

# **Role-Play Appendix**

Within this appendix, you'll find additional role-plays organized by category, as well as improvisational exercises that give a background story, but without the script. Some are geared towards youth in the community, others towards youth who have been incarcerated, and some towards youth are currently in detention or residential settings. Note that some of the role-plays use gendered names and pronouns (he/she), while others use they/them pronouns and have gender-neutral names. All can be changed and adapted for your population.

## **Descriptions of Role-Plays by Category**

### ***Youth in the Community***

1. **Jaime and José:** a child and their father, José, have an argument about homework.
2. **Mr. Cooke and Jon:** a teacher and student, Jon, have an argument about phone use during class.
3. **Justice:** a youth deciding whether or not to go to a party
4. **Rian and Cassie:** two youth who have a discussion about friendship
5. **Tyrone and Jasmine:** two young people at a party; involves substance use and consent
6. **Regan:** a youth asking a teacher for help

### ***Youth on Probation or Receiving Community-Based Services***

1. **Johnny:** a youth coming out of a drug treatment program
2. **Chris and Javier:** a youth reaches out to his mentor
3. **Frank and Billy:** two youth talking about going to a party
4. **Cindy:** a young person avoiding peer pressure from two old friends
5. **Alex:** a young person who resists getting in a stolen care
6. **Devon:** an improv exercise; a youth recently released from detention who is having issues in school
7. **Jacob:** an improv exercise; a youth recently released from placement who is tempted to go to a party

### ***Youth Currently in Detention or Residential***

1. **Jasheek and Sharice:** two youth tempted to fight another youth
2. **Crystal:** a youth working through some family issues
3. **Travis:** a youth going through a hard time and isolating himself who receives support from a peer
4. **Lavon:** a youth struggling to finish high school
5. **Sam:** a youth who becomes triggered when asked about family
6. **Angel:** a youth in court for the first time

## **Jaime and José**

**Background:** *Jaime and their dad, José live alone in an apartment; Jaime's mom left when they were young. José feels a lot of pressure to be as good as two parents, and so he puts a lot of pressure on Jaime to do well in school. Lately, Jaime and José have been stuck in a negative communication cycle that usually results in criticism, nagging, defensiveness, and arguing. This evening, José comes home to find Jaime playing video games and begins nagging them about their homework.*

José: Did you do your homework?

Jaime: No.

José: You didn't do it yet?! It's 10 o'clock- when are you gonna do it?!

Jaime: Later.

José: Later?! Later?! Really????

Jaime: Chill, I have first period free tomorrow.

José: Oh great - so you're leaving it to the last possible second. I'm sure you'll do your best work scrambling to finish. I told you if you can't get your grades up to a least passing...

Jaime: I'm GOING to pass everything!!

José: Doesn't look like it...

Jaime: I AM!!!

José: I don't see anything changing around here - same old lazy attitude. I come home and you're playing on your phone. Don't you have a biology test tomorrow too!?!??

Jaime: Yeah, so?

**José:** And I suppose you studied for that *really* hard, right?!

**Jaime:** I don't need to. I know it all.

**José:** Hmmmm we'll see. I'll be able to tell when we get the grades. I can check everything on line now.

**Jaime:** I don't know why I even bother – you don't believe I can do it. I'm just a loser to you. Maybe I'll just drop out now. I can make all the money I need selling weed, and then I don't even have to live here and listen to you nagging me all the time.

**José:** Great - let's how that works out for you. Great plan!!

**Jaime:** Forget this crap - I'm outta here.

## **Mr. Cooke and Jon**

**Background:** *Mr. Cooke has been teaching history for 25 years. Not much has changed since he first started teaching. He seems kind of tired and sometimes doesn't seem to have much patience left for all the energetic young students who noisily enter his classroom 5 times a day. Today he seems particularly weary and impatient. Students are talking during class and some have their phones out, which makes him feel disrespected and angry.*

*Jon has Mr. Cooke for US History first period. Jon has had some struggles at school-- he hates when teachers misunderstand him, which happens a lot. But he wants to finish out the year on a good note, not get in trouble and definitely never get suspended again. But this morning was challenging. His little brother was home alone sick and his mom had to go to work. She texted Jon to ask if he could go STRAIGHT home to check on him after school. Jon was about to respond, when...*

**Mr. Cooke:** All right settle down. As I was saying yesterday, the Civil War was a battle between the north and the south... Jon, put that away.

