

NEW MEXICO
CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

DIGITAL MAGAZINE

PARALLELS

VOLUME 2 / EDITION 1
JANUARY 2026

find

the

balance

within

you



**The New Mexico
Martin Luther King Jr.
State Commission
Invites You to
Participate in
“Dream Week.”**



“Dream Week” is designed to help individuals of all circumstances - whether at home or in correctional facilities - honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through a week of accessible, meaningful activities.

From January 12 - 19, participants can engage in daily reflections, creative expression, acts of kindness, and storytelling.

Each activity includes simple materials, brief instructions, and selected excerpts from Dr. King’s writings to inspire thought, discussion, and personal growth.

This series of exercises encourages participants to reflect on Dr. King’s vision for justice, equality, and community, while providing practical ways to carry his principles into everyday life.

Ask your SOE (Supervisor of Education) how you can participate!

3
Semester
Program



The Electrical Systems Certificate Program

- * 18-24 months to the door
- * 3 semester program
- * Must have clear conduct
- * High school diploma or equivalent
- * NMSU-Grants enrollment required
- * FAFSA completion required

Ask Education For More Details



**NEW MEXICO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT'S
ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**



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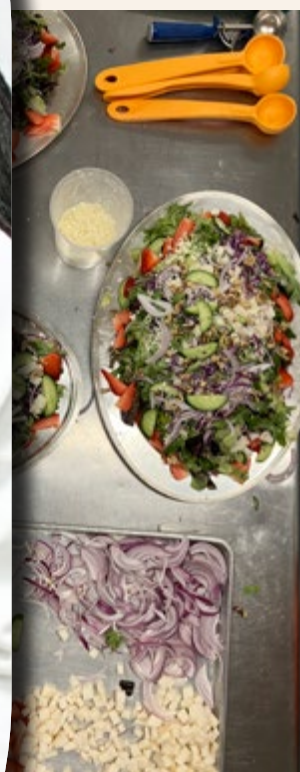
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AAA Food Handler's ServSafe Course



Get your food handler's card.

**90 Days to the
Door.**

**Contact the Education Department
for more information and to enroll.**

THE 2026 RESOLUTION SOLUTION

26 Ways to “Do Your Future Self a Favor” in the New Year



Your New Year's resolutions can help take you down new roads, toward new destinations.

It's a New Year! This is a time when many of us reflect on how the decisions we made in the past year worked out for us (or didn't); how our quality of life can be maximized; how we can set and work toward new personal goals; and how we can better ourselves. It's the perfect time to “check in” with ourselves, hold ourselves accountable for our past missteps, and assess our plans for the future. Of course, many New Year's resolutions are focused on physical fitness and health, but we shouldn't ignore the opportunities that exist for us to expand our minds; further our education; heal our hearts and souls; adjust our perspective; and do some mental or spiritual self-evaluation.

You may already know exactly what you want to work on and achieve in 2026, but if you're not sure how to make this year one of your best yet, we've assembled a list of New Year's resolutions that you may want to consider adopting for yourself.

1) Resolve to Focus on (Accentuate) the Positive.

You may or may not be old enough to remember the old Johnny Mercer song called, “Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive.” In part, the lyrics go:

You've got to ac-cent-tchu-ate the positive

E-lim-i-nate the negative

Latch on to the affirmative

Don't mess with Mr. In-Between

You've got to spread joy up to the maximum

Bring gloom down to the minimum

Have faith, or pandemonium

Liable to walk upon the scene

The message of the song, of course, is that the way we feel about our situation – and the result of our efforts – is largely determined by our perspective. Healthy positive thinking creates positive opportunities and developments and a negative attitude usually delivers negative results. As they say, “The grass isn't greener on the other side; it's greener where you water it.”

The New Year is a great time to work on reframing your situation in your own mind and evaluating how you can make the most of the opportunities that exist for you. Instead of allowing your thoughts to start with, “I'm in prison, so I can't...,” flip the script and tell yourself, “Because I'm in prison, I have the opportunity and time to...” Here, you might “fill in the blank” with thoughts like “finish my GED,” “get sober,” “train for a career,” “get a college degree,” etc.

It may be hard to believe, but despite the difficulties of incarceration, your current situation actually puts you at an advantage in a variety of ways.

***“It is never too late
to ask yourself,
‘Am I ready to change my life,
am I ready to change myself?’
However old we are,
whatever we went through,
it is always possible to be reborn.
If each day is a copy of the last one,
what a pity!
Every breath is a chance
to be reborn.”***

~ Shams Tabrizi

**If you're ready
to change your life,
ask Education and / or
Behavioral Health staff
at your facility how to choose
the programming options
that are right for you.**



GET FORKLIFT CERTIFIED!

Ask
Education
to be added to the next class list.



- ✓ 4-hour training course.
- ✓ Hands-on use of equipment.
- ✓ Requirement: 2.5 years or less to release.
- ✓ Certification can be used for employment in any field where forklifts are used.



The more you train your brain to always focus on the "silver lining," the easier it becomes to do so.

Think about a person who wants to get their college degree on the outside. In order to do so, they will need to figure out how to pay their tuition; how to balance classes with the job that they'll need in order to pay their tuition; how to arrange and pay for childcare while they are at both school and work; how to make time for parents and other family members who may need assistance; how to fit in study time and ensure that they keep their grades up; how to make time to meet with academic advisors to ensure that they're taking the right classes; how to fit in time to shop and cook for themselves and their family (or how to afford to eat out); how to pay their rent; how to find the time and energy to keep their house tidy for themselves and their children; how to arrange and pay for transportation for themselves and their kids to and from work and school (by keeping on top of car repairs and fuel expenses or bus fare)... and the list goes on.

For you, however, you can simply meet with the Supervisor of Education (SOE) in your facility, who will guide you through submitting your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid); help you determine what types of financial aid you may be eligible for; help you apply to the university of your choice; and assist you along every step of the way as you work toward your diploma. You won't be distracted from your studies by shopping for groceries; cooking meals; paying rent; caring for children; arranging and paying for childcare; working full- or part-time; keeping a household

clean; visiting and helping older family members; finding and paying for transportation to your classes; or... you get the idea.

So, why not USE this time to focus on something that will last you a lifetime and help you build a better life for yourself and your family? The time you spend in prison will pass no matter what. Why not look back on your sentence as a transformative period, with a High School Equivalency (HSE), college degree, or professional certification in hand? Accentuate the positive!

2) Resolve to Think in Systems, Not Goals.

As attributed to Scott Clary,

"The skill that changed my life: Learning to think in systems, not goals.

Goals say, 'Lose twenty pounds.' Systems say, 'Never eat alone. Always walk during calls. Don't let bad food into the house.' Goals rely on willpower. Systems rely on environment."

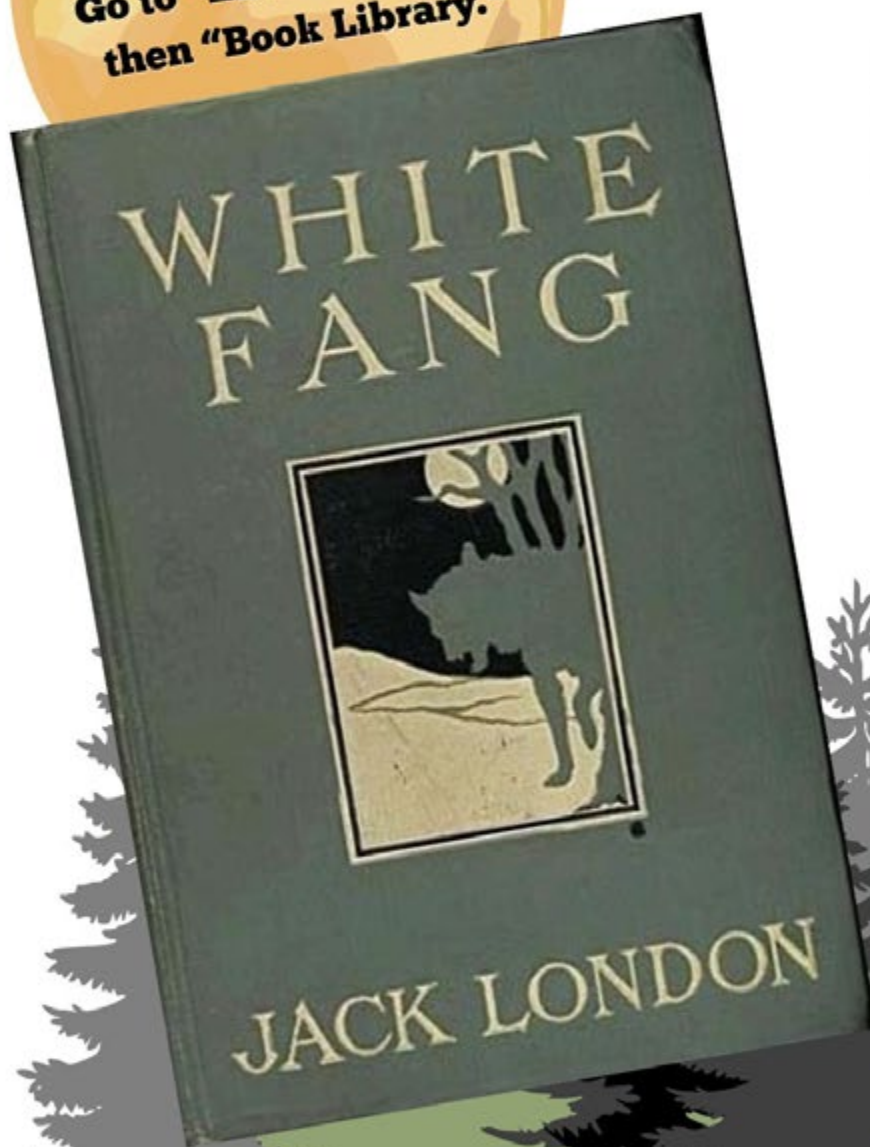
For you, for example, this might mean reframing your goal of getting your GED or HSE to focus on the system that will get you there. That might mean controlling your environment by designing a system that includes things like enrolling in the "Essential Education" program; studying for three hours each day; making a rule for yourself that you can't have your mid-morning snack until you've read the next

New Book Club Selection:

White Fang

By Jack London

Read it for **FREE**
on your
NMCD Tablet:
Go to "Entertainment,"
then "Book Library."



**Ask your Supervisor of Education how to participate
and potentially be featured in a podcast episode!**



Your physical health is a blessing; do all you can to protect it during your incarceration and beyond.

chapter of your text book; self-mandating that you study for one hour after each meal; meeting with a tutor on a regular basis, etc. In other words, focus on the means instead of the end.

Focusing on systems instead of goals will help you build a routine that becomes so natural that, before you know it, you'll turn around to discover that, just by living your life by your newly adopted commitments, you've reached your goal!

3) Resolve to Prioritize Your Physical Health.

As they say, "health is wealth," and despite being incarcerated, you have an opportunity to invest in the health of your mind and your body each and every day. Improve your cardiovascular health by committing to a walking or running routine; gain muscle mass by strength training; calm your nerves by adopting a regular yoga practice; or explore some other form of regular exercise. Not only will working out "detox" your mind of troubling thoughts and help you get into a healthy daily routine, but investing in your health will improve your life now and well into the future.

Regular exercise has been proven to reduce stress and anxiety; improve sleep quality; boost brain health; increase self-esteem and confidence; support mood regulation; reduce inflammation; improve memory and cognitive function; enhance mental resilience; and even promote social connections when you pursue your fitness goals alongside others.

You can even use your exercise routine to create bonds with your kids or other family members on the outside. Why not challenge them to walk or run at home while you do the same inside? Sometimes making an agreement to try to reach similar goals and keep each other accountable can help you both stay committed to your new resolution.

When considering your physical health, don't forget about improving your sleep hygiene. Be sure to read this issue's article titled, "Sweet Dreams are Made of This," which explains how focusing on your sleep schedule can make you healthier, happier, and even smarter!

4) Resolve to Explore Behavioral Health Opportunities.

Some people assume that Behavioral Health programming within the NMCD is geared exclusively toward substance abuse and mental health recovery. However, Behavioral Health has a variety of programming options available that can help you become a healthier, more well-rounded person even if you don't struggle with addiction or mental illness. We should all strive to improve our minds, hearts, and souls, and Behavioral Health programming can be an effective way to do so.

Whether it be enrolling in anger management classes; preparing for life after release; coping with depression; learning how to reject criminal thinking; or working toward being a more

EARN YOUR GED/HSE

right from your tablet.

It's free.

Learn at your own pace.

Leave with more than time served,

leave with an education!

"I got my GED,
and so can
you!"

Look for Essential Ed
in the "Education"
folder on your tablet,
then click to enroll.



essential
education

compassionate and empathetic person, there are so many ways that Behavioral Health programming can guide you toward being your best self.

