



December 2020

The Joy of Service

**I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.**
—Rabindranath Tagore

Can we talk about joy?

Yes, we're in the midst of very hard times, in our country and the world. Here at Human Kindness Foundation, we don't deny that truth. Aside from the headlines filled with disasters of all kinds, anyone who reads our mail knows countless stories of injustice, loss, heartbreak. Please know that we don't take your pain lightly. We also want you to know another side of the story. In those same stacks of mail, we read about tremendous hope, healing and yes, even joy. Please stay with us over these few pages to hear how some of our friends have found joy, and how they believe you can, too.



Sunny Jacobs spent 5 years on death row in Florida, and a total of 17 years in prison, before being exonerated. Her partner, the father of her children, was also exonerated, but it was too late for him: he was executed in 1990.

Sunny has been a dear friend and an inspiration to Human Kindness Foundation for decades. When we decided to talk about joy in difficult circumstances, we reached out to Sunny. The words below are her gift to you, sharing wisdom she has gained from a lifetime of living it.

Sunny and her husband Peter currently live in Ireland, where they run The Sunny Center, a retreat center for people who have been exonerated. From the center's website: **“Peter and I were both wrongly convicted and sentenced to death. Separately, we found that healing and forgiveness were the keys to a happy life afterwards. Now, through our foundation we are able to share our happiness and healing with many others.”** – Sunny Jacobs

They say we should not do good deeds in order to get a reward. But I don't think that's possible, because the reward is in the deed. When I do something for someone else, I am immediately rewarded by feeling good inside myself. No other reward is necessary.

It's an interesting thing about karma. When you finally get it balanced, your rewards are instant. Whenever I agree to go and talk about the worst things that ever happened to me, I am always given a gift by the universe. Usually, that comes in the form of a new friend. That doesn't mean that I don't pay the price of re-living my trauma. But I dedicate the pain to the people that might be helped by my presentation, by my opening and re-opening old wounds. I was asked recently, by a kind and thoughtful person, if there was any way to avoid the re-traumatization. I believe the answer is no, because your past is like your ass, it follows you wherever you go. You can't get away from it. The trick is to learn to sit comfortably on it.



You always have a choice. Even when it doesn't seem like there is a choice. When they bring your food tray to solitary confinement, you get to choose whether or not to eat what's on the tray. You get to choose whether to spend your days in fear, anger and frustration or creating an atmosphere of positivity and healing and inner peace. You can't give what you don't have, so if you want to help others you need tools to achieve a positive state of being. The tools I have used and that I recommend are yoga, meditation and prayer.

I learned these things while in solitary confinement facing a death sentence for five years. I spent another 12 years in general population afterward. I had a completely different perspective because of the five years that I had spent coming to terms with the possibility of my own death for a crime I did not commit. So when I was put into population, it was joyful. I could be with people again. I could eat with people and talk with people and walk with people. And I wanted to share my joy.

Joy is like love. The more you give away the more you are renewed and filled up again. And so I did service. I taught literacy and mathematics and joined groups to help make our prison a better place to be. I taught yoga and meditation, tools that had saved my life, literally, while I was sentenced to death. One of the resources that I came across was the book *We're All Doing Time*. When I was finally released, I was fortunate enough to be able to meet Bo and Sita Lozoff.

When we interview people now for the Sunny Center Foundation, an organization that my husband and I established to help

Children must early learn the beauty of generosity. They are taught to give what they prize most, that they may taste **the happiness of giving.**

