



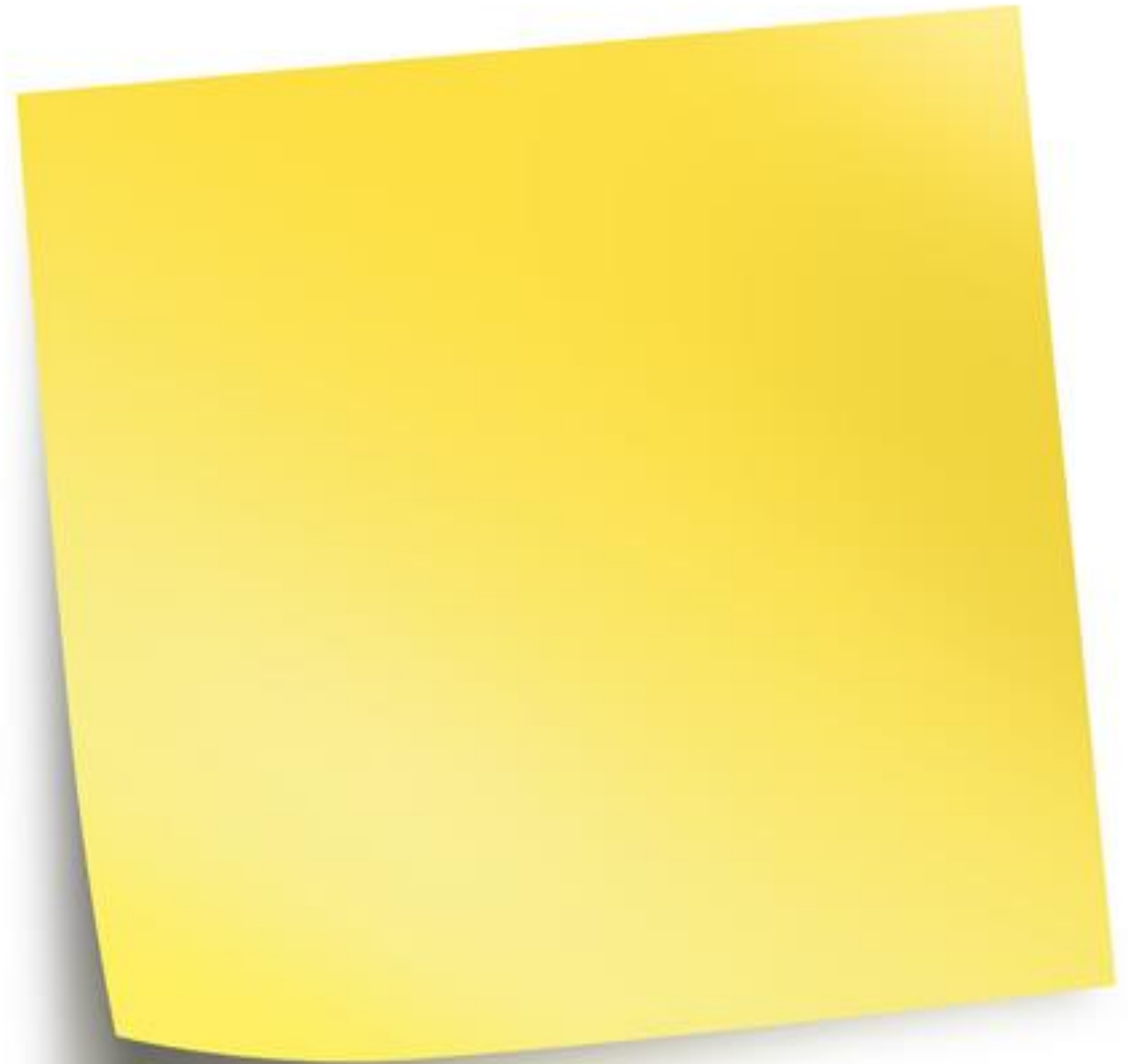
# Rewriting Stories: Transforming Lives of Justice-Involved Youth

*Restoring Hope Through Faith & Purpose*

# One Word Challenge

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In one word, write what  
justice-involved youth need  
most.





