010 for a review), as well as anxiety and depression (Hollon, Stewart, & Strunk, 2006) in adult populations. CBT also has a proven track record within the criminal justice system and has been shown to reduce anger in adult male prisoners (Vannoy & Hoyt, 2004), as well as incidents of misconduct among incarcerated men and women (Spiropoulos et al., 2005). Furthermore, CBT has been shown to be a promising intervention for some of the most difficult to treat prison populations including those with severe mental illness (Garrett & Lerman, 2007).



CBT serves as a fundamental mechanism of change in the HOH program. Whereas mindfulness practices help participants change their *relationship* to their thoughts (decentering and distancing), CBT guides them in changing their thought *content* through reducing cognitive distortions and challenging irrational beliefs. For example, in HOH, participants might be asked to examine thoughts associated with high-risk situations such as conflict with other inmates. These may include thoughts such as “Nobody talks to me that way and gets away with it” or “I might as well hit him, things can’t get any worse.” By replacing these potentially dangerous cognitions with more accurate and adaptive representations of reality, participants gain greater control over their behavior and reduce their risk involvement. Some sessions include a “Cool Thoughts/Good Move” list which participants read and discuss. Cool Thoughts are essentially coping statements that help participants reframe a situation and reinforce prosocial behavior. Good Moves provide a variety of behavior strategies that promote alternatives to risky or self-defeating situations.

## **Implementing the Houses of Healing Program**

### **Registering to Participate in the HOH Program**

There are two primary ways to set about having inmates register for the HOH course. One is to have the general population notified that a HOH course is going to be offered (this might be done by posting a flyer) and have inmates sign up on a first come, first served basis. The Houses of Healing course may also be part of the programming in a therapeutic community, mental health unit, or offender specific program where members of that program/community are expected to participate in the program.

Another approach to initiating a HOH course is to offer an introductory presentation (which includes an overview of the curriculum and the main presentation in Session 1. (This is referred to as Plan A in Session 1.) At the beginning of this presentation attendees are told that if they are interested in exploring the issues in Houses of Healing in greater depth, they will have the opportunity to sign up for the course at the end of the presentation. This approach is my strong personal preference. I encourage attendees not to register for the course unless they are willing to attend every class, do a daily assignment that will require about 30 minutes a day (this includes a daily meditation practice), and feel ready to participate in the challenging work of emotional healing. This format lends itself to a high degree of motivation and self-selection. By having attendees sign up at the end of the first session, they have a clearer sense of what they are signing up for. A course that unfolds in the most dynamic and healing way is not for those who need it, but for those who want it.

### **Letting Inmates Know About the Course**

Except for three semesters of college courses that I taught in the prison setting, the numerous other courses I have offered in ten different prisons and jails have all been on a volunteer basis. Arrangements to facilitate these courses were made through treatment staff, program staff, or a volunteer coordinator. The corrections professionals who assisted in coordinating these courses often posted flyers within the institution to let prisoners know about the upcoming course. You may wish to call it “The Houses of Healing Program”, “Anger Management/Emotional Awareness”, “Emotional Literacy”, or any title that best describes this program for you.

If you choose to let people know about the course from a flyer, the flyer/course description at the end of this section might suit your purposes or give you some ideas from which to work.

### **Number of Participants**

Over the years HOH courses have been facilitated with anywhere from 10 to 35 participants. However, groups ranging from 12 to 14 participants seem to be ideal. This gives the facilitator the opportunity to develop a deeper rapport with participants, helping to create a greater sense of connection and willingness to share within the group. The most important determinants in course size should be your comfort level and space availability.

After the introductory presentation where seats are arranged facing forward in a lecture style, I suggest moving them into a semi-circle with the facilitator(s) in front.

### **The HOH Course Format**

Each session incorporates a variety of facilitating modalities: presentation format, questions and responses, large circle sharing, dyads or small groups, as well as exercises where the focus is inward such as relaxation, meditation, and visualization exercises. Breaking up the session time into smaller units of activity helps maintain interest and focus.

### **Group Cohesion**

Healthy group process assumes safety, commitment, and confidentiality. Achieving this in prison can sometimes be more challenging than in the anonymity of the outside world. Many prisoners speak about the need to keep “the mask” on in the prison setting. Paying attention to how group members engage, especially in the early phases of a group, is a key to nurturing group cohesion. If a group member is disrespectful, it is important to address that behavior when it happens in the group or as soon as possible. Sometimes it is most skillful to address the issue within the group, and other times to speak to him/her privately.

If participants are withdrawn and disengaged, or if they are disruptive and talking to others or leaving the room, again it is most often best that it not be ignored or glossed over. Allowing disruptive behavior undermines the cohesion and productivity of the group by sending a message that the space is not being kept safe by the facilitator. From the start, observe the group as an overall entity with a personality. Is this an engaged and focused group, or one that is fragmented and unmotivated? Cohesion can be built by weaving the group together with shared issues and commonalities.