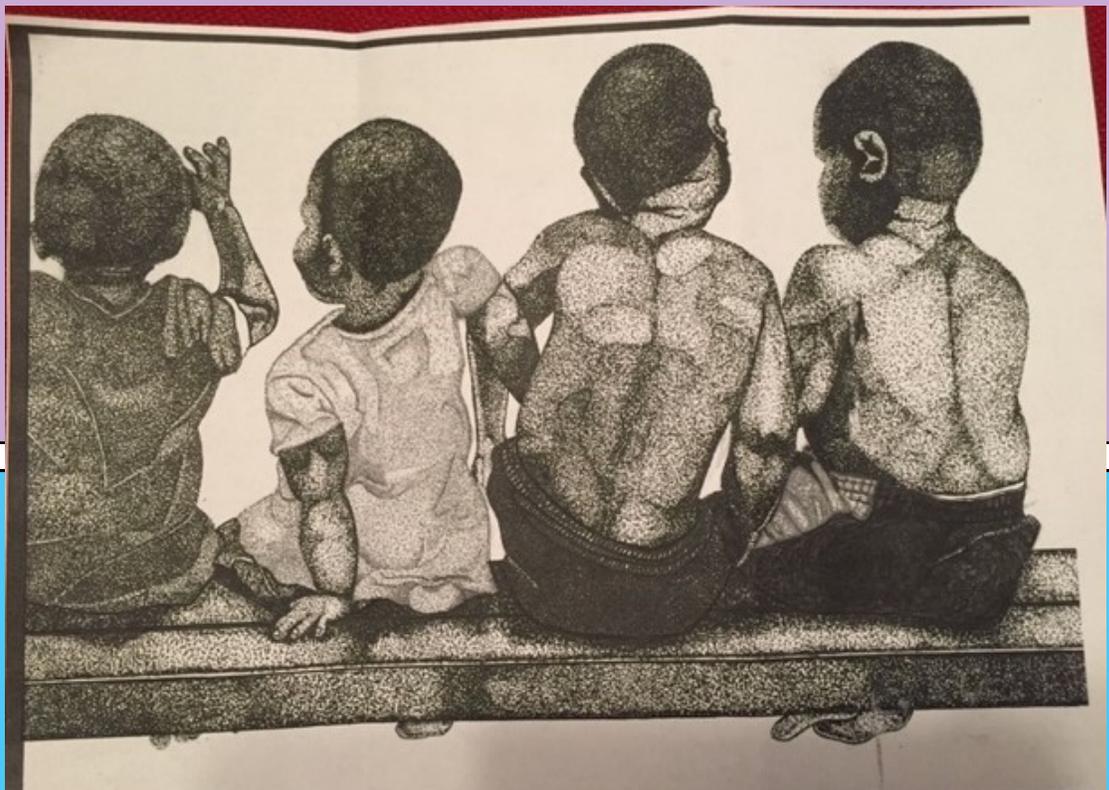
—Ohiyesa (AKA Charles Eastman), Sioux author and physician who treated Native American survivors of the Wounded Knee Massacre

other wrongly convicted people when they are released from prison, one of the first questions we ask is: "how did you spend your time when you were in prison?" As a general rule, people who make good use of their time in prison do better when they are released. I think it's because they have taken charge of their lives and done something positive, something to grow and improve themselves. That, in my mind, is what we are here for. If you can breathe, you can do it! If you can breathe, then it's not too late to start.

Service will bring you joy! Even if you are in solitary confinement, you can still do service by becoming the best person that you can be. Choosing a positive path for yourself contributes to the positive energy in the world, even from a death cell.

We are all together in this. Now, with the Covid quarantine, everyone is starting to realize this. It doesn't matter if you can be physically together. What matters is the energy that you put out and the energy with which you fill yourself up. Service can be as little as a smile. And today is a good time to begin. You can start by looking in the mirror, or the button on your sink, and give yourself a smile and a wink. Today is all you have, so make the most of it.

Peace and Love, Sunny Jacobs



The joy of serving others: “I have never been happier”

We're All Doing Time is directly responsible for the wonderful path my life is on. Although I am still incarcerated at a max security prison, **I have never been happier or more at peace in my life.** You recently sent me two more of Bo's books, and once again his words have moved me to make some changes in my life—mainly in the area of serving others.

I only have a couple more years of my sentence left, and I know when I'm released the only way I'll make it out there is to devote myself to helping others in any way I can. Although there is not a lot under my control in here, I do what I can here instead of waiting until I get out. I am fluent in Spanish, so I have been teaching English to the guys who only speak Spanish. I know it's not much, but it has given me the opportunity to meet a young man who is a seeker, and I told him that there is a Spanish translation of the book that changed my life. He is very excited about it!

I really felt moved to thank you for how much difference you and Bo have made in my life.

With great love & respect, JB



How Can I Help—especially when I'm in isolation?

There are two ways any of us can help others no matter how tight we are locked up or how free we can roam.

First, we can pray for others. Not just say we pray for others, but really spend time every day praying for others – whether that is person by person, the people in your institution, or all people everywhere. Prayer not only helps those we pray for, but it enlarges and softens our hearts as well when we actually spend time every day blessing others. Include everyone: friends, enemies, family, the staff at your facility, politicians....