**Jon:** *(keeps texting)* Just give me one second.

**Mr. Cooke:** *(speaking sarcastically)* Oh sure, Jon. No problem. Let's have all the kids in class adhere to the no phone rule – except for YOU.

**Jon:** *(getting frustrated)* I didn't SAY that.

**Mr. Cooke:** Really? I think you did. You said we can ALL wait while you finish your little game there.

**Jon:** I'm not playing a game!

**Mr. Cooke:** *(Raising his voice)* I don't care WHAT you're doing. You're breaking a rule!

**Jon:** You don't know what you're talking about!

**Mr. Cooke:** I know I'm about to take your phone.

**Jon:** No, you're NOT!!

**Mr. Cooke:** (*harshly*) Jon, give me your phone.

**Jon:** I NEED my phone!

**Mr. Cooke:** (*low and angrily*) Give me your phone.

**Jon:** (*yelling now*) NO! Man-you don't get it!!

**Mr. Cooke:** I get it. Keep your phone. I'm calling security to remove you from class. You can explain to Dr. Marshall how you needed your phone during MY lesson. This will likely result in your suspension.

**Jon:** Don't bother, I'm outta here!! (*Knocks book on the floor and leaves*).

## **Justice**

**Background:** *Justice has been dealing with a lot lately. Their parents split up a few months ago; their mom left town and their dad has been struggling to make ends meet. To make matters worse, Justice isn't doing well in school, so figured they might as well start skipping school to try to earn some extra cash doing things around the neighborhood. One day, Justice is on the block and is approached by a few older people from the apartments next door. They tell Justice that there's a party that night and they could really use a person to watch the door. They offer to pay Justice enough to put food on the table for a week.*

Neighbor #1: (walks up to Justice) Yo, wassup, how'd you like to make some extra cash tonight?

Justice: What would I have to do?

Neighbor #2: We're trying to book some cars and we need you to be lookout while we pullin' them. Whatever we get from choppin' it up, we'll break you off some.

Justice: Oh, I ain't gon' lie, that's a little bit hot.

Neighbor #1: It ain't about nothin', all you need to do is just holla if you see somethin' funny.

Justice: I hear you but it still don't feel right.

Neighbor #2: Look, we got bread right here, even if it don't come through, you gon' get paid (pulls out a handful of cash). Easy money.

Justice: I don't know....

## **Rian and Cassie**

**Background:** *Rian and Cassie have been friends since they were in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. They're now sophomores in high school and have started drifting apart; Rian has been hanging out with the "popular kids" and Cassie has been focusing on school. Cassie can't help but feel sad and angry at losing the friendship, but Rian has been too focused on the other kids to notice. One day, Rian gets asked to a party out of town and asks Cassie to cover.*

Rian: (running to catch Cassie in the hallway) Hey! Haven't seen you in a while. How have you been?

Cassie: I'm fine. You'd know how I was if you asked me more often.

Rian: Yeah, I'm sorry, I've just been busy with—

Cassie: (cuts Rian off) —yeah, you've been busy hanging with other people. I get it. So, did you want something?

Rian: Well, listen, I got invited to that big party this weekend. I'm sure my parents won't let me go, but if I tell them I'm at your house, they wouldn't care. Will you cover for me?

Cassie: For a second I thought you were going to ask me to come with, but I see where we're at now.

Rian: I'm sorry, I would, but it's not my place to invite anyone... besides I didn't think you liked them anyway?

Cassie: Whatever, it's fine. I don't know about covering though, you don't think your mom will figure it out?

Rian: All you need to do is just text her and let her know I'm with you. No biggie. We've been friends for so long, you can't just do this one thing for me?