### **Materials for the Course**

**1. Houses of Healing Books:** Whether you are lending or giving the book to participants, *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner’s Guide to Inner Power and Freedom* should be available to each participant for the duration of the course. If your budget cannot provide copies of the book for participants, sometimes religious groups or charitable

organizations or individuals interested in prison rehabilitation are willing and happy to underwrite the cost. If the person offering the course has exhausted all possible resources for purchasing the books, and if The Lionheart Foundation has the resources, it will donate a start-up set of books for a course.

I have found that offering a personal copy of the book to each participant adds a special dimension to the class and gives those who read it the opportunity to contemplate and get deeper into many of the issues that cannot be dealt with in the context of the class for, among other reasons, lack of time. Having their own book gives participants the opportunity to move through the material at their own pace, and underline and re-read sections that are particularly important or relevant to them. A participant in a group shared how he was sure that reading and re-reading the chapter on anger gave him the clarity and the distance that was necessary to avoid a serious fight with his cellmate. He said that had it not been for the insights he gained by reading the anger chapter he was convinced he would have acted in a way that would have resulted in a longer prison sentence. Recently, a counselor in a youth detention center wrote that she photocopied and handed out the chapter on grief to the teens in her group. One young man reported that he re-read the chapter each night before going to sleep.

It has been my experience that most people who self-select to participate in the Houses of Healing course can read. Their reading skills may not be strong, but many people struggle to read *Houses of Healing* (written at a 5th grade level) because they find that it is the first book they have ever read that speaks to their own life experience. In courses where some participants cannot read, participants who are strong readers have volunteered to meet outside of class time to read the book and assignments aloud.

If you do give a book to each participant, encourage them to read it slowly and work with the exercises and the sections titled “Pause and Reflect” as they read each chapter.

**2. Folders:** When possible it is useful to give each participant a folder in which to keep the weekly handouts.

**3. Blackboard, whiteboard or flipchart**

**4.** If you are using the Houses of Healing Educational and Training Video Series to supplement the course, a **DVD player and TV monitor is needed.**

## **Approaches to Introducing New Concepts and Techniques**

Each class focuses on material from one or two of the chapters in *Houses of Healing*. Material from *Power Source: Taking Charge of Your Life*, Lionheart’s emotional literacy curriculum for highly at-risk adolescents, has been added to this manual as well. New concepts and issues are introduced in each class. How you choose to introduce new material will be determined by the type of teaching approach with which you are most comfortable. The approach I use to introduce new concepts is that of a presentation/interactive style. I present the relevant information, while inviting comments and questions along the way. I make it my job to know the concepts I want to communicate. Sometimes I stand and use a blackboard or flip chart to reinforce or illustrate a certain point.

As in the teaching of any new material, the presentation style requires some study

and preparation at first. There are other teaching-style options that can be very effective if you are not comfortable with a presentation-style format. One possibility is to have concepts already outlined on a blackboard or flipchart and then address them and elaborate from what is drawn or written. Share your own observations and experiences to explore concepts. Ask participants for their personal experiences that illustrate certain points. Another possibility is to read from short sections of the book and invite reactions and discussion in regard to what has been read. Ask others to read from the book— especially the personal accounts. Whatever style suits you, I recommend that you keep the concepts put forth in the course central to the group.

### **Following the Script**

As you will find, the manual provides a thorough and detailed guide for conducting an effective HOH course. Many exercises are presented with a script that can be followed verbatim or used as a general outline. For example, you will see the words “explain” followed by a recommended version of how to present a given exercise or concept. The inclusion of this script is not meant to bind you to any particular instructional approach. Instead, it is a guide meant to facilitate the delivery of the program in a flexible but consistent way. I recommend that you familiarize yourself with the intention of the exercise but then present the material in a way that is natural to your teaching style while conveying the purpose of the activity. Lessons and insights learned from years of conducting HOH groups have also been included.

### **The Houses of Healing Video Series**

In addition to this manual and the book *Houses of Healing*, the Lionheart Foundation, in collaboration with Emmy-nominated documentary filmmaker Laurel Chiten, has produced “The House of Healing Educational and Training Video Series.” In this 10-segment series, many of the key concepts in *Houses of Healing* are presented. Scenes of prisoners working with the course material add power and immediacy to the viewing experience. (Each segment is 15 to 26 minutes in length.)

This series was designed to assist corrections staff and volunteers in the delivery of the Houses of Healing program and can be used in several ways:

- as a supplement to a facilitated Houses of Healing program
- as a complement to the content of the book
- as a complement to other existing programs (substance abuse, anger management, life skills, etc.)
- as a tool for staff training
- as a course or educational resource by itself for self-motivated inmates – e.g. viewed through institutional closed circuit TV systems

As you read through the course outline from week to week, you will notice that you can either show the segment that corresponds to that class or cover the concepts that are outlined. The video series is not necessary, but it serves to offer some of the core psycho-educational material in DVD format, if desired.