Be sure to contact Behavioral Health staff in your facility to find out what types of Behavioral Health programs are available to you and how you can enroll in the one that suits you best.

Or jump into the Atlas app on your tablet to explore what's available there - it's free!

5) Resolve to Commit to Your Recovery.

A very common New Year's resolution for many people – both inside prison and on the outside – is to commit to a new chapter of sobriety or to stay on track with their long-term recovery. Whether you're considering getting clean and sober for the very first time; you're trying to maintain your long-standing recovery; or you're ready to try to get off of substances again after a few - or many - previous attempts, there is a recovery program that's right for you.

Check out the article titled, "Catching the Chain Part 1" in Volume 1, Edition 1 of Parallels (January 2025) to find out about the many Behavioral Health programs that can help you get – and stay – on track with your recovery. Whether it be RDAP (Residential Drug Abuse Program), IOP (Intensive Outpatient Addictions Treatment Programs), or some other recovery program, Behavioral Health can introduce you to the right fit for you.

6) Resolve to Become a Certified Peer Support Worker.

If you are a person who has been in active recovery for three or more years, and you feel a calling to help others reach their recovery goals, then becoming a Certified Peer Support Worker (CPSW) might be a possibility for you.

CPSW's are not only rewarded by assisting other incarcerated people in reclaiming their lives, but they can also find gainful employment in the Behavioral Health field upon their release. CPSW's work in Behavioral Health settings like clinics, emergency rooms, crisis lines (like 988), and more. The very thing that has caused you to become incarcerated – your lived experience – could also qualify you for a stable, well-paid, and fulfilling career on the other side of your prison sentence.



Your incarceration provides an excellent opportunity to focus on your substance abuse and / or mental health recovery.

Be sure to read the article titled, "Turning Struggle Into Strength" that appeared in Volume 1, Edition 3 of Parallels (July 2025), which explains the process of becoming a CPSW, and then reach out to your Supervisor of Education (SOE) to find out more about starting your CPSW journey.

7) Resolve to Adopt an Attitude of Gratitude.

As attributed to Melody Beattie, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more."

Viewing our lives from a vantage point of gratitude has a surprisingly transformative effect. While many of us focus on gratitude around the Thanksgiving holiday, the New Year is actually another great time to meditate on the concept of being grateful for all we have (as well as being grateful for the opportunity to achieve more).

HEAVY EQUIPMENT CERTIFICATION 2026



A

Trade



- 16 Week Course
- Hands-on Training
- NCCER Instructor-Led Classes
- Certified in 3 Types of Equipment
- Seating is Limited
- 6-8 Months to the Door

**Ask Education
How To Enroll In
This In-Demand Class!**



If you have kids, make 2026 the year you learn how to be the best parent you can be.

Being grateful for each and every new day and recognizing the potential that each day offers us enables us to live a happier and more hopeful life.

One practice that can help keep you focused on gratitude throughout the coming year (and beyond!) is to keep a gratitude journal or list, or a gratitude jar or box. Each morning or evening, simply write down one thing for which you are grateful. You can write it in your journal or on your list or write it on a slip of paper that will be added to a jar or box. You can even decorate your gratitude jar or box. You may also want to include your family in this practice by having them do the same and then exchanging your lists, jars, or boxes on Thanksgiving Day or next New Year's Day, if possible.

But even if you decide to make this a personal and private practice, looking back over your gratitude entries from the past can help remind you that there is always something for which to be grateful. Every day might not be great, but there is something great in every day.

You can also deepen your gratitude practice by resolving to tell one person each day (either verbally or in writing) what it is that you appreciate about them. Whether it be a fellow inmate, a facility staff member, a family member, or someone else, doing so will help you focus on your gratitude practice and also make them feel great about themselves. A win-win!

8) Resolve to Become a Better Parent!

If you have kids, then being a parent is the most important job you'll ever have. Just because you're not with your kids right now doesn't mean that you can't commit to improving your parenting skills.

There are many parenting classes and programs available to you inside your facility that will teach you how to be the very best parent that you can be – both while you're inside and, if circumstances allow, after you're able to return to your family.

Becoming a better parent doesn't just mean improving your children's lives; parenting classes will teach you a lot about yourself and will enable you to be more supportive to your parenting partner(s). So, the simple act of enrolling in a parenting class can have ripple effects in your family and beyond for generations to come!

Contact your SOE to inquire about the parenting courses that are available at your facility or jump into the Atlas app on your state-issued tablet for a self-paced class. Then, prepare to become the best mom, dad, or step-parent that you can be!

9) Resolve to Get that HSE.

Even if getting your High School Equivalency has been on your "to do list" for years, now is a great time to finally take the plunge and make it happen! Getting your HSE will help you qualify for more jobs; better-paying jobs; Post-Secondary Education opportunities; and Career Technical Programming.

As reported in the article titled, "Catching the Chain Part 2," in Volume 1, Edition 2 of Parallels (April 2025), obtaining a high school diploma or equivalency increases a person's earning potential by over twenty-five percent!

As has been voiced by many other inmates, getting your HSE will also give you a life-changing boost of self-confidence. Be sure to listen to Season 1,

NMCD's CAREER TECH PROGRAMMING

IS NOT
JUST
ABOUT



MAKING A LIVING,



IT'S ABOUT MAKING A LIFE!

**Ask Education
how to get started!**



Take the next step toward your High School Equivalency (HSE) or college degree; you won't regret it.

Episode 2 of the “Inside Voices” podcast (available in the “Information” folder of your tablet), titled, “Learning Lounge.” In it, you’ll hear the stories of various NMCD inmates who have transformed their lives and their own self-image by earning their HSE.

Be sure to talk to your facility’s Supervisor of Education (SOE) to find out how to get started!

10) Resolve to Enroll in “Essential Education.”

If you have decided that it’s time to start working toward your HSE, consider enrolling in the free tutoring program that’s available on your state-issued tablet called, “Essential Education.”

Simply look for “Essential Education” in the “Education” folder on your tablet, then click to enroll. It is designed to assess your current knowledge base and then create a customized study plan for you that will allow you to focus on the areas in which you need to improve. It won’t require you to study the topics in which you’re already strong (wasting your time); it will help you strategically work on the areas that you need to strengthen.

Your SOE can answer any questions you may have about the program, and you can also refer back to the article titled, “Essential Education” in Volume 1, Edition 2 of Parallels (April 2025) to find out more.

11) Resolve to Take Your Future to New Heights by Jumping Aboard a UFO!

If you are already working toward your High School Equivalency (HSE); are within one year of your release; and are 24 years old or younger, then you might qualify for the Unearthing Future Opportunities (UFO) Program, which can potentially allow you to earn a \$150 stipend upon receiving your HSE!

The UFO Program can also provide help with financial literacy; résumé writing; interview skills; career readiness workshops; employment; and / or paid training program placement upon your release! So, ask your SOE about whether you are eligible to enroll!

12) Got Your HSE? Resolve to Enroll in College!

Even if you’ve already earned your HSE, you’re not done yet! Your Adult Basic Education credential positions you to enroll in college courses, and to potentially earn your Associate’s Degree, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree, and beyond!

Even if you started college in the past and had your education interrupted, now is a great time to resume your college career. Bridge the gap to that graduation cap!

Season 1, Episode 3 of the “Inside Voices” podcast,

**NMCD's
Transition Skills
Course
will allow you to say,**

***"I don't know
what comes next,
but I know
I'll be ready
for it."***

**If you are six months or less to the door,
ask your Supervisor of Education (SOE)
about enrolling.**



Transition Skills Course

**A nine week, peer-led class that will prepare you
to succeed on the outside.**

titled “OWL - Opening the World of Learning,” offers various stories from NMCD inmates who have earned an Associate’s Degree, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree, and even a PhD while incarcerated. You will find it in the “Information” folder of your tablet. You will also learn a lot about Post-Secondary Education opportunities in the Parallels article titled, “Higher Ground.” You will find it in Volume 1, Edition 2 (April 2025).

The first place to start when pursuing a college degree is filling out your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), so reach out to your SOE right away to get started on that.

13) Resolve to Become an Education Tutor.

Do you have a knack for teaching and explaining things to people? Is there an academic subject in which you excel? If so, reach out to your SOE to find out if you might be eligible to serve as a tutor for your fellow students.

Education tutors are not only able to contribute to their fellow students’ success, but they can potentially be paid for their work and enjoy the opportunity to learn their favorite subjects even more thoroughly!

Remember,

2 teach is

2 touch a life

4ever!

14) Resolve to Discover the Power of Affirmations

A good piece of advice is to be careful how you speak to yourself, because you are always listening. Remember that the way you speak to yourself shapes your reality. You may find that negative, critical, or even abusive voices from your past echo in your mind, but that makes it all the more important to drown them out with loving, caring self-talk of your own.

One way to do this is to develop some self-care affirmations for yourself. Affirmations, also called positive affirmations, are phrases that, when repeated regularly, can improve the way you think and feel about yourself and change negative thoughts and behavior patterns.

According to Corey Yeager, PhD, a Minneapolis-based licensed marriage and family therapist and



If you can believe it, you can achieve it. Make 2026 your best year yet!

the author of, “How Am I Doing?: 40 Conversations to Have With Yourself,” “Affirmations are free and easy to practice anywhere, anytime, so they’re a really accessible tool for coping with stressful current events.”

You can say your affirmations out loud, repeat them in your head, or write them down. Doing so will help encourage self-esteem and wellbeing. They work by replacing negative self-talk and helping you reframe how you think about yourself. For example, if you find yourself having a negative, self-critical thought like, “I’m a bad person,” or “I’ll never amount to anything,” stop yourself and take that opportunity to redirect your mind by changing that thought to, “I’ve made mistakes, but I’m learning everyday how to be a better person,” “I am more than my mistakes,” or, “I am using my time here in prison to ensure that my future will be better than my past.”

The use of affirmations can improve your self-esteem; support behavioral changes; and help you perform better under stress (like, when taking an exam for school, appearing before the Parole Board, or interviewing for a job). Some Behavioral Health professionals even believe that by practicing affirmations every single day, we may be able to create new pathways in the brain (essentially, “rewiring our brain”).

Start by picking your affirmation. Decide on a purpose, keep it short, and keep it authentic (make sure it’s true). Decide how and when you’ll use it and stick with your plan. Some people choose an affirmation that they can practice in the morning to help them have a more focused and motivated day. Others prefer to recite affirmations at the end of the day to calm themselves, regulate their nervous system, and help them sleep. Or you can certainly do both!

The beauty of affirmations is that they can remain completely private and are 100% customizable. You can create affirmations that are perfectly suited to your own unique needs.

Some examples of affirmations that may be helpful for you include: “I’m going to be ok,” “I am learning and growing everyday,” “I can build success from where I am right now,” “Today, I will be my best self,” or, “I will make the rest of my life the best of my life.” Some people prefer to combine their affirmations with their spiritual or religious practice, but it’s not necessary to do so. Just speaking kindly and encouragingly to yourself

on a regular basis is the key. So, give it a try!

15) Resolve to Become a Peer Educator with Project ECHO.

Do you have an interest in making an important contribution to your incarcerated community in the form of providing health education? If so, then becoming a Peer Educator with Project ECHO (Extended Community Healthcare Outreach) might be perfect for you. Peer Educators present classes to their fellow inmates on a variety of health topics, from preventing Hepatitis C, to common infectious diseases, STD’s (sexually-transmitted diseases), addiction, relapse prevention, and overdose prevention.

If becoming a Peer Educator with Project ECHO sounds interesting to you, start by reading the article titled, “Peer Factor” that appeared in Volume 1, Edition 1 of Parallels (January 2025) and then reach out to your Unit Manager to find out how you can become involved in this important health education initiative.



Becoming a Peer Educator is a great way to strengthen your community and lift others up.

**“Approach the New Year
with resolve to find
the opportunities hidden
in each new day.”**

~Michael Josephson

Start
Here.

Do you
have your
high school
diploma or
GED?



No.



Yes.



Do you
want to
get your
GED?



Do you
want to
go to
college?



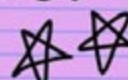
Yes.



No.



Yes.



No.



Let your
SCE
know!



Why
not?!



Let your
SCE
know!



Why
not?!



Ask your
SCE how
education
can change
your life!



16) Resolve to Start a Career Tech Program.

Wouldn't it feel fantastic to return to your family with a Career Technical Certification in hand, ready to walk into job interviews with the experience, education, and qualifications required to land a great job? Regardless of your academic education level, there is likely a Career Technical Program within the NMCD for which you can qualify. While some Career Tech Programs require an HSE, others do not (such as the Forklift Operator Certification Program), so there's nothing stopping you from laying the groundwork now for vocational success on the outside.