Cassie: Damn, I don't know...

## **Tyrone and Jasmine**

**Background:** *Tyrone is meeting up with a girl, Jasmine, he met yesterday at an event at their school. He liked her vibe and invited her to a party his friends were throwing the next night. Jasmine thought Tyrone was cool, so agreed to go to the party; she'd just broken up with her boyfriend and wanted to meet new people. When they first met, Tyrone was sober. At the party, Tyrone starts drinking right away and leaves Jasmine with his friends, which set off some triggers for her. After an hour, Tyrone finds Jasmine in one of the rooms downstairs.*

**Tyrone:** (slurs his words a little) Hey Jas, where you been? What do you wanna do now?

**Jasmine:** I've been here... are you ok? You seem different today.

**Tyrone:** Yeah, I'm good. Why you asking me stupid questions?

**Jasmine:** Stupid questions?

**Tyrone:** I'm just playing with you girl. Stop acting all sensitive.

**Jasmine:** (Just stares at him).

**Tyrone:** Stop playing baby. Let's go back to my place.

**Jasmine:** I don't know you like that.

**Tyrone:** You 'bout to make me upset. I asked you to this party, you owe me. We don't have to go to my place, there's nobody in this room.

**Jasmine:** I'm gone. I thought you were a different person. (Gets up and leaves).

## Regan

**Background:** *Regan was really confused in her English class. She felt like everyone else was getting it except her. She had a test coming up that she did not think she could pass. Mr. Wagner was nice and always said his door was open to students who needed help, but Regan was worried about going to him. She'd never been good at asking for help from anyone, which usually got her in trouble. Regan thought about just skipping the test altogether, maybe skipping out on the entire school day.*

*But today, Regan felt like she was ready to try asking for help. She had messed up so many times and she knew now that creating a future for herself depended mostly on her. Regan knew changing her life around would be hard-- going to school and staying clean were her biggest challenges. But she was finally able to accept that she needed support, and didn't mind humbling herself to ask for help. So, Regan decided to go see her English teacher.*

\*Knock Knock\*

Mr. Wagner: Hello Regan, what a nice surprise. What brings you by?

Regan: I'm having trouble in your class.

Mr. Wagner: Yes, I'm so glad you stopped by. I was wondering why you were so quiet these last few classes. You're usually so talkative! I like how much you participate and raise your hand. I had a feeling you were having a difficult time.

Regan: Yeah well, I liked when we were discussing the last book and the characters and stuff. I like getting into those peoples' heads and thinking about what the author really means me.

Mr. Wagner: You do a great job of that. You even predicted the outcome of how the book was going to end.

**Regan:** I know right?! I'm good at that!

**Mr. Wagner:** You are! So, I know that the grammar classes are not always as much fun.

**Regan:** That's true. And like, I don't understand that thing you're talking about now. The umm... like those conjunctions.

**Mr. Wagner:** Oh, yes. You mean the difference between a between a coordinating and a correlative conjunction - is that what is confusing you?

**Regan:** Yeah. Those.

**Mr. Wagner:** Great. Okay. So, let's start with coordinating conjunctions

\*Pause – Mr. Wagner spends 20 minutes explaining this concept\*

**Regan:** Wow, I get it now. I really do! Thank you!

**Mr. Wagner:** You are so welcome. Come by whenever you have questions. My door is always open.

**Regan:** Cool! I will. Thanks, Mr. Wagner!

## **Johnny**

**Background:** *A month ago, Johnny got out of an intensive drug program; the court made him go after he was found using and dealing. He did well in the program and has started to change his life around—went back to school, got a part-time job, and made things right by his mom. Yesterday, though, he had a fight with a person he'd been seeing and has been thinking about smoking since then. Johnny just finished playing basketball with two of his friends and now they want to smoke.*

**Friend 1:** That was a good game. You guys ready to hit this with me? (Points to the blunt he is rolling).

**Friend 2:** That's a good look. I haven't smoked since this morning. It's been too long! (laughs)

**Johnny:** I'm good. I got stuff to do today, and you know what happens when I get a little bit of that in me.

**Friend 1:** Stop acting funny like you didn't used to do everything high! (Both laugh). Plus, you said you'd been thinking about it since yesterday!