**PURPOSE**





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## Why Incarcerated Youth Should Be a Top Priority

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- 60,000+ youth incarcerated on any given day in the U.S.
- Over 70% have experienced trauma or abuse
- 80% of incarcerated youth are re-arrested within 3 years
- Disproportionate racial impact & broken support systems

# What Science Tells Us

## Mental Development



- Teen brains are still developing into their mid-20s

The **prefrontal cortex**—the part of the brain responsible for **impulse control, decision-making, judgment, and emotional regulation**—is the last to fully develop.

This part of the brain **continues maturing into the mid-20s**, with **age 25** often cited as the **average benchmark** for full development.



# What Science Tells Us

## Effects of Trauma



- Trauma delays emotional regulation and impulse control

Trauma can significantly affect impulse control, especially in children and adolescents whose brains are still developing. When a young person experiences trauma—such as abuse, neglect, violence, incarceration or that of a parent—it can cause the brain to become wired for ***survival** rather than **growth** and **regulation***. This shift can directly interfere with the brain's ability to pause, reflect, and respond with control.

# What Science Tells Us

## Caring Adults



*“Relationships are the agents of change, and the most powerful therapy is human love.”*

—Dr. Bruce Perry, child psychiatrist and trauma expert

- Healing is possible with consistent, caring adults

The adolescent brain is highly plastic—which means it can still change, adapt, and heal. Trauma, neglect, and instability disrupt the development of the prefrontal cortex, which governs decision-making, impulse control, and emotional regulation, but consistent, safe relationships with caring adults help rewire these areas by modeling trust, empathy, and regulation.

When a youth experiences relational safety, it calms the amygdala (***the fear center of the brain***), which is often hyperactive in trauma survivors.

# From Prison to Purpose

 Leave A Mark  
Columbus

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Corry Ebersberger



Reflect:

Who  
Helped  
You?

Think of a time someone believed in you or gave you a second chance.

- Who were they? \_\_\_\_\_
- What was their characteristics of that person? \_\_\_\_\_
- What difference did it make? \_\_\_\_\_

A young person with short dark hair, wearing an orange jumpsuit, is sitting in a jail cell. They are looking down at a book or document they are holding. The cell has vertical metal bars. The image has a dark, moody atmosphere with some white brushstroke-like effects overlaid.

## 5 Core Needs

1. Safety (emotional and physical)
2. Empathy without judgment
3. Opportunities to develop voice and purpose
4. Holistic mentoring and consistency
5. Hope for the future

# Scenario Role-Play

Scenario: A youth says, “*What’s the point of dreaming? It never works out.*”

→ Root: Disappointment, crushed potential

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_

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Scenario: A youth says, “*The system’s rigged against blacks. I don’t stand a chance.*”

→ Root: Injustice, frustration, survival mentality

How would you respond? \_\_\_\_\_



# What Can You Do?

## 1. Mentor Through Presence, Not Just Programs

- **Show up consistently** in the life of one youth—even just writing letters, recording or visiting through facility volunteer program.
- Ask: *“Who’s one youth I can intentionally walk with this year?”*

## 2. Start A Path To Purpose Journey With One Youth

- Help a youth **discover their gifts, name their dreams, and write a new story.**
- Guide them in creating a life plan, vision board, or personal mission statement.
- Ask: *“What would you do if you knew you were made for something more?”*

## 3. Disciple Through Creativity

- Host **purpose-centered Bible studies** for justice-involved youth using journaling, music, or art.
- Use themes like *“From Prison to Purpose”* or *“Designed for More.”*

# What Can You Do?

## 4. Support Their Families

- Mentor or support the **siblings or children** of incarcerated individuals.
- Deliver care packages or host “Family Days” that promote reconnection and healing.

## 5. Bridge Re-entry With Relationship

- Create or join a **re-entry support circle** to walk with a youth **6–12 months post-release**.
- Help with life skills, transportation, prayer, or emotional processing.

## 6. Capture Their Stories

- Help youth write or record **their testimonies or transformation stories**.
- With permission, publish them anonymously to **inspire others** and **honor their voice**.

# What Can You Do?

## 7. Pray Specifically and Strategically

- Create a **youth prayer wall** or **adopt-a-name prayer group** where each mentor prays for one incarcerated youth by name and need.
- This helps shift the culture from transactional help to spiritual intercession.

## 8. Create Legacy Projects Together

- Work with a youth to **create something lasting**—a letter to their future self, a “legacy” shoebox, a life values statement, or a vision collage.
- This helps them see their life as **part of something bigger than their past**.

