AWE
ALTERNATIVES WITH EDUCATION

Breaking the cycle of crime—jail—more crime—more jail: This is what AWE is all about.

HOPE IS POSSIBLE

Frieda came to our programs during her incarceration, having suffered much. She had experienced the ravages of war in her country of origin. She struggled with mental illness. Not knowing how to relate to other women, she had endured many indignities in jail. Argumentative, befriended by almost no one, she was a lonely woman.

Something, however, inspired her to enroll in one of our art courses. She picked up the crayola pencils and began to draw. Beneath her hand emerged ruby, gold, and emerald leaves; peaceful scenes of water and hills; a graceful tree with blue bark − always colorful images of nature. As she drew, she found healing. The course gave her a way to express herself. At the last class as she handed in her pencils, she pleaded to take the course again. “This gives me something good to do,” she explained. “It helps me when I am angry.” So she re-enrolled.

Finding the art course helpful, she decided to enroll in our other courses, Achieving Your Potential and Anger Management. Frieda listened and took notes. She said little, but when she spoke, her words were insightful. Learning about “blind spots,” and “conditioned thinking,” she identified them in herself. “I see these in me,” she said, “but I never had a name for them.” She also noted that her “conditioning” was causing her problems. Learning about “comfort zones,” she said, “I need to stretch my comfort zones.” And she did so, approaching people in ways she hadn’t tried, being non-aggressive. Frieda developed a vocabulary that helped her work on issues that kept her isolated. Most importantly, she gained self understanding that increased her motivation to change many of her behaviors.

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As Frieda’s behavior improved, some of the other women began to like her and offered friendship. In fact, Frieda even seemed to like herself. Gradually, she transformed her behavior even more. She developed potential that she said she knew, down deep, was there.

Over the several months before her release, Frieda remained in our programs. She had no behavior violations.

Frieda’s opportunity to learn more about her dysfunctional thinking enabled her to change her behavior. She re-established ties with her family. When she was released from jail, she was determined to make something of her life in this country.

Your contributions to Alternatives With Education make hope possible for Frieda and for women like her.