**Johnny:** That's the problem. I didn't do anything when I was high because I just don't feel like it. I'm trying to change things up. And even though I've been thinking about it, doesn't mean I'll do it.

**Friend 2:** So, you're telling me next time we're out partying, you're not going to get right so we can talk to these girls? Yeah right! (Both laugh).

**Johnny:** Come on man, you know I got game. I don't need to be high to get at these girls. Especially if your girl's around (all laugh). I'm just saying I don't need the weed to get right. That's just not me right now man. I've got bigger plans.

## **Chris and Javier**

**Background:** *Chris has been out of juvenile hall for exactly 5 days. After 3 times inside, he is determined not to go back. This time he knows what his triggers are, he knows what his challenges will be, he's been down this road before. The last time he went back to the Hall is was for ditching school. The time before that it was a dirty urine test. This time he has a mentor, Javier, someone who he feels really has his back. He knows he can call him any time.*

*It's Friday night and Chris knows his friends are going out. The urge to join them is so strong it literally feels like he is being pulled. He's been home by 6pm the last 5 nights and he is feeling caged. He grabs his cell and calls Javier.*

Javier: Hello?

Chris: Hey, it's Chris.

Javier: How you doin' Son?

Chris: (sighs loudly) So so...Well, not great. Frustrated.

Javier: Okay, can you say more? What's goin' on?

Chris: ALL my homies are chillin' tonight. This sucks. I don't even understand why I can't go out. My last two tests were CLEAN! I'm not even going DO anything! I'm tired of lookin' at these four walls.

Javier: I'm glad you called.

Chris: What? Why?

Javier: Cause you KNOW I'm gonna talk you into staying home. You're looking at the BIG Picture!

Chris: Yeah.

Javier: So, tell me why you're NOT gonna go out tonight.

Chris: Cause I want to get off probation.

Javier: That's right. And how are you gonna do that?

Chris: Short term pain, long term gain.

Javier: You got it. How are gonna take care of yourself right now?

Chris: I'm gonna go do some push-ups.

Javier: How many?

Chris: I don't know. As many as I can.

Javier: Alright. Call me later and tell me how many you did.

Chris: Alright. Thanks.

Javier: You're welcome. You got this.

## **Frank and Billy**

**Background:** *Billy has been on probation since he got out of placement a few weeks ago. He knows what to expect—he’s been on probation before. The last few times he’s messed it up by still hanging out with the same kids and getting involved in the same stuff. This time, he wants to be different—he’s got a kid on the way now and doesn’t want to get locked up and miss the birth. His friend, Frank, has been around for it all and wants the best for him. Still, Frank misses having his “fun” friend around and tries to convince Billy to come out.*

**Frank:** My man! Did you hear about Chantel’s party tonight?

**Billy:** Yeah, of course. Who doesn’t know about it? But I WISH I didn’t know. The last party she had was lit!

**Frank:** Why - you’re going, right?

**Billy:** Nah.

**Frank:** Why not?!

**Billy:** I’m on probation and you know my girl’s having our kid. I’m not messing it up this time.

**Frank:** But you’ll be with me! I won’t let anything happen. Even if those guys come, I’ll make sure they know not to come at us.

**Billy:** I can’t risk it, man. My life is too important now. But listen, how about you and I do something else instead? This way you won’t risk anything by going to the party either.

**Frank:** True, true. I do want to stay out of trouble or my pops will kick me out again. They’ll be other parties. What do you wanna do instead?