## 9. Help Them Discover Their Name’s Meaning and Identity in Christ

- Many youth have never been told the **meaning of their name** or how it connects to their identity and purpose.
- Teach them the Biblical significance of names and help them **own a new story about who they are**.



# What Can You Do?

## 10. Lead a Purpose-Focused Devotional Series

- Create a weekly or monthly study around themes like identity, destiny, overcoming shame, forgiveness, and calling.
- Use scripture to **reveal how God transforms pain into purpose** (e.g., Joseph, Paul, David).

## 11. Offer One-on-One Listening Sessions

- Give youth a safe, confidential space to talk—**not to fix them**, but to listen and affirm their worth.
- Practice active listening and offer gentle reflection: *“I hear you. That makes sense. You're not alone.”*

## 12. Lead a “Letters of Life” Activity

- Help youth write letters to their future self, to someone they’ve hurt, or even to God.
- These letters help them reflect, release pain, and reimagine who they want to become.



# 30-Day Challenge

What is ONE action you will take within 30 days to impact a justice-involved youth?

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

# Books or Articles



## 1. “Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison” by Nell Bernstein

- **Why it’s valuable:**

A deeply researched and emotionally charged look into the failures of the juvenile justice system—and the urgent need for reform and restorative approaches.

- **Best for:**

Understanding the system, its harm, and why relationship-centered alternatives matter.

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## 2. “Healing Invisible Wounds: Why Investing in Trauma-Informed Care for Children Makes Sense” by Justice Policy Institute

- **Why it’s valuable:**

This article emphasizes how trauma impacts youth behavior and how institutions (including juvenile facilities) must become **trauma-informed**.

- **Key takeaway:**

You don’t just mentor behavior—you mentor pain that hasn't yet been healed.

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## 3. “Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them” by Dr. James Garbarino

- **Why it’s valuable:**

This book explores the **psychological roots of violence in youth**, especially incarcerated boys, and outlines pathways to healing.

- **Focus:**

The role of trauma, social environment, and fatherlessness in fueling destructive choices.

Tools  
for the  
Journey



# Books or Articles

## 4. “Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption” by Bryan Stevenson

- **Why it’s valuable:**

Though not solely focused on youth, this powerful memoir by a juvenile justice advocate highlights **real stories of incarcerated youth**, including 14-year-old Charlie and others.

- **Best for:**

Inspiring deep compassion, understanding systemic injustice, and seeing the power of redemptive relationship.

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## 5. “The Impact of Mentoring on Reentry Outcomes: A Review of the Literature” – Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

- **Why it’s valuable:**

A practical, research-based article reviewing what works in mentoring youth during and after incarceration

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## 6. “No Matter How Loud I Shout: A Year in the Life of Juvenile Court”

**Author:** Edward Humes (Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist)

- **Why it’s valuable:**

This book offers an insider’s look at the juvenile justice system through the eyes of judges, prosecutors, defenders, and, most importantly, the youth themselves.

- It **humanizes incarcerated youth** by telling their stories in depth
- Highlights the **complexity of the system** and its often-failed attempts at rehabilitation
- Provides a **realistic, empathetic, and sometimes painful perspective** that equips mentors and ministry leaders to serve with deeper understanding

Tools  
for the  
Journey

# Mentor Training Resources

## 1. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership – [Mentoring.org](https://mentoring.org)

### Why it's valuable:

MENTOR is the gold standard in the U.S. for mentoring training, research, and tools.

### Key resource:

The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™ – a comprehensive guide used nationally.

### – Training options include:

- Online courses
  - Evidence-based practices
  - Resources for mentoring high-risk youth
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## 2. National Mentoring Resource Center (NMRC) – [nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org](https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org)

### Why it's valuable:

Supported by the U.S. Department of Justice and MENTOR, NMRC offers **free, high-quality resources** and tools backed by research.

### – Best features:

- Model program database
- Training toolkits
- Trauma-informed and culturally competent mentoring strategies
- Downloadable curricula & practice guides

Tools  
for the  
Journey



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“You’re already  
showing up.

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Now, go deeper.  
Walk with one youth.  
Share your tools.  
Speak life. Reflect  
Christ.

You don’t need a new  
program—you just  
need to give what’s  
already in your  
hand.”

# Questions & Final Thoughts

What's **still** on your mind? How can we support each other?





Thank You For Participating!