Be sure to read Volume 1, Edition 3 of *Parallels* (July 2025), which focuses on the many Career Technical Programs that are offered throughout the state. You'll also learn a lot about how gaining a trade while inside can make for a smoother reentry process by listening to Season 2, Episode 5 of the "Inside Voices" podcast, titled, "Long Road Ahead." You'll find them both in the "Information" folder on your tablet.

Each facility has a different selection of Career Technical Programs, so be sure to reach out to your SOE to find out which ones are available at your facility, and which ones you can qualify for.

17) Resolve to Submit an Essay to *Parallels*!

If you're a regular reader of *Parallels*, then you've likely seen the ads in this and past issues requesting inmate-written essays. There's surely something that you'd like to share with your fellow inmates, so why not write up your thoughts and submit them to your SOE?

We are looking for stories about how Adult Basic Education, Career Technical Education, and Behavioral Health Programming may have improved your life; how you have made progress in your substance abuse and / or mental health recovery; how you are able to monitor your mindset and stay focused on your rehabilitation; and ...whatever other positive stories you may have to tell! Have you participated as a dog trainer or foster? Tell us about it! Are you a member of a cool inmate fund-raising club? We want to hear about it! Have you had a transformative experience with a culinary program or other class? You know what to do!

Keep in mind that essay submissions are subject to editing by NMCD staff in the Education Division and that your name may be omitted from your contribution.

18) Resolve to Join an Inmate Fundraising Club.

Across the state, inmates have formed fundraising clubs that benefit children in need, the elderly, animals, and others. Through concession sales, the



Learn a new trade this year! With so many Career Technical Education options, you're sure to find the perfect recipe for success!



Start 2026 the “write” way! Try journaling, or write an essay to submit to Parallels via your SOE (Supervisor of Education).

donation of arts & crafts, and other club activities, NMCD inmate clubs are able to support the communities that mean the most to them.

Be sure to ask your Unit Manager what types of clubs already exist in your facility and find out how to join – and if none of them interests you, why not consider starting your own?

19) Resolve to Dive Deeper into Your Faith.

The New Year is a wonderful time to explore or recommit to your faith. Whether you prefer to read and reflect on your studies in solitude, or participate in group discussions and services, there are ample opportunities for you to embrace your faith during your incarceration.

Remember that there are many spiritual and religious texts available to you for free via your state-issued tablet, which you can read anytime at your leisure. You will find them in the “Entertainment” folder, under “Book Library.” There are also many spiritual and religious study groups, services, and other resources available to you in your facility.

Committing to memorizing a verse or passage from your favorite religious text each day or each week can be a comforting routine that provides both spiritual support and a sense of structure for your daily schedule.

Reach out to your facility’s Chaplain to learn more about the different types of spiritual and religious programs that are available at your facility.

20) Resolve to Help Make a Dog’s Life a Little Less “Ruff.”

Many of NMCD’s facilities offer dog training programs that allow qualifying inmates to train and care for shelter dogs inside NMCD facilities, preparing the pups for their eventual adoption into the outside community.

For some participants in these programs, dog training can even turn into a career on the outside. So, not only can fostering dogs bring you joy during your incarceration, but it can also qualify you for an animal-centric job track upon your reentry.

If you love animals and are interested in giving a shelter dog a better chance of finding their “fur-ever” home, be sure to reach out to your Unit Manager to find out whether your facility offers such a program, and if so, whether you may be eligible to participate.

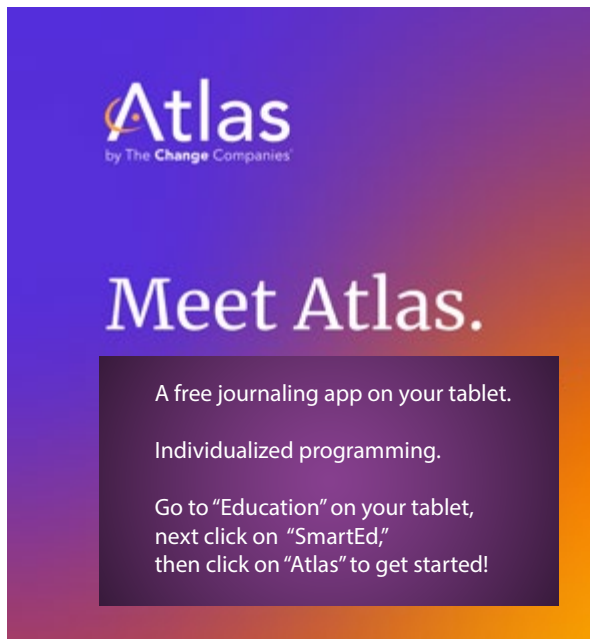
You can also learn more about these programs by reading the article titled, “Teacher’s Pet” in Volume 1, Edition 2 of Parallels (April 2025). Look in the “Information” folder on your state-issued tablet.

Finding ways to improve your life is a walk in the park!



Ask Education how to take the first step!

21) Resolve to Start Journaling or Keeping a Sketchbook.



Many people – both inside and outside prison - are discovering the therapeutic benefits of writing and journaling these days. Whether it be “free association writing,” wherein you simply let your unfiltered stream of consciousness pour onto the page; a diary format; or a more crafted form of creative writing, putting your thoughts onto paper can be extremely supportive of your mental health.

Be sure to read the inmate-contributed personal essay titled, “My Deliverance” in this issue of *Parallels*, which describes how the author has found mental and spiritual freedom through writing and journaling.

Other therapeutic practices can involve drawing or sketching in a notebook; creating cartoon strips; doodling; keeping a “visual diary,” wherein you document your days by drawing pictures of key events; or creating a “vision board” on which you draw or write your goals, aspirations, hopes, and dreams.

Not only can getting your thoughts down on paper help you work through emotional struggles on a daily basis, but periodically reading back through your past entries can also remind you of how far you’ve come.

22) Resolve to Prepare for Your Parole Hearing.

Most of the people incarcerated within the NMCD will eventually be released back into the community,

and that will involve serving a period of parole.

Be sure to read the article titled, “Meet the Board,” in Volume 1, Edition 4 of *Parallels* (October 2025), which explains the process of preparing for your Parole Hearing. It’s in the “Information” folder on your tablet.

Whether your Parole Hearing will be this year, or many years from now, it will benefit you to start educating yourself on the process and assembling a variety of materials now, which will be added to your Parole Package.

Certificates of completion for programs in which you’ve participated and even personal essays about how you’ve come to understand the impact that your crime has had on others can all be collected in preparation for your eventual Parole Hearing. Do your future self a favor and start assembling these items now.

You can also speak with your Classification Officer, who will be able to help you understand your responsibilities in this area and how the process will work.

23) Resolve to Prepare for Your Release.

If you’re a regular reader of *Parallels*, you probably remember the article titled, “Learning to Fly,” from Volume 1, Edition 2 (April 2025). It discusses NMCD’s “Transition Skills” class, which prepares incarcerated people for life on the outside. (If you’d like to revisit it, you’ll find it in the “Information” folder on your tablet.)

If you are six months to the door or less, be sure to reach out to your SOE to get yourself enrolled in this very important, peer-led class.

You will also learn a lot more about the classes that can prepare you for your reentry by listening to Season 2, Episode 1 of the “Inside Voices” podcast, titled, “Cleared for Departure.” You’ll find it in the “Information” folder on your tablet.

24) Resolve to Read More.

With over 75,000 book titles available on your state-issued tablet (the entire contents of the Gutenberg Library!), along with the many books that you will find in your facility’s library, you will never be lacking for interesting reading material

Got Your GED?



You're Not Done Yet!

Talk to your SOE (Supervisor Of Education) about applying for college courses today!

Funding options available such as FAFSA.

Open up new doors of opportunity with a degree from an accredited college.

during your incarceration. You will find all of these digital titles in the “Entertainment” folder on your tablet, under “Book Library.”

Commit to reading a book per week or per month or consider joining NMCD’s “A New Chapter” Book Club. Your SOE can tell you more about it, and you can also learn more by listening to Season 2, Episode 4 of the “Inside Voices” podcast, titled, “Introducing a New Chapter.” You’ll find it in the “Information” folder on your tablet.

You will also find a wealth of useful information by reading past issues of Parallels, all of which are available on your state-issued tablet (in the “Information” folder).

Reading, after all, is the best way to travel the universe (and beyond!) without ever leaving your bunk!

Keep in mind, too, that reading is a great way to create and maintain bonds with your children or other family members if they are open to doing so. Deciding to read the same book and discussing it during in-person or video visits is a great way to stay connected while you’re away.

25) Resolve to Listen to “Inside Voices.”

To hear more interviews on the Parole Board, check out the free podcast on your tablet. Located in the “Information” folder.



Inside Voices S2E10

Did you know that NMCD’s Reentry Division produces a monthly podcast that’s specifically designed for YOU? Titled, “Inside Voices,” you will find past episodes of it on your tablet, in the “Information” folder.

“Inside Voices” uses a narrative format to tell the stories of people who are – or were – incarcerated

within the NMCD. It’s inspirational, educational, entertaining, and it’s FREE!

26) If Possible, Resolve to Make Stronger Connections with Your Family.

While it may seem like you’re living in a different world than the one in which your family exists (and in some ways, you are), you can still make a New Year’s resolution to explore ways to stay connected to them, within the limits of any legal (crime-related) restrictions that may exist.

From writing letters or poems, sending drawings, or creating hobby craft gifts, there are many ways in which you may be able to ensure that your family knows you’re thinking of them.

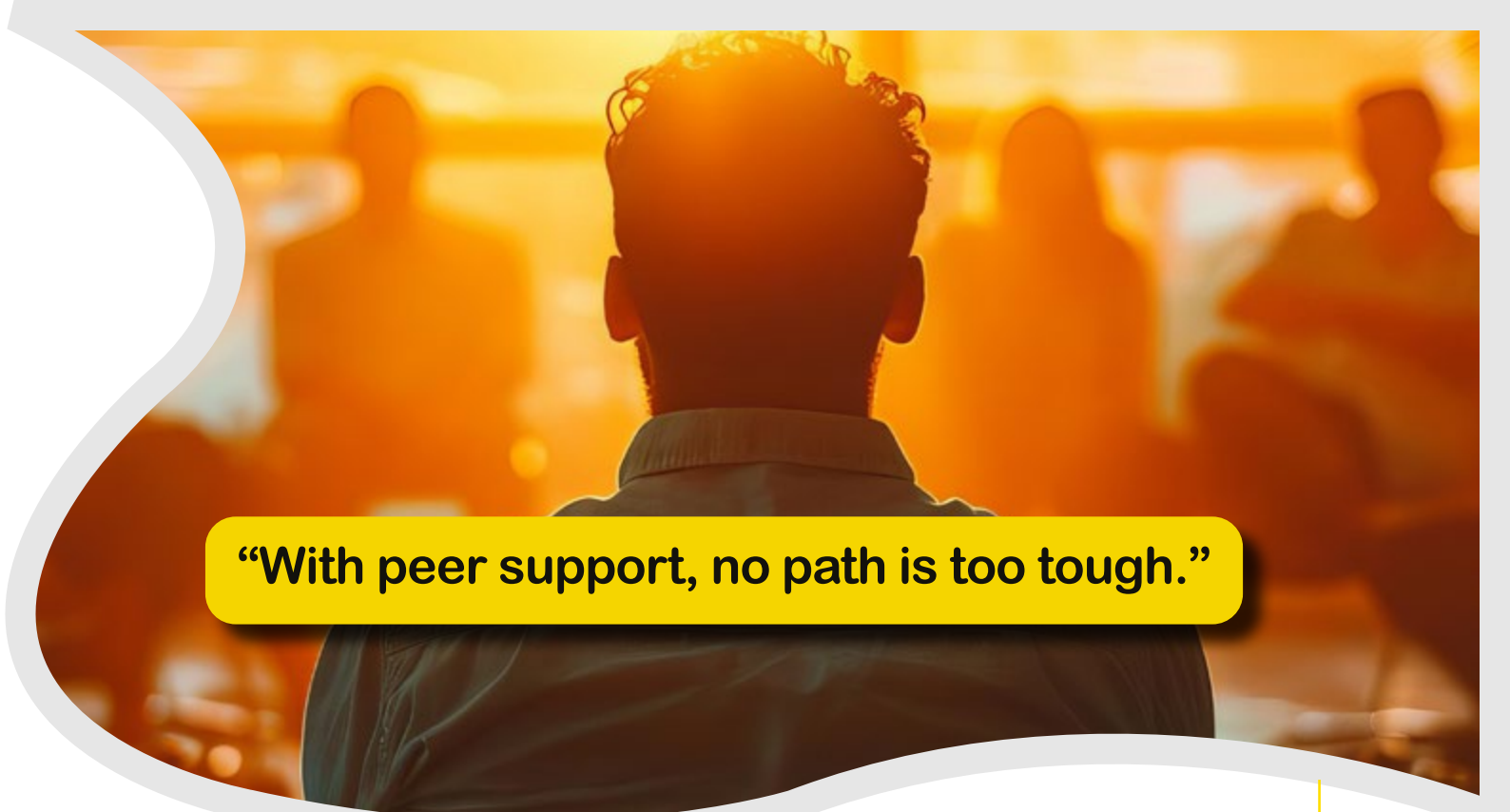
If possible (and if they are receptive to it), phone calls, as well as video and in-person visits are also important ways to keep in touch with those you love. Remember that reading to your kids; expressing gratitude to your parents, partner, or other family members; and asking questions about what’s going on in their lives are important ways to make visits meaningful and memorable.