## Cindy

**Background:** *Cindy is walking home from school and planning to go straight home. She's on probation and knows there are certain people that would be hard to walk away from if she sees them. She even takes a new route home hoping to avoid them. But that day luck was not on her side. She sees two of her old friends who are still in the life... It's clear they've been smoking and are up for anything. As Cindy walks by, her friend calls her over.*

**Holly:** Hey, Cindy! Come over here girl - we're about to go over to Park Place and see what's good. You in?

**Dion:** Yeah, you don't need to do anything - just give us a shout if you see the cops or something.

**Cindy:** I don't know... I'm just going home you know... I'm trying to stay out of this shit.

**Holly:** Come on - we're not gonna get caught!! I know this block like the back of my hand. And the old heads don't even care. Anyhow, even if you *did* get caught, I know the cops in that hood and they'll let us off with a warning.

**Dion:** (laughs) Yeah, come on girl. Don't be so paranoid. Nothing's gonna happen. We'll go over, do what we do, and be out. The money is there, why you gonna pass that up?!

**Cindy:** Sorry, I gotta go. I gotta get home. For real. My mom needs me, she's been sick. I'm out! Do ya'll wanna come with? My mom would love to see you...

**Dion:** Nah, we're good. We got money to make.

## Alex

**Background:** *Alex is walking around bored and looking for something to do. Some friends pull up on the sidewalk in a new car and ask Alex to get in. None of them have their driver's licenses, but tell Alex it won't matter because they won't get caught. Alex is on probation after being locked up for two months on drug charges.*

Driver: Get in. We've been looking for you.

Alex: Where'd you get this?

Passenger: We stole the keys from my mom's house. It's her boyfriend's.

Alex: Are you out of your mind? She's gonna know it was you.

Driver: C'mon, get in. We can't wait around all day or we'll definitely get busted.

Alex: I'm on probation. I can't get in that car.

Passenger: (Holds up a beer can, smiling). The keys aren't the only thing we snatched from my mom's house. Get in!

Alex: (Looks around to see who else is on the block, then gets in the back seat of the car. Takes a can of beer and has a sip. The car is still parked). Y'all are never gonna get away with this.

Driver: What do you mean *us*? You're sitting here too.

Alex: Yeah, you're right. I'm out. (Goes for the door handle).

Passenger: (Hits lock button on the car door). You can't bounce like that. You're in it now. You get all soft on us while you were locked up?

Alex: Nah, I'm not. I got too much on the line for this shit. If I get caught doing something, I'm going away for two years.

**Driver:** You soft but I ain't arguing with you. Get out if you want.

**Passenger:** (unlocks car door). Whatever, go on.

**Alex:** (Gets out of car, watches as it speeds away. Just as it rounds the corner, Alex sees a cop car coming down the opposite street).

*\*whispers\** Shit, that was close.

## **Improv Exercise: Devon**

Devon just got released from detention for the fourth time. Each time they'd left, they swore to **never** come back. This time, they really wanted to mean it. They planned to go back to school, as they were just 18 months away from getting their high school diploma.

But, school had always been hard, and Devon knew it wouldn't be easy this time around. Devon had already been kicked out for fighting a bunch of times in the past few years, usually fighting because of feeling disrespected. Sometimes at school, Devon felt like everyone else understood everything the teacher was saying except for them, and often felt stupid and ashamed.

Family life wasn't much better. Sometimes at night, Devon would hear their parents fighting and it would just get to be too much. At some point that "F-- it" feeling would settle in and Devon would go find their friends and party all night. The folks who were always around were mostly ditching school, drinking, smoking weed and doing the same old thing. The last time that happened, Devon got locked up.

When Devon left detention this time, they were determined to keep the big goals in mind. Something clicked and they knew that they were the only one who could really be in charge of their life. It was like a switch was flipped and they aged two years during the last week in detention. Devon had been meditating every day, sometimes for just a few minutes, which usually calmed him down. This is what it sounded like in Devon's head as they walked out the door: "One day at a time. Go to school. Breathe. Next day - Go to school. Breathe. Ask for help. Breath. One day at a time. You can handle this. Breathe."