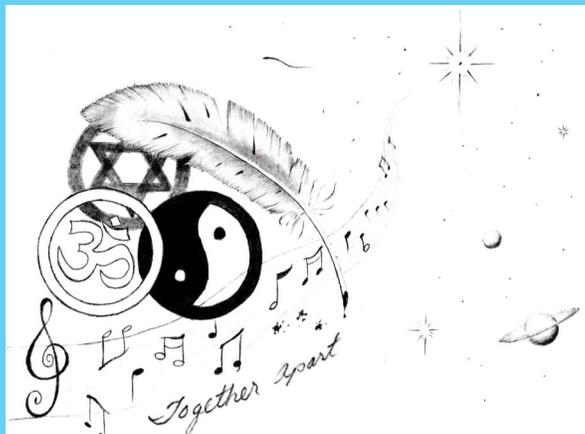
The second way we can help others is a little more subtle but very real: by keeping our own minds, bodies, and spirits in good shape. Every one of us who allows ourselves to get in bad shape drags the world down a little further. When we take decent care of mind, body and spirit, the world is a little lighter and we are more available to uplift others because we are not drowning in our own suffering.

It's a terrible thing to be locked up, but we always have power and we always have influence in the world, even if it is hard to see. Every bitter thought makes a more bitter world. Every thought of faith and love and blessing makes a world with less suffering.

In open population, when you have the opportunity to help others in obvious ways, please do that. You might teach people to read, help someone write a letter, give some commissary to sick people, join forces with others to do a kindness project of some sort, look out for young frightened newcomers. Take responsibility for your unit being a slightly safer, more decent place to live because you are there. These are all important things to do.

But when you are yanked out of those opportunities you still have your work to do: Pray for others, and keep yourself in good shape. This is basic spiritual survival and we hope our books and newsletters help you do these things.

“Together-Apart”: a time for meditation and prayer



Beloveds,

Our invitation to sit together-apart that was in our last newsletter had such a huge response, we felt we should run it again for those who might have missed it. I've heard from people inside and out as far away as Europe, and I personally look forward to our time together every week.

Here is one practice you might consider doing on Wednesday evenings:

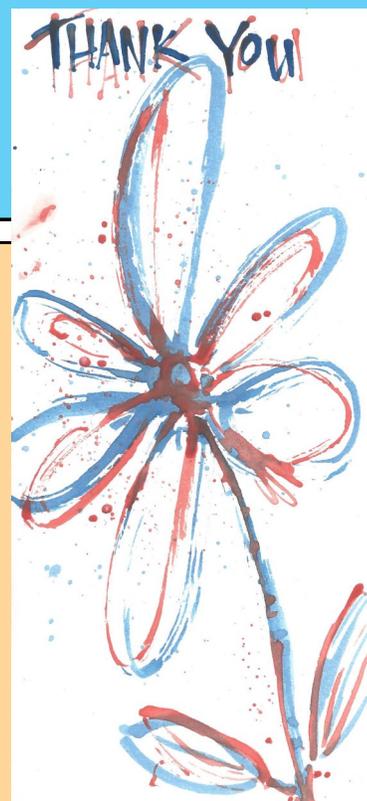
Start by sitting as quietly as possible and be aware of your breath coming in and going out. I notice that the breath going in is a little cooler than the breath going out. Then, still focusing on the breath, say silently to yourself: "May I be

peaceful, May I be healthy, May I be happy." Then, think of someone you care about, and repeat those three prayers for them. And now, dear ones, still using the breath as a reminder to stay present, extend that blessing to all beings in this world.

There is so much sorrow, fear, and uncertainty in our world right now, and I strongly believe that your blessings of compassion and love will help make the world a better place.

I love you all so much. "See" you on Wednesday evening! —Sita

Join us on Wednesdays from 7:00 to 8:00pm, using this practice or any meditation or prayer practice. If the timing doesn't work for you, choose any Wednesday time.



The joy of serving others: “we sit together without judgment”

Dear Sita,

My name is K. I am currently serving a 40 year sentence for drug related charges.

A few days ago, someone handed me your HKF newsletter, and I decided to write. I've heard a lot about the book *We're All Doing Time*, and I'd like a copy.

The world is a crazy place right now and being inside doesn't shelter us from it. Not only has Covid-19 slipped into many facilities, but racism runs rampant. Fear and hate surround us here in Montana, but so does hope, compassion and love.

Our world has literally been shutdown here: no visits, no church, no other religious gatherings, no outside volunteers, no family day, no child visits, no AA or NA or any outside contact. Time is hard right now! There's been an increase in fights, suicide attempts, and a general loss of hope. But **I've also seen some wonderful things: compassion & hope & love. Women comforting each other, giving each other hope** in a hopeless place and really sticking together.

At least 10 (out of 200) of us here sit "together-apart" with you on Wednesdays from 7-8pm. We are all of different beliefs, but we sit together anyway without judgment.

Thanks for your time and always be the change you want to see in the world.

Namaste, K.

Nine Paths to Forgiveness: Understanding Ourselves and Others

Now available free if you are incarcerated; \$9 for others.