Watching the same TV shows or movies and then discussing them; listening to episodes of NMCD’s “Inside Voices” podcast and then talking about them (they are available to your family for free on the home page of the NMCD website – www.cd.nm.gov); and reading spiritual or religious texts and then comparing notes can all be ways to ensure that you have something interesting to discuss during your chats.

Speak to the Chaplain at your facility to find out if you might be eligible to participate in some of the “Family Day” events that are organized by non-profits and ministries like “Wings for Life.”

So, there you have it: 26 ways to “do your future self a favor” in the New Year. Hopefully you’ve been inspired to adopt a few of these New Year’s resolutions and have learned about some programs and services that you didn’t know about before. Remember that there are always numerous opportunities available to you for improving your life from the inside out - and Happy New Year!

PARALLELS



“With peer support, no path is too tough.”

CPSW PROGRAM

Do you have 3 or more years in recovery?

Do you currently serve in a peer role?

Do you have a passion for helping support others?

**Train to Become a
Certified Peer Support Worker.**

**Contact Behavioral Health to learn more about
this program.**

“It’s more than a certification, it’s a calling.”



CAUTION: HANDLE WITH SELF-CARE

Adopting a Self-Care Practice During Your Incarceration
Can Improve Both Your Everyday Life and Your Long-Term Future



"It's not selfish to love yourself, take care of yourself, and to make your happiness a priority. It's necessary." ~Mandy Hale

Self-care is something that may or may not have been on your radar before your incarceration. Even some people who have heard of self-care think that it's not important or available to them. They may have the mistaken belief that self-care is only for wealthy or privileged people, or that resilient people have no need for self-care. They may believe that self-care is all about bubble baths and beach vacations. This simply isn't true. Self-care is for everyone, is accessible to everyone, and can help anyone live a healthier, happier, and more successful life.

For some incarcerated people, an absence of self-care in their past may have even contributed to their being sent to prison. Neglecting to set healthy boundaries; believing that a criminal lifestyle is all you're capable of; believing that you're not worthy of health and happiness; and thinking that you're destined for a life of incarceration are all thought traps that you may have fallen into prior to your incarceration.

But it's not too late to discover and embrace self-care and use it as a tool that will help you build a better life, from today forward.

Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health and wellbeing.

Recognizing and prioritizing the need for self-care is most likely to happen when a person has a strong sense of self-respect and a healthy level of self-esteem. But the opposite is true too: adopting self-care practices can help you improve your self-esteem and build up a healthy sense of self-respect.

Expecting more for (and of) yourself; believing that you deserve a happy and healthy life; and being willing to work toward your goals are all parts of loving yourself and can inspire you to prioritize self-care.

But the thing about self-care is that, while everyone can benefit from it, it will look different for each person. So, that is your job: to figure out what your own self-care practice will look like.

While everyone's self-care routine will be customized to their own needs, there are a few general areas that we should all address when designing our own self-care plan.

Obviously, someone who is incarcerated will have to adapt their self-care activities to the opportunities that are available to them in prison, but you will discover that many of the most effective self-care practices are completely free and take place entirely in your own mind.



“I took Career Technical classes on the inside and got a career on the outside.”

**Take
THE
Next
Step**

**Get started on a Career Tech program.
Ask Education How to Sign Up Today!**

“Learning to love yourself is like learning to walk –essential, life-changing, and the only way to stand tall.” ~Vironika Tugaleva

When you consider your own self-care practice, be sure to include all of the following areas of your life in your plan:

Gratitude & Mindfulness

As we have discussed in many other Parallels articles (in this issue and others), an attitude of gratitude can help you maintain a positive mindset and appreciate all the things that are going right in your life.

From enormous blessings like family, good friends, and your health, to small joys such as the ability to read a great book, enjoying an occasional bag of chips or a candy bar, or the opportunity to spend a few minutes petting one of the dogs that are being fostered in your facility, there are always blessings to be appreciated.

As attributed to William Arthur Ward, “Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.”

Another aspect of life that can also be a beneficial piece of our self-care plan is mindfulness. Mindfulness involves being fully present in each moment and “living in the now” instead of in the past or the future.

For a lengthy discussion about mindfulness and how it can improve the lives of incarcerated people, be sure to read the article titled, “Serenity Now,” which appears in Volume 1, Edition 1 of Parallels (January 2025).



If you start collecting your blessings in a box or jar, you'll soon realize how much you actually have to be thankful for.

Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries (sometimes called personal boundaries) are another concept that you may or may not have been familiar with prior to your incarceration. But if you've participated in any Behavioral Health programming, Reentry classes, or substance abuse treatment during your time in the NMCD, then you're probably well-aware of the importance of boundaries now.

Creating and maintaining healthy boundaries simply means making good decisions for yourself and setting self-imposed limits or rules that enable you to be your healthiest, safest, and happiest self. Healthy boundaries protect your physical, emotional, and mental well-being, especially in the context of personal relationships. They help define who you are and create a safe, respectful space for yourself by guiding how others treat you and what you are and are not comfortable with.

This means saying, “No” to ideas or suggestions that you know will likely get you into trouble. It means standing up to peer-pressure when you know that you're being pushed into making a bad decision. It means recognizing when someone is attempting to manipulate or abuse you and deciding to distance yourself from that person. It means knowing yourself well enough to realize that certain people, places, and situations are likely to overwhelm you with temptation and potentially cause you to jeopardize your sobriety, fidelity to a partner, or commitment to a law-abiding lifestyle – and doing everything in your power to avoid those tempting circumstances.

We've all found ourselves in situations that we might describe as a “slippery slope.” Healthy boundaries allow us to make the (sometimes tough) decision to recognize the danger and walk away from that slope before we start slipping into trouble.

Once you start setting firm boundaries for yourself, a funny thing tends to happen: you may start to recognize certain people around you who are what might be called “boundary pushers.”

These are people who don't respect the boundaries that you set for yourself and may try to pressure

WHO LET THE Dogs ~~OUT?~~ IN?

HAVE YOU WONDERED WHY YOU MAY
HAVE SEEN DOGS IN YOUR FACILITY?



THE NMCD PARTNERS WITH LOCAL
ANIMAL SHELTERS TO MATCH SHELTER
DOGS WITH INMATE TRAINERS IN
ORDER TO GIVE THE PUPS A BETTER
CHANCE OF EVENTUALLY BEING
ADOPTED BY FAMILIES IN THE
COMMUNITY.

NOT ONLY DO THE DOGS GET “A NEW
LEASH ON LIFE,” BUT INMATE TRAINERS
ALSO GAIN VALUABLE DOG-TRAINING
SKILLS THAT CAN POTENTIALLY TURN
INTO A FULFILLING POST-
INCARCERATION CAREER!

ASK YOUR UNIT MANAGER IF YOUR
FACILITY HAS A DOG PROGRAM, AND IF
SO, WHETHER YOU MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE
TO PARTICIPATE!



you into doing things that you've already made clear you're not willing to do. Self-care involves distancing yourself from people who do this.

There are plenty of supportive people around you who will not only respect your boundaries, but will admire you for enforcing them. These may be fellow inmates, teachers, tutors, program coordinators, peer mentors, or others. Seek these positive people out and surround yourself with them instead of the "boundary pushers."

Ask for Help When Needed

Another important self-care practice is asking for help when you need it. Asking for help is one of those things that many of us struggle with, but practicing self-care means reaching out for the support that will pull us out of trouble and enable us to succeed.

If you recognized that a friend, family member, or loved one needed help, you would surely do everything in your power to make sure that they got the support they needed, right? So, why don't we show ourselves that same kindness when we, ourselves, need help?

Self-care is exactly what is reflected in the word: caring for oneself. Truly caring for yourself means seeking help for yourself when you need it.

You may think that you'll inconvenience others by asking them for help; you may be embarrassed (having been raised to incorrectly think that strong people don't need help); or you may not even understand what type of assistance you really require.

But none of these reservations should keep you from making your struggles known. As an incarcerated person, you are actually surrounded by people who are trained, motivated, and eager to help you. From Behavioral Health professionals, Correctional Officers, your Unit Manager, your teachers, tutors, program coordinators, your facility Chaplain, peer mentors, Classification Officers, and so many others, there are people all around you to whom you can turn. Even if the person you ask can't provide what you need, they will be able to refer you to the person in your facility who can.

As attributed to the late Carrie Fisher, "Sometimes asking for help is the bravest move you can make."

Maintain Family Bonds if Possible

When you're incarcerated, it's easy to slip into loneliness or isolation. Even surrounded by so many people, you can still feel very alone.

While it's not possible for everyone, trying to maintain family ties can help with these feelings of isolation.

Taking advantage of opportunities for phone calls, video and in-person visits, and sending letters are all ways to stay connected to your family back home. If they are open to it and you know that these connections will enrich your life, then engaging in them is an important way to support your own self-care.

You will find some creative suggestions for ways to strengthen family bonds in this issue's article titled, "The 2026 Resolution Solution."

If you are unable to connect with your family (due to their death, estrangement, or other circumstances), then consider investing your time, energy, and love into a "surrogate family" of your choosing. Many of us, for a variety of reasons, have opted to embrace close friends as our "chosen family," which can provide the same love, support, and encouragement as blood relatives. Directing energy toward connecting with these folks, then, can become a healthy self-care practice.

However, remember to establish and enforce those healthy boundaries, even with family members.

Values & Morals

Our values and morals are the things by which we define ourselves. They may also be beliefs that guide our behavior. An important form of self-care involves reflecting on the values and morals you hold dear and determining how you can express them in healthy ways.

This may include spiritual and / or religious studies and activities; volunteering; studying and meditating on philosophical teachings; or other reflective undertakings.

It's important to remember that your values and morals are unique to you, and others' will be different. While self-care means exploring and upholding our own values and morals, it does not

Self-Care During Incarceration



Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health and wellbeing.

While focusing on self-care during your incarceration can seem difficult, there are a variety of steps you can take to make it a priority.



Reading, whether for spiritual enrichment, recreation, or academic improvement, can be an important component of self-care.

mean telling others what their values and morals should be. Self-care involves respecting yourself, but being a caring member of your community involves respecting the opinions, beliefs, and convictions of others.

If you have questions or just want to talk about developing your own values and morals, be sure to reach out to your facility's Chaplain, who can help guide you in this area.

Hobbies & Interests

Just because you are incarcerated doesn't mean that you need to give up the joys that come from pursuing hobbies and interests. In fact, doing so is an excellent way to engage in self-care.

As a "reward" for studying, working, or programming during the day, unwinding with a fun hobby or interest is a great way to treat yourself.

Whether it may be making hobby crafts, recreational reading, writing, drawing, journaling, playing cards or a board game, gardening, knitting, crocheting, dancing, watching a movie, listening to a podcast, exercising, or any number of other options, hobbies and interests are one of the things that make life worth living. So, never think of pursuing them as "wasting time" - doing so is actually a valuable form of self-care!

Exercise & Sleep

One of the most popular ways people incorporate self-care into their lifestyle is by taking steps to improve their health through diet, exercise, and sleep hygiene.

While incarcerated people aren't necessarily able to have much control over their diet, you can try to opt for healthier commissary snacks, lower calorie drinks, and fewer splurges like candy bars and chips.

But where incarcerated folks can take control of their health to a great degree is through exercise and sleep.

Be sure to read both "The 2026 Resolution Solution" and "Sweet Dreams are Made of This" in this issue of Parallels to learn about how a regular exercise routine and better sleep hygiene can improve both your mental and physical health.

Taking care of your body and mind are both excellent ways to practice self-care.

Social Community

In addition to keeping ties with your family or "surrogate family" strong (if possible), another form of self-care involves maintaining a supportive and positive circle of people around you on a daily basis.

As mentioned before, while there are people in prison (and everywhere) who are likely to influence you negatively, there are also people who will lift you up, encourage you to be your best self, and support you in making healthy choices. Always choose to surround yourself with "the good eggs."

