



Fighting for Change

Missouri Juvenile Justice Association

May, 2023



Objectives

- Identify 4 principles for working with marginalized youth.
- Discuss the process for building mentoring relationships.
- List steps for your personal commitment to fight for change.



Bryan Stevenson

Lawyer, social justice activist, law professor at New York University School of Law, and the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative

Movie: *Just Mercy*



PRINCIPLE #1

POWER IN PROXIMITY

- Get to know kids
- Listen
- Understand their stories
- Affirmation



PRINCIPLE #2

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

- Fear, Anger, Oppression
- Conflict, Distrust
- Presumption of Guilt



PRINCIPLE #3

STAY HOPEFUL

- Hopelessness is the enemy of justice.
- Keep fighting for justice.



PRINCIPLE # 4

BE WILLING TO DO THINGS THAT ARE UNCOMFORTABLE AND INCONVENIENT

- Joy and Agony
- Mercy, Compassion, Justice
- Redemption, Humanity



Mentoring Relationships

- Mentoring must be based on a real and caring relationship.
- Mentoring requires trust and commitment.
- Mentoring requires patience and perseverance.
- Mentoring requires a belief that success is possible.



RELATIONSHIPS

- A mentor will be successful ONLY if there is a trusting and caring relationship.
- Building the relationship takes time.



Relationships

- A caring relationship weathers the tough times.
- Walk the talk. Be a model.
- A sense of humor helps.



TRUST and COMMITMENT

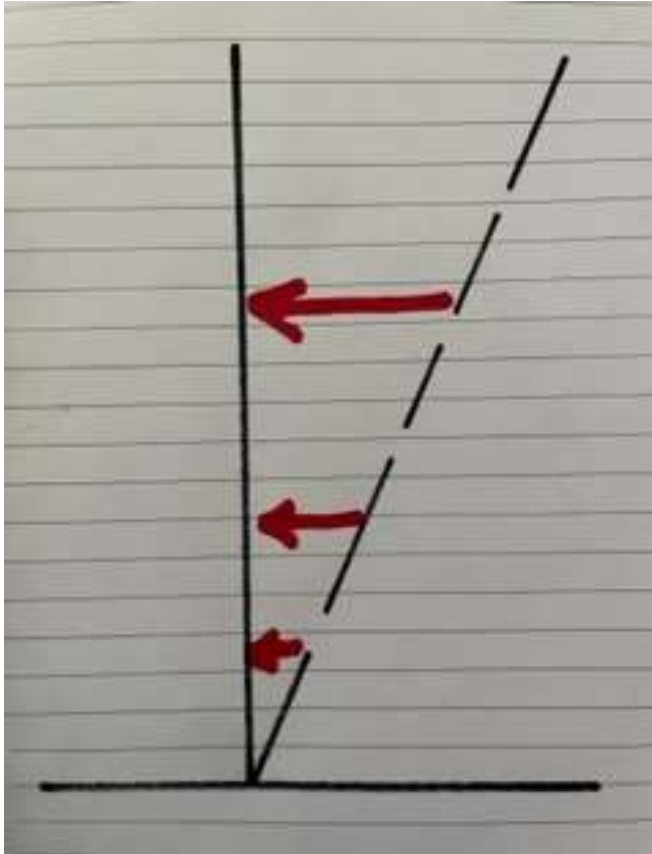
- Honest conversations must occur – about life choices, future goals, decisions, emotions, and frustrations.
- Ground rules need to be set – confidentiality, privacy, legal ramifications.



Trust and Commitment

- Share your values. Don't shy away from the difficult conversations.
- Sometimes the most loving thing we can do is hold our mentees accountable for their decisions.

Tools to Use



Tools to Use





PATIENCE & PERSEVERANCE

- There will be setbacks.
- There will be frustration.
- There will be communication issues.

- **DON'T GIVE UP !!!!**



Patience and Perseverance

- Learn to wait for the right time to talk.
- Use mistakes as teachable moments.
- Love them anyway.



SUCCESS IS POSSIBLE!

- We know that one person can make a powerful difference in the life of another person.
- Will you be that person?



