

# AWE

ALTERNATIVES WITH  
EDUCATION



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

*No further academic courses beyond the GED are offered at Potosi Correctional Center. Graduates of the GED program at PCC, however, asked for more classes, so one of our volunteers, a former college teacher of philosophy and math, responded. She began by offering an introductory course in a subject the graduates chose. Their first choice? Ethics. She followed that course with Literature, then Economics—both chosen by the men. By this time, other offenders at PCC wanted access to the program, so eventually it was offered to any man in the general population units who had a GED or a high school diploma. Additionally her classes were videotaped, so now anyone in the prison with access to a TV can learn from her classes broadcast over the closed circuit TV channel. Word has it that Introduction to Psychology is getting high ratings, and now viewers of the program want to take it in person.*

*The following was written by Michael in response to some questions given for homework in the Introduction to Communication course.*

### **To Think About:**

1. Pay attention to your conversations this week. When and how did you and others use indirect communication?

I noticed at work that a certain person, who is my friend, loves to argue a lot. A conversation came up between him and another person who is also my friend, about how the first person was not doing his share of the work. After awhile I was unfortunately brought into the conversation.

In order to not offend either party, I used indirect communication. I delivered a Meta-Message to communicate with them. I let them know how I felt about them arguing with each other about trivial issues, concerning who is doing what and when, and that we are wasting time by arguing about it when we could already be done with our work if everyone chipped in.

1. Watch for the ways you are framing your encounters. How would you define the frames you are using? Are you and your conversational partners using the same ones?

I think in the above communication, the frame was changed by me, as I did name it and change it to a less argumentative frame, a frame of reasoning things out. It was a daring move, as it could have caused both parties to be mad at me. But as we took on the new frame, we were able to put away the arguing and change the semantic noise. Since we all are friends, I tried to be careful in naming the frame, so I tried to use indirectness so I would not appear to be demanding or imposing. I tried to be respectful and fair to both parties.

*At the end of his assignment, Michael wrote:* I like this class on communication. I have learned a lot already [after two classes]. I'm looking forward to learning more. You are a very good teacher and easy to understand. Thank you for your time!

*It is obvious from the above answers that our students are learning more than information. They are putting what they learn into practice. In fact, their teacher tells us that the courses they want most are those in human behavior. Your contribution to Alternatives With Education can help provide new ways of thinking and behavior for people who are incarcerated.*

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