Of course, your teachers, tutors, peer mentors, and facility staff are among these self-care supporters, but you may also find quality associates by getting involved in fund-raising clubs, hobby groups like



Keep your
self-talk kind,
supportive, and
positive.



NMCD's "A New Chapter" Book Club, hobby craft groups, or other programming opportunities. As they say, "birds of a feather flock together," so by becoming involved in activities that you enjoy, you will likely find like-minded people.

The important thing is to invest in relationships with people who will keep you focused on your goals, respect your boundaries, support you in your self-care practice, and remind you that your success is worth striving for.

Self-Improvement through Programming

Perhaps the most powerful way to practice self-care while in prison is to take advantage of the numerous programming opportunities that are available to you.

Between Behavioral Health, Education, and Career Technical programming, there are so many programs that can support you in becoming the person you want to be. Put simply, programming provides the best chance to change your life, long-term, for the better.

Committing to enrolling in, studying for, and participating in these programs is one of the best ways to make a promise to yourself that you will leave prison as a better and more well-rounded person than you were when you came in. Striving toward and keeping that promise is what self-care is all about.

You can read more about the numerous

programming options that are available in this issue's article titled, "The 2026 Resolution Solution." And you are always encouraged to talk to your facility's Supervisor of Education (SOE) and / or Behavioral Health staff to find out which programs might be the best fit for you.

From substance abuse or mental health recovery; Adult Basic Education; Post-Secondary Education; Career Technical Education and beyond, programming can redirect the trajectory of your life.

Prioritizing and practicing self-care is one of the best ways for you to transform both your everyday life in prison and your long-term future on the outside. Practicing self-care is the best way for you to "be your own best friend" and safeguard your own mental, physical, and spiritual health.

So, do yourself a favor and explore some of the many ways you can develop your own self-care practice.

**"How we care for ourselves
gives our brain messages
that shape our self-worth.
So we must care for ourselves
in every way, every day."**

~Sam Owen

PARALLELS



Surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals during your incarceration will help you explore a variety of healthy self-care practices.

What are Your Programming Picks for 2026?

Whether you're ready to commit to your recovery, further your education, or take the first step toward a new career, you will find the perfect path among NMCD's programming options.

**Ask your SOE
how to get
started!**

Education

Behavioral Health

Career Tech

With
all these
programming
opportunities,
who has time
to hibernate?!



"MY DELIVERANCE," AN RCC INMATE ESSAY

In this excerpt from his personal essay, the author explains how writing and journaling have helped him cope with his incarceration and maintain his mental wellbeing.

Note that this essay has been edited for clarity and space constraints by NMCD Education staff.



The author has found that his writing practice helps support him through the challenges of incarceration.

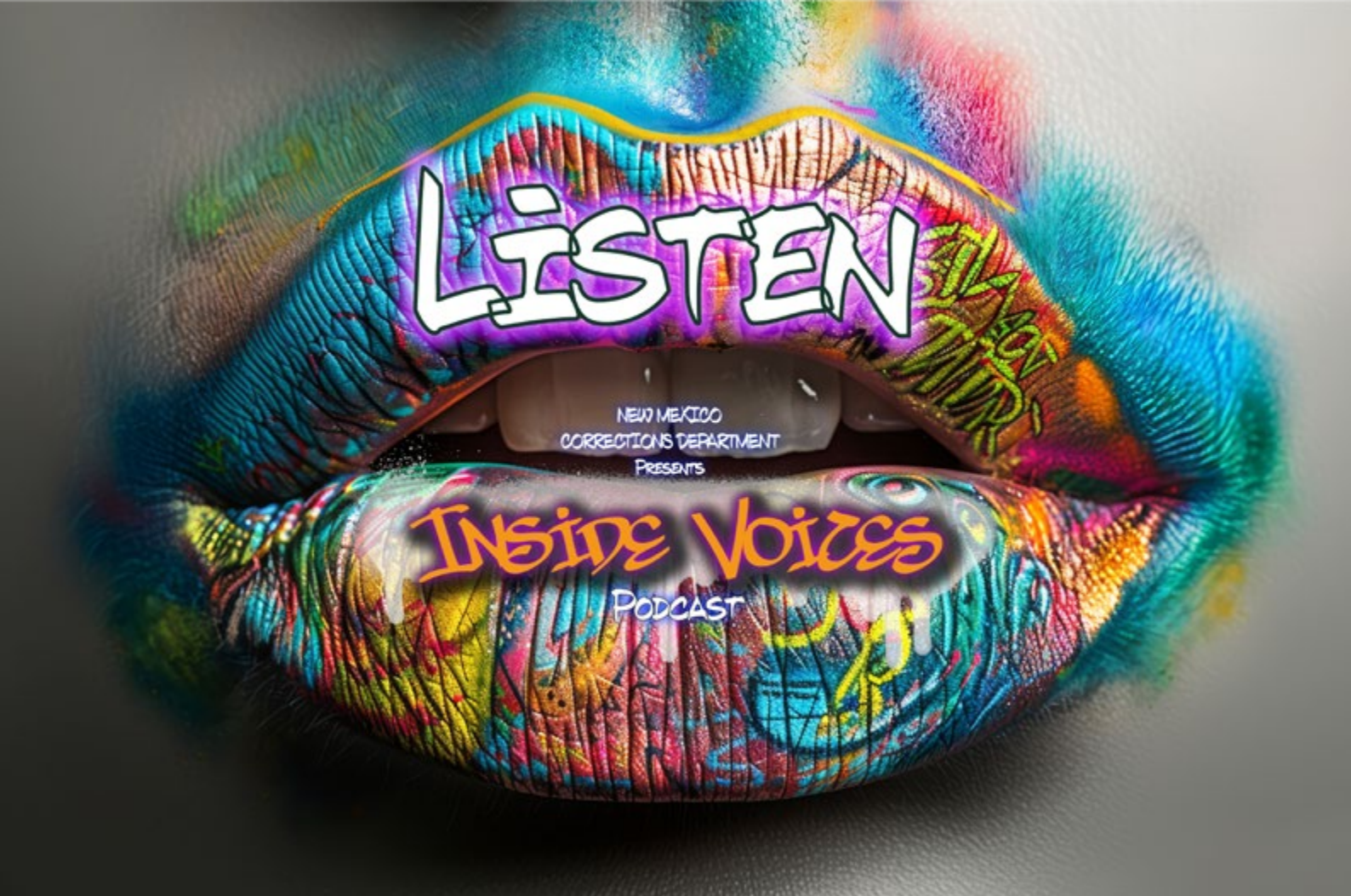
I've never in my life, been as free as I am now! The crazy thing is that I'm in prison. Most people would never feel as free as I do, in my situation.

In the midst of my incarceration, I still find a way to free my mind. Not only am I free and liberated by Christ and his promises that I stand on, but I write! Writing offers an extremely liberating and therapeutic outlet for mental health and wellbeing. By providing a private space for self-reflection and expression, writing reduces stress, allowing the proper alone time to process your emotions, and helps you gain new perspectives on how to deal with difficult experiences. Writing helps control racing or chaotic thoughts in your mind that you have been struggling with, developing ways for overwhelming emotions to be managed and structured. This allows you to think clearly. The very act of writing helps you to dig deep inside yourself and figure out

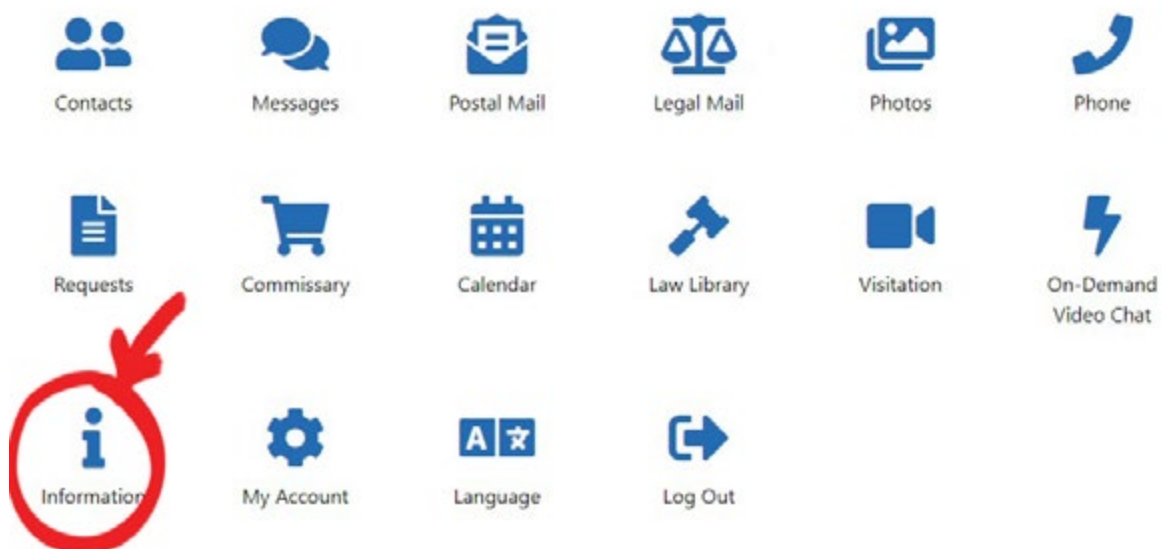
who you really are.

If you journal, you can document your experiences and how you react to them. You can identify emotional patterns, triggers, and the underlying motivations behind your behavior. Instead of suppressing or avoiding unmanageable emotions that linger deep down inside, you can write. Writing can create a safe way to confront and release those emotions, if you use it to your advantage. This will allow you to really grasp feelings of anger, grief, and anxiety in a controlled environment.

Writing sets me free and allows me to be my own God at times. I have the power and the authority to create, and to destroy. It gives me a feeling of empowerment and justice. It takes me away, off to distant lands. I can travel to Japan, Italy, and even to medieval times, if I wish. This helps me to reframe from past experiences and find strength in



**A free monthly podcast. Your stories, told by you.
Located in the “Information” section of your tablet.**



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Current Location is NMDOC-Central New Mexico Correctional Facility, LEVEL II A-1-2, Kiosk 56456, Computer TAB-90742.



Sometimes getting your thoughts out of your head and onto paper is a powerful way to free your mind.

myself. Using poetry and other forms of literature help me better myself and use my imagination. I am able to find peace, on a boat, adrift in the midst of a hurricane. I am able to create a great escape and fall into my own fantasy. The feeling writing gives me is extraordinary. It's like I get shot straight into another dimension. So how am I so free while living in such a place? I write. This is my liberty. This is my deliverance.

PARALLELS

If you would like to submit an essay to be considered for inclusion in **Parallels**, reach out to your facility's Supervisor of Education (SOE) to find out how to do so.

**“I never wrote things
down to remember;
I always wrote things
down so I could
forget.”**

**~ Matthew McConaughey,
“Greenlights”**

**Did you start your college degree
but your education was
interrupted?**

NOW is the time to finish!

**Talk to your SOE to find out how to
take the leap and continue your education!**



***YOU'RE
NOT
DONE YET!***

***BRIDGE THE
GAP TO THAT
GRADUATION
CAP.***



SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THIS

Quality Sleep is a Foundation of Good Health,
so How Can You Ensure the Best Sleep Possible in Prison?



It's never a good idea to "sleep through your sentence," however, getting the proper amount of healthy sleep during your incarceration is essential to good health.

As was discussed in the article titled, "The Home Stretch" in Volume 1, Edition 4 of Parallels (October 2025), there's simply no place like home. Home is where you can relax, let your guard down, rest comfortably, and sleep deeply. There's just nothing quite like sleeping in your own bed in your own home.

But quality sleep is so important for our bodies and our brains that even when we can't be at home, we still have to do everything we can to get the best sleep possible.

We've all heard the saying, "If you snooze, you lose." But the reality is that, once you start learning about all of the ways in which sleep benefits us, you'll realize that "If you DON'T snooze, you'll lose."

What happens to our bodies during sleep?

When we sleep, our body and brain engage in vital health-supporting processes, including memory organization, cell repair, and immune system strengthening. These functions are supported by

cycles of both REM and non-REM sleep.

REM stands for "Rapid Eye Movement." REM sleep is a distinct sleep stage characterized by rapid eye movements, increased brain activity, vivid dreaming, and muscle paralysis. It typically occurs about 90 minutes after falling asleep and occurs in cycles throughout the night.

The muscle paralysis that occurs during REM sleep sounds scary, but it is actually a protective mechanism. During REM sleep, when most vivid dreams occur, the muscles of your arms and legs are temporarily prevented from moving. It is believed that this prevents a sleeping person from physically acting out their dreams.