What Do The Kids Say?

- Everybody deserves a second chance.
- We are all going through something.
- Kids make mistakes.
- Learn our background.
- We are more than criminals.
- We need people to talk to.
- We need mentors on the outside.



What Do The Kids Say?

- Get to know us before you judge us.
- Don't mistreat us.
- Don't throw our charges in our face.
- Have empathy. Walk in our shoes.
- Don't give up on us.
- Show us that you care.



What Do The Kids Say?

- Understand our story.
- Treat us the way you want to be treated.
- Don't let the power of the job go to your head.
- Don't feed a kid a lie.
- We need mentors while we are locked up.



What Do the Kids Say?

From an 18 year old female who has been in the system four years:

“We need staff! We need people who really care who can be enthusiastic and can provide programs to help us. Please show us empathy and feel what we feel. We don’t need judgment. We need you to go on this journey with us.”



What Do The Kids Say?

It's Me

He tells you he don't need you with those sad empty eyes; he claims he's got it all handled, yeah, he tells you all those lies.

Don't help me, I can deal with my problems so he will say, can't you see he's begging for help in the worse way?

He says move around but means I need you bad.
He said it don't matter but it means he's going mad.

I beg you, don't believe him, he's broken and he cries.
He stops from taking action on thoughts of suicide.

But no one really cares. He wants to be free.
I know what I am saying because he..... is me.



PERSONAL PLAN

- Who needs your help?
- Who can you easily find time for?
- Personal or Professional Connection?



PERSONAL PLAN

- When?
- Where?
- How Often?
- Family Involvement?
- Accountability?
- Length of time?

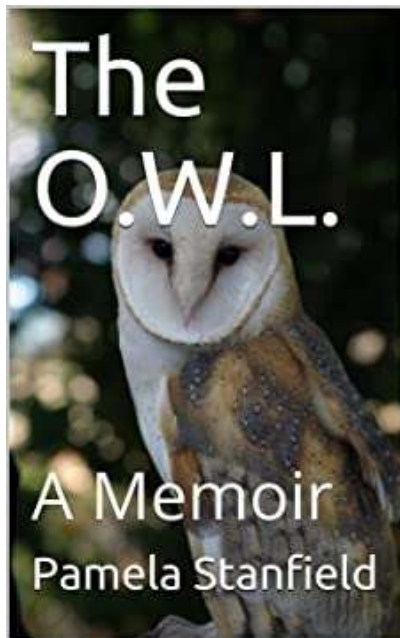


THANK YOU

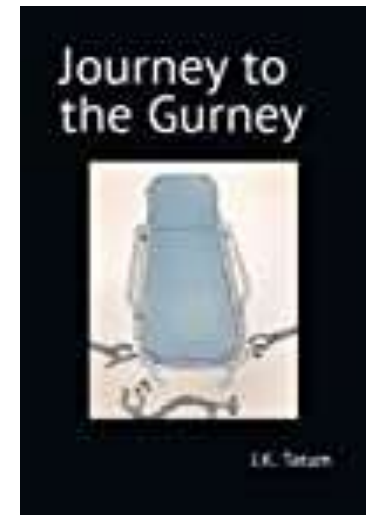
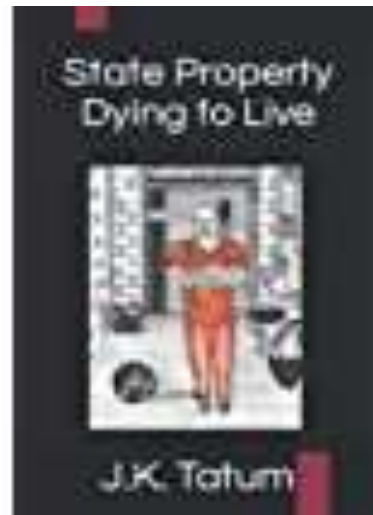
Sincere thanks go to all the young men and women I have mentored or spent time with while they were detained who have given me permission to share their stories.



Books- Pamela Stanfield



Lasting Legacy – J.K. Tatum





Thank you!

- Thank you for attending today. You do make a difference every day!
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