A few weeks into being out, Devon was managing. But then one day, someone laughed at Devon's reading in class. Devon kept stumbling over a word, trying to read it 3 times. Even though only one person was laughing, Devon felt like it was the whole class. Then one kid shouted out, "Come on, can't you read?!? This is like 3rd grade sh\*t." Devon jumped up - chair flying to the floor making a huge crash. But the sound seemed to snap Devon out of it. Devon took a breath. And then another one. They thought, "You can handle this..."

(scene continues)...

## **Improv Exercise: Jacob**

Jacob had been in and out of placement so many times, he almost lost count. His mentor reminded him – it had been eight times. Eight times that he got out thinking, “I’m free,” and not really worrying about how he would stay out. He thought about the first time he got out. He was 14 and he really only thought about the next time he would chill with friends and didn’t worry much about temptations.

This time he was 16, almost 17 and he had been thinking a lot about the hamster wheel he had been on the last few years. Every time he went back to placement it was because of something he was doing to feel good, to relieve stress, like smoking weed, even getting into fights - it felt good to get his feelings out like that sometimes.

The difference now was that Jacob had learned to meditate. It didn’t give him an instant high, but it actually did make him feel calmer. He noticed, especially if he did it every day, it helped him stop blaming others for his situation. Even though he knew his life was unfair in a LOT of ways he also knew that sometimes he had made choices that got in the way of his goals.

This time, Jacob had been home for two weeks. It had been really boring sometimes. At those times he reminded himself, “Boredom won’t get me locked up.” When his friend Jason called to ask in him if he could go to a party that night, it was hard to turn it down- but he did it. Jason started describing who going to be there, and what they would be using...

Jacob finds a way to back out and get off the phone. When he hangs up, puts on his shoes, does 10 push-ups and goes for a run.

## **Jasheek and Sharice**

**Background:** *Jasheek and Sharice had both been locked up for a few months. Even though they were from different neighborhoods, they had people in common and so were cool with each other in the housing area. They just got word that a new kid would be coming to their unit from a rival neighborhood, and were planning what to do. Jasheek knew he'd be locked up for a while, so didn't care what happened. Sharice, on the other hand, had a chance to go home and didn't want to get a bad report for his next court date.*

**Jasheek:** Yo, c'mon son, it'll be easy. We got this. We'll pack him up.

**Sharice:** I know, but I don't wanna risk it. My judge said if I screwed anything up this month, he wouldn't even consider me for a program in the town.

**Jasheek:** Yo, this comes with the game. We gotta nip it in the bud before it starts. He might come in and try to run the crib.

**Sharice:** I don't know, you might have to do this dolo.

**Jasheek:** You a sucker.

**Sharice:** Yeah, but my life is worth a lot more than a fight. Who knows what could happen? I'd rather stay out of it and to myself. I got too much on the line.

## Crystal

**Background:** *Crystal has been in an out of placement since she was a little girl. Her mom's got a lot of issues and every time her mom screws up, the court puts Crystal in placement "for safety." Crystal loves her mom, though, and always chooses to go back to her and give her one more chance. The most recent time was pretty bad, though, and Crystal has been thinking about what it'd be liked to stay in placement for a while longer, or go to a foster home. The thought makes her sick to her stomach and she feels angry, sad, and scared all at the same time. But, Crystal knows that her mom needs serious help. One day, Crystal was in the kitchen area with another youth she's known for a long time, when the youth starts to ask her about her mom. Crystal keeps her calm for a little, but then feels disrespected.*

**Crystal:** I mean, I love my mom, don't get me wrong, but I'm beginning to wonder if I need to be away from her for more than a few weeks.

**Youth:** I've known you for a long time, Crystal. This is the first time I've heard you talk like this. You saying you don't want to live with her anymore?

**Crystal:** Maybe just not right away. You know the court always sends me back the moment my mom cleans up her act or my grandmother steps in. But it never sticks. Maybe if I'm away longer, my mom will really put in the work to do right by me...

**Youth:** You really think she would? You've been in and out of this place as much as me. I know my parents aren't ever changing, but being outside is way better than being in here, or living with people I don't know. You're better off just going back to your moms. Don't be stupid.