REM sleep supports emotional regulation during waking hours and helps us process stressful experiences. It also improves brain function including problem-solving and creativity.

During non-REM sleep, on the other hand, heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure slow down.



While it may seem like your body & brain are “switched off” during sleep, they are actually doing important work for your wellbeing.

During non-REM sleep, you are able to move your body, change sleeping positions, and do things like kick off your covers if you become too hot.

Both REM and non-REM sleep cycles are essential to quality, healthy sleep.

What do our brains do while we’re sleeping?

While it may seem like your brain is “turned off” while you’re sleeping, it is actually very busy recovering from the day. Some of the brain activity that happens during sleep include:

Processing and memory:

While you’re sleeping, your brain sorts and stores information from the day, forming new long-term memories.

The tech-minded folks among us might think of our brains benefitting from sleep the way a computer hard drive benefits from being “de-fragmented.”

Basically, while you’re sleeping, your brain is figuring out what it needs to remember and where to store that information. It also determines which of the things that happened during the day aren’t that important and can therefore be “thrown away.”

It’s easy to understand, then, why we feel as if we have a cluttered, chaotic mind when we’re sleep-deprived. Sleep helps “tidy up the mess” at the end of each day.

Toxin removal:

While you sleep, your brain clears out metabolic waste and toxins that have built up during waking hours.

Brainwaves:

Brain activity shifts from the alert patterns of waking to slower, deeper patterns during non-REM sleep, then ramps up again during REM sleep.

What are some of the physiological changes that our bodies undergo while we’re sleeping?

Muscle relaxation and repair:

During deep non-REM sleep, your muscles relax and your body increases blood supply to them to repair and grow tissue.

This is one of the reasons why rest is so important when you are recovering from an injury. This is also why it’s necessary to adopt a healthy sleep schedule if you are trying to build muscle.

Heart rate and blood pressure:

In non-REM sleep, your heart rate and blood pressure drop, giving your cardiovascular system a rest. They rise again during REM sleep.

Hormone regulation:

Sleep allows for the release of hormones like growth hormone for cell repair and melatonin for sleep regulation.

It's More Than Your Picture

State ID & Driver's License



A Driver's License or State Identification Card
offers benefits such as:

Proof of identity / Opening bank accounts /
Driver's License provides mobility

Starting at 90 days to your projected release date, these MVD ID/DL
transactions also provide an opportunity for voter registration.

Ask your Classification Officer
how to get yours.

It's free and it's the law!

Hormones that regulate hunger and fullness are also balanced during sleep. This is why a regular, quality sleep schedule is important if you are trying to manage your weight.

Body temperature:

Your body temperature drops slightly during sleep. This is why it's difficult to sleep comfortably without any blankets or covers over you.

How is our immune system affected by sleep?

Strengthening:

Sleep strengthens the immune system by releasing proteins called cytokines that help fight inflammation, infection, and trauma.

This is why it's so important to get plenty of sleep when we're recovering from an injury or simply trying to avoid catching a cold, flu, or other illness.

Immunological memory:

Sleeping activates and strengthens the immune system's memory for fighting future infections.

What is the concept of "sleep hygiene?"

Sleep hygiene refers to practices that promote quality sleep and improve sleep patterns. It involves establishing healthy habits and creating a supportive sleep environment.

While this may seem like a difficult thing to achieve while in prison, there are actually many practices that you can adopt to help improve your sleep hygiene during your incarceration.

Tips for improving your sleep hygiene:

Make sure you're getting enough sleep (but not too much).

It's generally agreed that most adults should strive to get 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night.

But while it's important to get enough sleep, be mindful not to overdo it. Regularly going to bed too early, going back to sleep after morning count, or taking frequent naps during the day can make it difficult to sleep at night, as your body realizes that it's getting too much sleep.

Sleeping too much can cause its own list of problems including an increased risk of obesity and weight gain; sluggishness; muscle aches and soreness; headaches; joint pain; increased inflammation; depression and anxiety; cognitive impairment (difficulty concentrating, memory problems); irritability; and mood swings.

So, if your goal is to establish and maintain a regular sleep schedule that includes sleeping through the night, it's best to avoid taking naps during the day and aim for about 8 hours of quality sleep during the overnight hours.

Establish a regular sleep schedule.

Try to go to bed and wake up around the same time each day. Dramatic shifts to this pattern will make it more likely that you'll have trouble sleeping and won't enjoy all of the mental and physical benefits that sleeping provides.

Establish and maintain a relaxing bedtime routine.

"Wash away the day."

There's a lot to be said for "washing the worries of the day off of you." Washing your face and brushing



We all know about personal hygiene, but sleep hygiene may be a new concept for some.

*You Have
Something
to Say!*

*So
Say it!*



*Ask your
Supervisor of Education
(SOE) how to submit
an essay or artwork
that might be featured
in NMCD's Parallels
digital magazine!*

your teeth before bed can help you feel as though you've washed away any negativity or struggles that you may have encountered during the day and prepare you to rest without those mental and emotional weights on you.

It can even be helpful to focus on an affirmation or meditation as you undertake your bedtime self-care routine, such as, "Washing away the worries of today prepares me for a fresh start tomorrow," or, "The troubles I encountered today are disappearing down the drain."

Read something relaxing.

Many people find that reading before bed can help cue their body that it's time to sleep. But be careful when choosing your bedtime reading material.

Thrillers, mysteries, and action-packed stories can excite your mind, making sleep difficult. A better choice might be spiritual or religious texts, poetry, or more calming novels. Even reading and re-reading encouraging letters from your kids or other family members can prove to be a source of serenity as you bed down for the night.

It's also advised to read from a printed book, rather than a tablet screen, before bed. The light emitted by a digital screen at bedtime can interfere with sleep by suppressing the body's production of melatonin. This suppression of melatonin disrupts

the body's natural sleep-wake cycle (also known as the body's circadian rhythm).

Remember that your facility's library has numerous books that you can check out and enjoy as bedtime reading material.

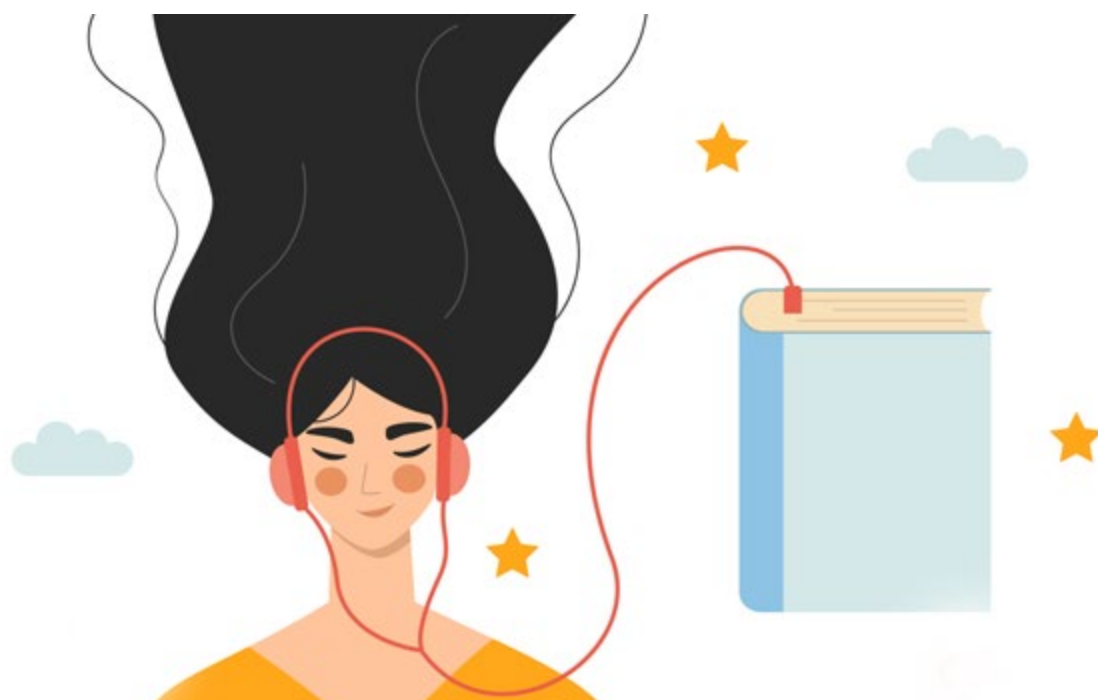
Listen to some soothing music.

Even if it's not your usual choice, consider listening to some classical music before bed. Classical music can help you sleep by lowering stress and anxiety through its calming rhythms, which slow your heart rate and breathing. The slow tempos, typically between 60 and 80 beats per minute, can help synchronize your brainwaves, while instrumental melodies create a peaceful atmosphere and can reduce stress hormones like cortisol.

Using headphones to listen to classical or other soothing music can not only deliver these tranquil benefits directly into your brain, but can also help drown out any disruptive noise from your surroundings.

Listen to an audio book or podcast.

Another way many of us choose to be lulled to sleep is by listening to the voice of someone reading a book or telling a story. This might take the form of listening to an audio book recording, a radio show, or a podcast.



Many adults are realizing the value of listening to a "bedtime story" in order to fall asleep faster. Audio books, recorded meditations, and podcasts are all ways people are winding down for sleep.

It's no wonder why kids love to be "told a bedtime story." The rhythmic lull of someone else's voice can almost hypnotize us toward sleep. Hearing someone else's voice can also comfort us and help us feel less alone.

As with bedtime reading material, make sure that you don't choose anything too dramatic or potentially unsettling. Political podcasts or sporting events, for example, might get you too riled up to sleep. So, instead, choose something calmer.

One great choice is NMCD's "Inside Voices" podcast. Available for free on your state-issued tablet (by clicking on the "Information" folder), you might find that the voices and music featured in each episode offer a relaxing audio backdrop for your trip to "Z Town."

Focus your mind on positive thoughts.

Once you've washed your face and brushed your teeth, read a chapter or two of your book, and perhaps listened to some tranquil music, it's time to settle in to actually drift off to sleep. But this is also the time when negative self-talk, racing thoughts, and anxiety can creep in and keep you awake.

After you've washed your body, it can also be helpful to "cleanse your mind."

This might take the form of repeating affirmations to yourself, saying prayers in your head, or simply conducting a mental "debriefing" from the day. This could include asking yourself questions like, "What did I do today that made me proud of myself?" "What could I have done better today?" "How can I do better tomorrow?" or, "What positive choices

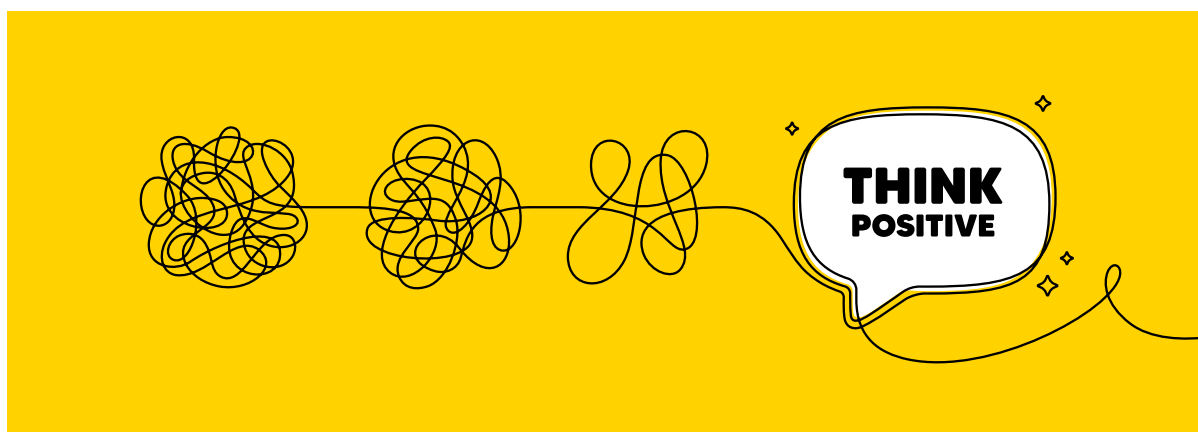
did I make today?" (Be sure to read this issue's article titled, "The 2026 Resolution Solution" to learn more about how to use affirmations.)

This is also a good time to employ various relaxation techniques that can help you quiet your mind and fall asleep.

Some people find it helpful to use simple meditations such as focusing on each part of their body, one at a time, and relaxing each one as they move through the meditation. (For example, start with your right foot and focus on relaxing it completely, then move on to your right calf, right thigh, and so on until you have fully relaxed each part of your body.) Chances are that before you've even finished moving all the way through to your left foot, you'll be asleep.