Although designed to augment the course, the House of Healing Video Series can be shown independently as well. In one prison where the course is being facilitated, the

men meet twice a week. In one session the facilitator offers the course as put forth in the manual without the video. In the second meeting of the week, participants meditate together and watch the video as a review and reinforcement. The video also lends itself to prisoner-led support groups. In one jail where I have facilitated courses, the video series was offered via a closed circuit TV system that is available throughout the jail. Although not everyone in the prison participates in a House of Healing course, they have the opportunity to view the videos if they choose.

If the videos are utilized in the context of a course, rather than playing each segment from beginning to end, the facilitator can stop at different points to discuss the content. Also, rather than viewing every segment, the facilitator may choose to show selected segments.

### **The Order of the Course versus the Book**

When I wrote the first draft for *House of Healing*, I wrote the chapters in the same order in which I teach them. I realized, however, that this was not the optimal way to introduce the subjects in book form. When I teach, for instance, I do not address the issue of the impact of one's childhood experiences until the seventh class. Before dealing with this subject, which is difficult and painful for many prisoners, it is best to establish as much trust within the group as possible. It is also important to have time for exposure to perspectives and techniques (relaxation, meditation, "learning to See" and reframing) that help participants tap into their own reservoir of compassion and inner strength first.

In book form, addressing a subject like meditation first, without the support and encouragement of a facilitator, held the strong possibility that it might be too nebulous and unusual to engage readers who have never been exposed to this type of introspective technique before. Childhood experiences offer something that everyone can relate to personally – and even if they don't personally relate to the specific lives that are illustrated in the chapters, they are apt to recognize people they know on those pages. The stories in the book are likely to strike a chord from their personal history and thus create more openness to the content in subsequent chapters.

### **Self-Work**

Each week, "self-work" is distributed at the end of the session. This work is completed by participants individually and brought to the next group meeting. Self-work typically involves reading the HOH chapters which will be discussed in the next session, written exercises, and daily meditation. Self-work is reviewed at the beginning of the following session after the meditation. It is very important that self-work is reviewed *each class* to underscore its importance as a critical part of the program. Many of the exercises assigned as self-work involve the type of reflection that is not possible during the group itself. Also, assigning self-work magnifies the impact of the program by increasing the time participants are thinking about and putting to use the concepts and skills presented in the program. Simply put, the more reading, writing and meditating the participants do on their own between classes, the more powerful the program will be for them.

## **The Importance of Group Discussion**

Although each session holds a great deal of information to be presented in a short amount of time, it is very important to create the opportunity for participants to discuss what they are learning and explore how they are applying it to their daily lives. The manual provides many guided discussion questions to use as springboards. If participants are initially reluctant to engage in discussions, going around the room and asking each person to share an answer to a question can often become a catalyst for a more natural conversation. Discussions also provide an opportunity for facilitators to get a sense as to how well participants understand concepts presented in the manual, to make clarifications, and to reinforce the use of skills.

## **Final Notes...**

Some participants may not be ready to take advantage of the program in any substantive way. Many will benefit from the program as they become more socially and emotionally competent. And others will literally transform their life course, initiating a ripple effect that positively impacts their families and larger communities.

After facilitating the HOH program for more than 20 years, my enthusiasm and passion has not waned. Over these years many HOH facilitators have said that teaching the program is one of the richest and most rewarding experiences of their lives. I find it a blessing to do this work. And as I point out to the incarcerated men and women who participate in the program, the essence of this curriculum is work that every person needs to do if they want to experience “inner power and freedom”. In fact, many facilitators talk about how personally transformative this work is for them.

As you work with HOH, you will most likely find that some groups are quite easy to facilitate while others are more challenging. However, if you are prepared in terms of the course content, have good personal boundaries, practice the centering techniques that the program promotes, and extend a high degree of respect, I trust that facilitating the HOH program will be a deeply rewarding and fulfilling experience. I, for one, am grateful that you are choosing to do this work, opening new doors to a brighter and more hopeful future for incarcerated men and/or women.

I have taught this course at least 30 times now to over 400 inmates and each time I am again blessed to witness the miracle of deep transformation as inmates engage with the material and with themselves.

*The Rev. Dr. J. Penfield, Chaplain  
Adult Correctional Institution, Cranston, RI*

I really thought that I knew myself but realize now I wasn't even close. I'm not hopeless nor am I unworthy of love. I'm not destined to unhappiness and horrible thoughts of life in prison from the lack of knowing any other way. Because I am not the man I used to be.

*Dennis, State Prison, Susanville, CA*

Houses of Healing has given many, many prisoners a new way of life. It has changed people around me, and has put love into many hearts. I'm leaving these walls soon, and I know I'm not coming back because I'm not using knives and guns anymore. I'm using love and kindness to survive.

*Henry, MCI Concord, Concord, MA*

All page references in this manual refer to corresponding pages in the book *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom*. The full references from this introduction and from the rationales at the beginning of each session can be found at the end of this manual.