**Crystal:** (voice rising) Wait, you saying you think I'm stupid or something? Here I am confiding in you and you're saying I'm being stupid?

Youth: Hold up hold up, I didn't say that—

Crystal: (interrupting, voice still rising) I don't care what you think you said, I know what you mean. You think you know my life better than me?

(Staff hears what's happening and comes over)...

## **Travis**

**Background:** *Travis was admitted to detention four weeks ago for a felony; this was his first time getting locked up, even though he'd been in and out of residential since he was young. When he got there, he was scared, but knew he couldn't show it. He didn't speak to many people and tried not to show any emotion. The other kids always thought he was up to something, or called him "spaced out" or "strange." Travis' eyes were either darting left and right to take in his surroundings, seeming on high alert, or he would get lost in his thoughts and stare into space for minutes on end. Though he often tried to be alone and isolate himself, Travis would also become explosively angry if anyone provoked him. One day, while Travis was playing cards by himself, some kids were teasing him about his hair. Travis felt himself heating up. An older kid who'd been on his hall and wondered what was really up with Travis saw it happening, and got the kids to stop. He saw Travis playing cards by himself, and asked to join.*

**Youth:** Hey, don't pay them no mind. They don't know sh\*t. You mind if I join? You know how to play Palace?

**Travis:** (looks up, still heated, but doesn't say anything).

**Youth:** (sits down across from him) I know you don't talk to many people. It be like that when you first come in. This place is wild.

**Travis:** (speaks softly, nodding) It is what it is.

**Youth:** How you be getting your mind right? It can be really crazy in here, you gotta do something. I learned how to meditate, you ever try it?

**Travis:** Nah, I'm good. I wanna stay to myself.

Youth: That's just the thing though, you can meditate all by yourself, don't need anyone. If you want, I'll lend you my book and you can read about it. It really helped me out. Like I said, when I first came in, I was wild'in out. Now that I meditate, I feel calmer and can make better decisions. When I first came in, I woulda jumped in with the other kids and maybe even tried to fight you. But now, it's not like that.

Travis: Why'd you stop them anyway? You think I can't take them?  
(starts to feel disrespected)

Youth: Nah, nah. Not at all. I've seen you get it in. I just didn't want them doing that, it wasn't right. Plus, no one needs to be fighting all the time, it's not healthy.

Travis: Aight. Thanks, I guess.

Youth: So, what's up with you anyway? You got family out there or nah?

(conversation continues...)

## **Lavon**

**Background:** *Lavon had been locked up for almost 3 years. He was approaching his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and knew he'd go to the adult jail soon. For the past year, he'd been working really hard to graduate high school before he left, but as graduation came closer, he felt his motivation slipping. Why work hard if he was just going to still be in jail? His case wasn't going anywhere. He's with his tutor one day when they have this conversation.*

**Lavon:** I don't want to do this anymore. Who the f\* cares about history?

**Tutor:** I know, I know, but you're so close to graduating. C'mon, I'll help you... see here, the fifth amendment to the Constitution...

**Lavon:** (cuts tutor off, starts to get upset and pushes the book onto the floor) Yo, I said I don't want to do this anymore! Let me go back to my unit!

**Tutor:** Okay, okay. We can stop. But what's up? I've never seen you like this, and you know we've been through a lot together.

**Lavon:** (starts to calm down) I just, I don't know. I'm starting to wonder if this is all worth it. You know I'm just going to be locked up still even after I graduate, right? I should just stick with what I know. Going to school here was something I'd never do at home. I don't know why I started.

**Tutor:** I remember why you started. Because your little brother needed a role model. Remember that first time he came to family night? He ran around chasing all the balloons? You turned to me and said, "I want to be better for him."

**Lavon:** I didn't think you remembered that. You're right. But it's too hard. Looking at this shit just makes me remember that I'm still locked up, I ain't going to be out anytime soon. I just wanna leave it all alone and smoke.

**Tutor:** I hear you, and I'm sure I'd feel the same way. But remember who you are on the inside—the Lavon I know is kind, decent, and loves his family. He wouldn't let anything stand in the way of that. Maybe this is just a mask talking?