Another helpful meditation can involve thinking of a pleasant, peaceful place from your past (or from your imagination) and picturing yourself slowly walking through it. You might imagine yourself moving through each room of a beloved house from your childhood; through a beautiful forest; or through the streets of a favorite town or city. If you are envisioning an actual place, challenge your memory to recall where each door, window, building, tree, valley, or hill is.

Try to imagine every detail as vividly as possible, including the colors, the scents, and the light. Think about how the floor or ground feels under your feet; how the doorknobs feel as you turn them; and what the birds overhead sound like. Try to choose a place that is connected with only happy memories or experiences. As you slowly and methodically move through the space in your mind, you are likely to drift off to sleep.



It's important to "unwind your thoughts" as you drift off to sleep. Sometimes a mental "debriefing" at the end of the day can help you leave any stresses behind you.

**Feeling like a piece of the puzzle
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on your tablet.**



SmartED

Atlas to get started.

Putting the pieces together is easier with the right tools.

**Ask Behavioral Health at your facility
for more information.**

Another simple “sleep hack” is to choose a category and then go through the alphabet and think of three words for each letter (categories might include things for which you’re grateful, things you want to achieve, the names of people who are important to you, places you’d like to visit, animals, song titles, the names of movies or books, etc.). As you think to yourself, “Aardvark, armadillo, alligator; bear, bee, bison...” you will probably find it difficult to make it too far into the alphabet before nodding off.

Count your blessings instead of sheep.

There’s a lovely song that was featured in the 1954 movie titled, “White Christmas,” called, “Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep.” The lyrics, in part, go:

“When I’m worried and I can’t sleep

I count my blessings instead of sheep

And I fall asleep counting my blessings”

This song is a great reminder of how focusing on all of the blessings in your life, both big and small - and mentally taking an inventory of all of them – can help you settle into a positive and peaceful state of mind and fall into a soothing slumber.

For example, if you can hear rain and thunder outside, simply focusing on the fact that you are safe and sheltered from the storm can blanket you in a sense of gratitude and calm.

Make a bedtime journal entry.

Another bedtime ritual that you might find helpful is journaling. Getting your thoughts onto paper and off your mind, then “closing the book on the day” can be a great way to prepare for a pleasant night’s sleep.

Another thing that some people find helpful is to keep a note pad and pencil handy on their nightstand for nagging thoughts that may crop up.

Many of us find ourselves peacefully drifting off toward sleep only to be jolted awake by something that we want to remember to do the next day or an idea that we don’t want to forget. It can be helpful to keep a notepad next to your bed so that, when this happens, you can simply jot down your thought or idea and not have to worry about forgetting it.

Again, getting it onto paper and off your mind can help you clear the way for more peaceful sleep.

Exercise regularly.

One of the best improvements you can make to your sleep hygiene involves something that happens long before you start getting ready for bed each night, and that’s working out.

Exercising regularly improves sleep quality by regulating circadian rhythms, increasing deep sleep, reducing stress, and raising melatonin levels. The increase in body temperature from exercise and subsequent drop afterward help signal the body that it’s time to sleep.

Exercise also helps by reducing stress hormones like cortisol and boosting mood-enhancing endorphins, both of which help you relax and fall asleep more easily.

Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per day, and if possible, try to exercise outdoors to get natural light exposure, which will further help regulate your circadian rhythm. But exercising indoors is definitely preferable to not exercising at all.

Avoid intense exercise close to bedtime (within an hour or two), as it can be stimulating. However, gentle activities like stretching or yoga can be beneficial for relaxation.

Avoid too much caffeine and sugar.



Counting sheep is a tried and true method for falling asleep. But have you tried counting your blessings instead?

Got kids? Be sure to take advantage of CYFD's **Family Resource Centers**

**Connect with low or no-cost services and supports, including
applying for benefits, accessing state services,
employment opportunities and much more!**

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- **Budgeting Guidance / Assistance**
- **Nutrition & Cooking Classes**
- **Assistance with Securing Stable Housing**
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- **Guidance for Parents and / or Caregivers in Identifying and Securing Services**
- **And so much more!**

Tell your parenting partner that they can find out more by:

- **Visiting www.cyfd.nm.gov/family-services/family-resource-centers/**
- **Calling (505) 827-7613**
- **Sending an e-mail to familyservices@cyfd.nm.gov**

*"Having somewhere to go
is home.
Having someone to love
is family.
Having both is a blessing."*



**Children, Youth &
Families Department**
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

“The best bridge between despair and hope is a good night’s sleep.”

~E. Joseph Cossman

Watch your caffeine intake throughout the day, especially in the afternoon and evening hours. Too much caffeine can interfere with your sleep. And remember that caffeine is found in coffee, many types of sodas, energy drinks, hot chocolate, chocolate milk, chocolate candy bars, and hot or iced tea, among other sources.

Remember, too, that consuming a lot of sugary snacks or drinks too close to bedtime can also interfere with a good night’s sleep. Candy, cookies, snack cakes, and sugar-sweetened drinks can all potentially hype you up and make winding down for slumber a challenge.

Create a supportive sleep “micro-environment” for yourself.

Since there are a lot of things about your physical environment inside prison that you can’t control, it might seem difficult to create an optimal sleep setting for yourself. But by focusing on the factors that you can control, you can make a comfortable “micro-environment” for yourself that will support your own sleep hygiene.

This means “setting the stage” for a good night’s sleep.

While you may not be able to control the lighting in your pod, you can block the light by placing a shirt or blanket over your eyes. While you can’t keep others from making noise, you can use earplugs or headphones to prevent yourself from having to hear it. And while you can’t dictate that the entire pod be maintained at a certain temperature, you can use an extra layer of clothes to keep yourself warmer than the room temperature.

Don’t drink too much of any liquid too close to bedtime, as you’ll likely find your sleep interrupted by a late-night trip to the restroom.

You can also maximize your own comfort by strategically arranging items like rolled up clothing around you. Some people find it comforting to position something soft against their back; hug a rolled-up sweatshirt in front of them; or put something soft between or under their knees. When sleeping on your back, pulling the corners of your pillow around your neck so as to support your neck and avoid propping your head too far forward is also a simple way to ensure optimal coziness.

Consider applying a dab of flavored lip balm or scented lotion to your upper lip as part of your bedtime routine to ensure that you smell a pleasant scent as you drift off to sleep.

Keep a cup or bottle of water near your bed too. If you wake up in the night feeling dehydrated, you can simply reach over for a quick sip and get right back to sleep instead of having to get up and walk to the faucet (which is likely to make falling back to sleep a lot more difficult).

Remember, though, that the use of these sleep tips will be subject to the rules of your facility.

So, while sleeping in your own bed in your own home is the ideal sleeping situation, there are certainly a number of things that you can do to ensure that you get good, quality sleep even during your incarceration. Take some of these suggestions to heart, snuggle in, and sleep tight!

PARALLELS



If you're ready to choose differently, end the loop, and start your growth, reach out to Behavioral Health, your Supervisor of Education (SOE), or your facility's Chaplain to find out which programs are available to help you make the change.

FINDING CALM IN THE STORM

Stress Management Techniques and Programming Options
Can Help Maintain Wellbeing During Incarceration



As avid sailor Jimmy Buffett used to say, "You can't control the wind, but you can adjust your sails."

As we discussed in the Parallels article titled, "The Home Stretch" (Volume 1, Edition 4, October 2025), being incarcerated is ranked among some of the most stressful life events on the Holmes Rahe Stress Inventory. This means that it's particularly important for the incarcerated community to explore ways in which they can manage that stress.

Everyone – both inside prison and on the outside - experiences stress, and everyone must work to discover the stress-management techniques and practices that are most effective for them. While it may seem that people on the outside have access to a much wider variety of stress-management options, you might be surprised by how many opportunities exist for people on the inside.

Through programming; Behavioral Health services; physical exercise; sleep hygiene; pursuing hobbies and interests; participation in spiritual and religious activities; the use of breathing techniques and affirmations; and other tools that are available to you, you can find the perfect stress-management practice for yourself.

As is the case for most people, you will likely discover that it's not necessarily just one activity

that helps you stay on top of your stress, but rather a combination of several practices, which will be unique to your specific needs.

The anger management classes that are offered through Behavioral Health, for example, are likely to be one component of a successful stress-management strategy. However, most people will find it helpful to also pursue additional stress reduction methods.

The important thing is to explore what's available, give a few things a try, and figure out what works best for you.

"The Art of Living" Program at PNM

One program that is geared specifically toward supporting incarcerated people in their stress management practice is called "The Art of Living Prisoner Rehabilitation Program."

Currently offered at PNM's (Penitentiary of New Mexico's) South Location, this program is made available through a partnership between non-profits "International Association for Human Values" and "The Art of Living," along with the NMCD.



What could YOU do with \$150?

- ★ Buy your kids holiday or birthday gifts!
- ★ Spend it on commissary!
- ★ Put it in your savings!
- ★ Pay for your first college course!
- ★ Share it with your family!
- ★ The sky's the limit!

- Are you 24 years old or younger?
- Within one year of release?
- Working toward your GED or HiSET?

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Enroll **BEFORE** obtaining your GED/HiSET,
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The UFO Program can also provide help with:

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According to “The Art of Living” organization, the objective of the program is “to make a life-transforming difference in the lives of people within the criminal justice system, by teaching skills for reducing stress, healing trauma, and providing practical knowledge of how to handle one’s emotions, live to one’s highest potential, and contribute to society.”

Having served over 10,000 inmates, Correctional Officers, and Law Enforcement Officers in 44 countries since 1992, the program “aims to reduce offender recidivism and end the repeated cycle of violence and abuse.”

“The Art of Living” website goes on to explain that “Without tools to process past trauma and present stresses, incarcerated individuals often cope with their negative emotions such as anger, guilt, mistrust, and frustration with unhealthy behaviors and attitudes - including violence, addiction, apathy or lethargy. The Prison Program offers practical methods for participants to transform these negative emotions for true rehabilitation and develop the core human values innate in all human beings, such as service to others and compassion.”

The program achieves these goals by teaching advanced breathing practices that are believed to “create dynamic cleansing effects on the body and mind.”

“Participants learn how to use their breath to gain relief from the accumulated effects of stress and negative emotions. The program also teaches

practical life skills that enable participants to accept responsibility for their past actions and to handle future conflict and stressful situations successfully.”

The cornerstone of this program is a breathing technique called Sudarshan Kriya. Program organizers report that this unique practice transforms overpowering emotions and restores calm and alertness. The organizers also point out that learning this breathing technique allows participants to utilize it as a no-cost, self-empowering tool that can be used anywhere, at any time, even after their incarceration.

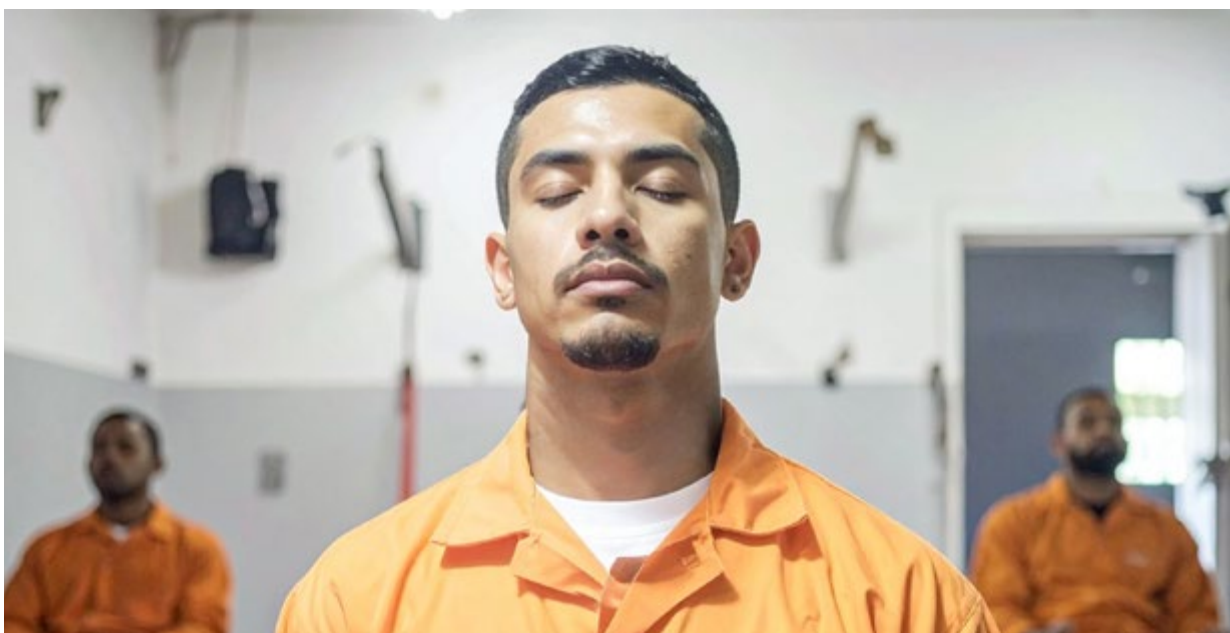
The course has also been designed to include practical life-skills training to help participants become more aware, and more in-charge, of unhealthy mental habits and patterns.