Nine Paths to Forgiveness

Understanding Ourselves and Others



By Chris Canfield

This simple tool allows us to better know each other and ourselves. Which in turn allows us to be more forgiving of ourselves and others. —Tom Dodson. “Tall Tom” has shared his spiritual path with HKF’s readers during his 30+ years in prison and since his release in 2008.

Author Chris Canfield is a member of the Human Kindness Foundation Board of Directors and the Executive Director of Conservation Trust for North Carolina



This new book introduces the enneagram, a centuries-old tool for understanding personality differences and motivations. Written and illustrated especially for people who are incarcerated and the people who care about them, the book explores the 9 enneagram types. When we understand motivation, we can move toward forgiveness of ourselves and others.

Written by Chris Canfield; illustrated by Doug Meffert; cover art by Keron McHugh. 72 pages; paperback

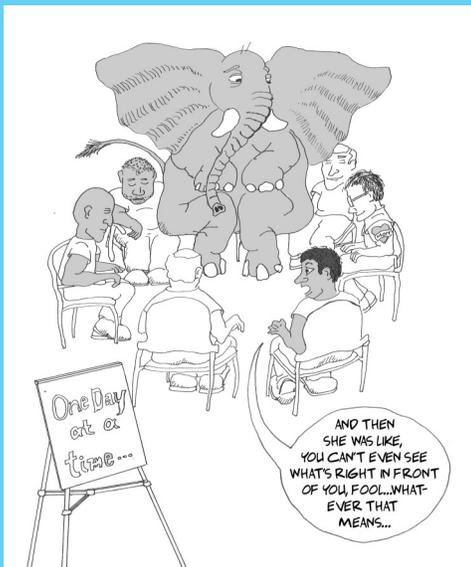
Request your free book by writing to: Human Kindness Foundation, PO Box 61619, Durham, NC 27715. If you are not incarcerated, please purchase the book at www.humankindness.org

From the Introduction:

The enneagram is much more than a personality typing system. It is meant to support you on your other personal paths of healing. Groups have used it as a complement to twelve-step programs by enhancing awareness of our addictive patterns, assisting our personal inventory, releasing our grievances and helping us to more wisely make amends.

The enneagram is also intended to be part of any spiritual journey. Each enneagram type has its unique ways to try to block our spiritual growth. True spiritual surrender asks us to live beyond the limits of one personality pattern. The enneagram offers a way to become aware of personality’s forms and tricks so we can free ourselves to become our evolving authentic self.

Drawings by professional cartoonist Doug Meffert make *9 Paths to Forgiveness* easier—and more fun—to read. Our thanks to Doug for his generous contribution of time and talent.



The enneagram does not put us in a box, it shows us the box we are already in—and the way out.

—Riso/Hudson, *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*

Letters



friend in a place where you can't trust anyone is getting to me. I'm sure I'll get through it but I'd like to hear what you think. I'm serving a 9 years sentence but I hope to parole in four years.

I appreciate you listening and hope to hear from you soon.
With love, B

Dear B,
We're sending you some books. I think you will enjoy them and find them useful. I read your letter carefully, B, and even read it a second time because I thought I had missed something. You see, your reaction worries you but sounds completely normal and expected to me. You're isolated, which is stressful, in a harsh environment, which is extra stressful. You reached out in conversation to someone that

you thought was a friend. That person rejected your friendship. And then you cried. The situation is difficult and unhealthy. Your reaction is human.

You also describe yourself as emotionally vulnerable and ask if that means you lack spiritual fortitude. What if it's the opposite? What if the fact that you are stronger now gives you the freedom to let yourself feel your real feelings? Facing your very human emotions might take courage.

I realize that it isn't always safe to show tears or vulnerability. I'm sorry that's your situation, and I can't advise you on the details of how to keep yourself safe. But I can say that, when you believe you are physically safe, letting your emotions come into your awareness can be a very healthy thing to do. Tears can be a healthy release of stress. So no, it doesn't sound to me like you lack spiritual fortitude.

I'm glad C introduced you to HKF, and I'm glad you wrote to us. We are honored to know you as you walk your spiritual path.

Peace and blessings,
Catherine

Dear Catherine,

I'm currently serving my second term. This one was stabbing and car-jacking, my first one was for aggravated robbery, so clearly I have a predilection for violence. My former celly and dear friend C turned me on to your newsletters and I can say I am very fond of your work.

I'd like to mention something I'm going through. I'm currently on quarantine although there is nothing medically wrong with me and the time down in my cell is stressful. Today I had a conversation with an individual that I thought of as my friend and it turns out he was holding some things against me and wants nothing to do with me. By the end of the conversation I broke out in tears. I'm not in any form of crisis. I got those days out of the way on my first number, but I was surprised to be feeling so emotionally vulnerable. The last time I broke down was when I was fresh in county and I was looking at a life sentence and my family wasn't speaking to me. It felt like everything was crashing down on me.