**Lavon:** Maybe... yeah... I guess. The mask is so loud though, I really was about to fight you over trying to make me do history (both laugh).

**Tutor:** I know. Sometimes the masks make us feel like that's all we are. But your Core Self is stronger. I know that, and you know that too. We've just gotta make sure we're paying attention to it.

**Lavon:** Aight. Listen, from here til I leave, you gotta remind me every time I see you, okay? Imma need it.

**Tutor:** I got you. Now... back to history?

## **Sam**

**Background:** *Sam's been in residential for a couple months now. The school district placed Sam there because they were acting out too much in class and were failing a lot of classes. Sam tried to tell them it was because they had too much on their mind, but no one seemed to listen. Sam's mom and little brother both struggle with mental illness, and their dad struggles with substance use. Sometimes, Sam felt like the only one taking care of the family. Now, Sam's stuck here, and worries about their family every day. To make matters worse, it's a holiday, and Sam feels extra alone. Staff ask Sam if their family is coming for a visit, which really sets Sam off.*

Staff: So, Sam, anyone from your family coming for the holiday party?

Sam: (sharply replies). No.

Staff: How come? You didn't want them to come?

Sam: You don't know me, why you askin' me questions like that?

Staff: Chill, chill, it was just a question. I'm sorry.

Sam: Nah, you saw my file, you probably know and were just asking to make me react! Like everybody does in here! (starts to ball fists and raise arms up)

Staff: Listen, nah, really, I didn't know. I'm really, really sorry. You want to sit and tell me about it? We don't have to go to the holiday party later either, we can get permission for a movie or something. You got a favorite movie?

Sam: (starts to take deep breaths) I like action movies.

Staff: Cool, cool, let's pick one out then. If you want, you can tell me what's going on. If not, cool, we'll just watch the movie.

Sam: Thanks. Sometimes I just get really upset when I think about my family....

(conversation can continue)...

## Angel

**Background:** *This is Angel's first time being locked up. He met with his lawyer once the day after he got to detention, but didn't really understand what was happening. He was so in shock that when his lawyer asked if he had any questions, all Angel could do was nod "no." Later that day, he got so angry thinking about his situation that he punched another kid for no reason. Angel remembered his lawyer saying something about court the following week, but when Angel was woken up by the officers early the next Tuesday morning, he still didn't know what was going on. "You've got court, c'mon" said one of the court officers. Angel got to court and was placed in a holding cell with a few other kids from detention. Someone came around and gave everyone "breakfast" (milk and a box of cereal), but Angel was too nervous to eat. Finally, after what seemed like hours, Angel's name was called. He was taken in cuffs to the courtroom and sat down at a long table in front of the judge. His lawyer was there next to him but didn't say anything to him. Angel was shaking and felt like he might throw up, but the sight of his lawyer also made him mad. Before he knew it, his lawyer said something to the judge and Angel was being taken back into the holding cell. His lawyer followed.*

**Lawyer:** So, we got an adjournment for a few more weeks, that will give us time to see what the prosecution is offering. If you're lucky, they'll offer a 1 to 3 with time served and we can keep you here with your family for as long as possible. Then when you go up, you'll only have to do a little time before seeing the board.

**Angel:** (looking confused) Sorry, what?

**Lawyer:** I know it's a lot to take in, but trust me, it'll all be fine. Just do what I tell you.

**Angel:** But how can I do what you tell me if I don't understand what you're saying? (starting to become angry)

Lawyer: Ahh don't worry, I'll come see you next week and we'll go over everything. (starts to walk away)

Angel: Wait! (stands up and starts banging on the cell)

Lawyer: (keeps walking away) I'll see you later, Angel! Got another case.

Other kid in the cell: That's how they are, man.

Angel: How though? I thought he was supposed to be defending me? (pacing and balling fists)

Other kid: Quiet down man, the officers will come.

Angel: Don't tell me what to do! (approaches other kid)

(scene can continue)...