

AWE

ALTERNATIVES WITH
EDUCATION



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

A major part of the GED test is the essay. Fail the essay: fail the entire test. In Frankie's first attempt on the PreGED test, he failed the essay. Since then, he wrote many more essays and discovered in doing so that he liked to write. He composed the following essay at the age of 33, when he had spent more time in prison than he had been out. Shortly afterwards, he passed the GED on his first attempt, ranking in the 57th percentile in writing. We include his essay to show both the challenges our students face and the change they can make with the help of education.

ESSAY PROMPT: WHAT EVENT CHANGED YOUR LIFE IN A POSITIVE WAY?

On March 11, 1999, at 6:55 PM, my mother's body was found in a vacant building in North St. Louis. She was brutally murdered at the age of forty. I was in prison when I received the devastating news of my mother's death. I was very lonely, tearful, and lost. I couldn't even be released for her funeral. My mother and I were very close. She was always the one who I could go to in my time of need. I could talk to her about anything, and she always gave me the right answers to all my questions. However, after her death, I felt victimized. I lost my confidante. I felt like I couldn't trust anyone with my secrets and feelings. Furthermore, I felt like I didn't have anyone else that I could turn to. It took me some time to overcome these issues, but I decided to change my life. I learned how to be my own man and think for myself; I found God; and I learned about victims.

When I first came to prison, I thought it was cool to be a follower and do things that I saw others do. What I mean by that is, I started gambling and catching a lot of conduct violations which I thought was the thing to do. When my mother was killed, I then decided that it was time to change. Over the course of time, many people have shown me how to mature as an adult and be my own man.

The most positive thing I have done since the death of my mother was connecting with God. As a child I went to church but never knew who God was, nor did I know what it meant to be a follower of God. Since the death of my mother, I have begun to read my Bible and speak with God regularly. I noticed that by doing the work of God, things have been easier for me. I have a new direction in my life. I no longer have to put my faith in other individuals and do the negative things that I see them doing. God has laid out a plan for me, and in order for me to follow that plan I had to change my life.

Finally I learned more about victims. I know that everybody in prison has created victims in different ways. The ripple effect that I have caused was very powerful not just towards my victim's family but my family as well. I understand that creating a victim can be done in a lot of different ways. In my past I have created a lot of victims, but since my mother's death, I have matured and taken classes that have shown me how not to make additional victims. Thanks to the Impact of Crime on Victims class, I am now able to share my story and open up to other people for advice. I no longer make victims because my life has changed dramatically while I have been incarcerated at the Potosi Correctional Center.

In conclusion, the main event that changed my life was my mother's death. I would also like to add that I started to think for myself, I found God, and most of all I learned about victims. I now begin the next chapter in my life more aware of how my actions impact not only people in my immediate circle, but people connected to me in any way.

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