I don't know if I'm lacking in spiritual fortitude at the moment or if the built up stress of quarantine and losing a



Good day and God bless,

I hope you can help me. I asked the Lord to come into my life, and then I really felt love and happiness. But not long afterwards, I lost my mother and my spirit fell into a bottomless pit and is still there. I then got a letter from my best friend who told me that his health is poor and he's ready for the Lord to come. Now I ask myself why would the Lord take these people away from me? I lost the relationship with my children the day I came to prison over four years ago. Now I have no one! I have thirteen more years to do, and I don't see any light. My inmate friends keep telling me that the Lord still loves me, which I believe but don't feel. I need to get back on track but all my pain is keeping me away.

I strongly believe that a person needs to be loved by others to give love to others, and this goes back to my children and family members. I know I need to change my outlook, and this is where I need the most help. I look forward to your reply.

God bless you all, M

Dear M,

Thank you for your letter. I'm sorry for your suffering, dear.

I wanted to talk to you first about the loss in your life, and why the Lord allowed the loss of your mom and your friend. Loss is one of the biggest and most painful life lessons that we have. Life on this plane of existence is pass-



ing. Even the sun will die some day. Everything that comes, goes. That is the dance of physical form. It's not personal, and God is not punishing you, although I know that's how it feels sometimes. Our challenge here is to learn to appreciate and love the forms that come into our lives and be grateful for them while they grace our lives, grieve them when they leave, but always go back to trusting life on life's terms. We need to find new ways to love without total dependence upon the forms for our sense of well being. No one gets to face life without loss. We all even lose our own bodies at some point. I've known some folks who suffered a loss and then just gave up—never trying to be happy again. It's sad, but within ourselves we can find the courage to let the grief be, and then let it go too when the time is right.

I'm sorry about the pain of being out of touch with your children. Some family ties come back to us, and some don't. But you can send them your love in your prayers, on a soul level, where we are all connected. Pray for their health and happiness.

And, M dear, I disagree with your statement, "I strongly believe that a person needs to be loved by others to give love to others." That's conditional love: you do something for me, and then I'll love you. True love is its own reward. It is totally possible to give love without any expectation of reward. Our Sita is a shining example of that unconditional love. It doesn't matter to her if someone returns her motherly love or not, she loves anyway.

Jesus said, "Love those who hate you and pray for those who persecute you." This is how your heart can change, M dear. Following these words of Jesus can be your path, and when you fail, you can try again.

Love, Donna

Help **O**ther **P**eople **E**veryday



The joy of serving others: "I feel I've been called to reach others"

My name is D. I am a 48 year old woman. I came across your organization a few years ago while I was serving time for a drug related charge. I spent about 2 years incarcerated, and it was the lowest point in my life. I could not understand how I had landed in those circumstances. At the very beginning of my stay, I came across *We're All Doing Time* and subsequently ordered two other books from the Human Kindness Foundation. I began doing the simple movements. I had not thought about physical activity in years due to my addiction. I was able to look at this time as a much needed sequester from the world that was there to bring me into wholeness again. I treated my incarceration as if I had voluntarily embarked on a spiritual journey in a foreign country. I used the time to heal mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. When I was released, I found a yoga studio where I could continue my practice and become certified to teach.

Yoga and meditation changed my life, my direction, and everything about my world and my perspective. It was the foundation that allowed me to see things differently and release the things I clung to. I feel I've been called to reach others, and now I teach "Yoga of 12 Step Recovery," which I take to people in sober living communities.

Thank you for all you do. This foundation and its ideals touched me and transformed my life. All **the inner joy and peace I have today are a result of the journey I consciously chose** after reading your books. Thank you!!

Many thanks to the artists: pg 1: Richard Woodrum, Ione CA; Jesse Kranz, Moose Lake MN; pg 2: Tony Summers, Raleigh, NC; pg 3: Steven Dean Parks, San Quentin CA; pg 4: Joe (Robert) Swainston, Rosharon TX; Michael Womack, Gatesville TX; pg 6: Mayra Perez, Chowchilla CA; Donnie Joe Mayne, Lamesa TX; page 7: Edwin Rivera, Dallas PA; pg 8: Jessica Hampton, Goodyear AZ.



humankindness.org

PO Box 61619
Durham, NC 27715



**Life's most persistent
and urgent question is:**

**What are you
doing for others?**

**—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther
King, Jr.**