The program providers report that participants begin to reduce and manage stress in their lives in a healthier way. Participants say that they sleep better, think more clearly, and begin to take responsibility for their actions. By handling stressful situations better, they gain confidence in their ability to have self-control and make positive changes in their behavior.

Course participants report experiencing the following benefits:

Normalized sleep patterns

Reduced depression & anxiety



Breathing techniques, whether practiced alone or in a group, are a free and completely accessible way to calm yourself and conquer stress.

Behavioral Health Services

Life After Release Group

provides cognitive and behavioral skills training modules that assist in planning for life after release for incarcerated individuals approaching a release date.

The Depression Group

is an introductory psychoeducational group that provides participants with education about depression and its treatment.

IOP

Intensive Outpatient Addictions Treatment Programs offer a concentrated period of addictions treatment.



Living in a Fog?

If you're struggling with mental health or substance use disorder issues, reach out to Behavioral Health staff in your facility.

We Can Help!



It can be helpful to imagine yourself inhaling calm and exhaling stress when doing your breathing exercises.

Increased confidence in having self-control

Increased energy & clarity of mind

Increased resilience to daily stressors of life

Decreased interpersonal conflict

Decreased engaging in destructive behavior

Improved immunity & physical well-being

Freedom from traumatic scars of the past

Greater positive outlook on the future

Decreased apathy & lethargy

So, if this program sounds interesting to you, be sure to talk to your facility's Chaplain to find out if PNM's pilot program will be available at your facility in the future.

And if your family would like to learn more about the program, tell them that they will find more information at: <https://www.artofliving.org/us-en/prisoner-rehabilitation>

Box Breathing

While "The Art of Living" program mentioned above teaches participants to use the Sudarshan Kriya breathing technique to calm their mind and achieve mental focus, you can employ and benefit from other breathing exercises on your own, even if that program is not yet available at your facility.

One simple relaxation technique that is available to anyone at any time is called "box breathing." In order to do it, you simply inhale through your nose, hold your breath, exhale through your mouth, and hold again for equal counts, typically four seconds each. This rhythmic pattern calms your mind and body. It's a powerful practice that can reduce stress, improve focus, and manage anxiety by regulating your nervous system, heart rate, and blood pressure.

One of the very best things about box breathing is that it can be used anywhere. It's a portable and accessible tool for managing stress during activities like taking tests, public speaking, sitting for your Parole Hearing, or anytime.

Box Breathing in Six Simple Steps:

1 Find a comfortable position: Lie down or sit with your back supported and your feet on the floor.

2 Inhale: Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of four. Focus on expanding your belly and ribs.

Box Breathing



**Inhale through your nose
to a count of four.**

**Hold for
a count
of four.**

**Hold for
a count
of four.**

**Exhale through your mouth
to a count of four.**



for Stress Relief





Yoga is a powerful way to calm your mind, stretch your body, and soothe your spirit.

3 Hold: Hold your breath for a count of four.

4 Exhale: Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of four, emptying your lungs completely.

5 Hold: Hold your breath out for a count of four.

6 Repeat: Repeat the cycle several times, or for as long as you need to feel calm.

So, the next time you feel yourself getting stressed, give this simple breathing routine a try. You might be surprised by how effective it is.

Yoga

Another powerful stress management technique can be found in the practice of yoga.

Yoga is a mind-body practice with origins in ancient India that aims to unite the body, mind, and spirit through a combination of physical postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), and meditation. While it began as a spiritual and philosophical practice, today in Western culture, it is widely practiced as a physical exercise for improving strength, flexibility, and balance, as well as reducing stress and promoting a sense of well-being.

While various NMCD facilities offer organized yoga classes, it is a practice that you can also pursue on your own.

See if your facility's library offers any books on yoga. You can create your own routine of stretches with the help of the books you find, and you can incorporate that routine into your daily life.

You will even find some books about yoga available for free on your state-issued tablet. Simply go to the "Entertainment" folder, then click on "Book Library," and look for the following titles:

"The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali: The Book of the Spiritual Man" by Charles Johnson Patanjali

"An Introduction to Yoga" by Annie Besant

"Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda

"The Doctrine and Practice of Yoga Including Best Practices and Exercises of Concentration..." by Swami Mukerji, A. P.

"A Series of Lessons in Gnani Yoga: The Yoga of Wisdom" by William Walker Atkinson

"A Series of Lessons in Raja Yoga" by William Walker Atkinson

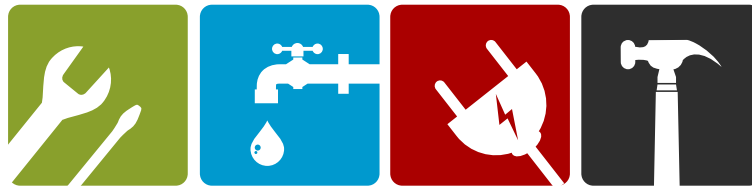
"Jnana Yoga, Part II: Seven Lectures" by Swami Vivekananda

"Yoga as Philosophy and Religion" by Surendranath Dasgupta

Keep in mind that some of these books explore the more spiritual aspects of yoga while others will simply guide you in how to realize the physical and mental health benefits of stretching your body and breathing with purpose.

Learning and practicing yoga can not only enable you to better handle the everyday stresses of being incarcerated, but can also serve you long into your

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****Bonus**** Participants releasing to the following counties - Union, Harding, Quay, Guadalupe, De Baca, Curry, Roosevelt, Chaves, Lincoln, Otero, Eddy, and Lea - may be eligible to receive tools purchased by Eastern Board WIOA offices.

future, post-incarceration life.

Behavioral Health Programming

One of the most effective ways to manage stress is to reframe how you experience and react to stressful situations. Stress will always be a part of life; while we can make some lifestyle changes that can minimize stress, we can never eliminate it from our lives entirely. Therefore, we have to adapt to our environment and train our brain to respond to stress differently, and Behavioral Health Programming can be one of the most effective ways to do this.

As mentioned before, anger management classes are one way to learn how to react to stressors in a healthier way.

But there are also many other Behavioral Health programming opportunities that can teach you how to be more resilient when faced with the inevitable stresses of life. Developing patience; recognizing your triggers; learning how to create firm boundaries; and realizing the need to prioritize the demands placed upon you are all stress-management strategies that Behavioral Health programming can assist with.

Be sure to reach out to Behavioral Health staff in your facility and let them know that you'd like to explore programming that can help you manage stress more effectively. They will let you know what they recommend. You can also use the Atlas app on your state-issued tablet to access free self-guided classes that can be helpful in this area.

Physical Exercise

Exercise is something that can not only greatly reduce stress, but is also completely free and accessible to people who are incarcerated.

Exercise reduces stress by releasing endorphins and other mood-boosting chemicals while decreasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. It also provides a mental break from worries, improves sleep quality, reduces muscle tension, and builds resilience and confidence.

Working out, running, walking, dancing, or other forms of aerobic exercise are all great ways to get your heart pumping and enjoy all of the stress-taming benefits of exercise.

See the article in this issue of Parallels titled, "The 2026 Resolution Solution" to learn more about



Exercise your body in order to exorcise stress.

how exercise can benefit your physical and mental health and remember that building an exercise habit now can benefit you throughout the rest of your life!

Sleep Hygiene

Maintaining a healthy sleep schedule is another accessible and totally free way to support your stress management practice during your incarceration.

Sleep hygiene reduces stress by regulating the body's stress hormones, like cortisol, and improving emotional and cognitive functions. Consistent sleep schedules, a relaxing bedtime routine, and avoiding stimulants like caffeine (especially close to bedtime) help regulate your body's internal clock, decrease stress hormone levels, and improve your ability to handle daily stressors.

See the article in this issue of *Parallels* titled, "Sweet Dreams are Made of This" to learn more about how sleep hygiene can support your physical and mental health both during your incarceration and beyond.

Hobbies and Interests

As is discussed in this issue's article titled, "Caution: Handle with Self-Care," making time for your own hobbies and interests while incarcerated is an important way to support your mental health.

Hobbies reduce stress by providing a mental break, releasing endorphins and dopamine ("feel good" hormones), and lowering cortisol levels (stress hormones) through enjoyable and engaging activities. They offer a healthy outlet for creativity, problem-solving, and social connection, helping to improve mood, focus, and overall well-being.

So, by making room in your day for your hobbies and interests, you're actually protecting your body and mind against the negative effects of stress.

Spiritual & Religious Activities

Another way in which you can enrich your stress management practice is through spiritual and religious activities. Completely free and highly accessible to the incarcerated community, these types of undertakings can be very supportive to your physical and mental health.

Prayer relieves stress by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering stress hormones like cortisol, and promoting a state of relaxation. It also provides psychological benefits such as a sense of hope, emotional release, and a way to reframe situations.

Remember that you have access to a wide variety of spiritual and religious texts at no cost on your state-issued tablet. Just look in the "Entertainment" folder and then click on the "Book Library."



Reading spiritual or religious texts or reading for enjoyment are both great ways to deal with stressors.

***Not all heroes wear capes!
Some just
carry Naloxone!***

NMCD's
NALOXONE

"GRAB AND GO" PROGRAM
IS NOW AVAILABLE AT

ALL

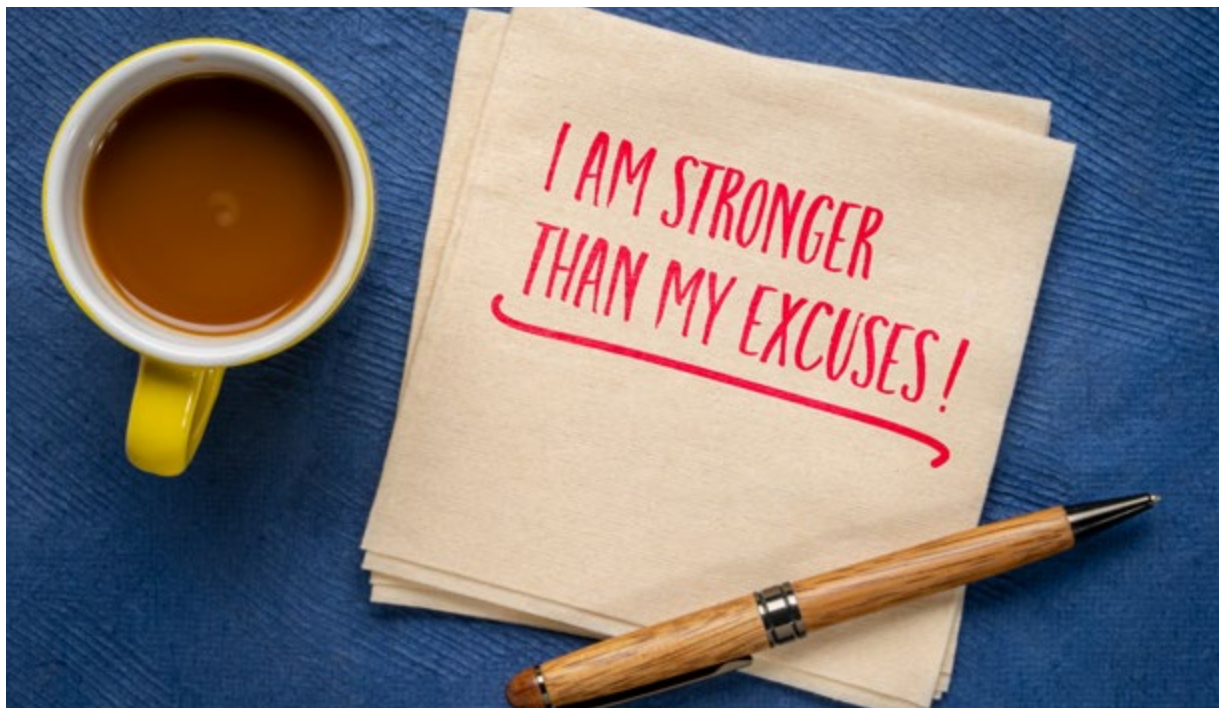


**NMCD PROBATION
& PAROLE OFFICES!**



If you are a probationer or parolee and believe that it would be helpful for you to have access to the opioid overdose reversal medication Naloxone, you can now stop in at ANY NMCD Probation & Parole Office statewide and help yourself to a box, which includes two doses, along with literature that details instructions for its effective use.

Do humanity a favor - be a lifesaver!



Affirmations can be an effective way to “talk yourself down” when you’re ramped up from stress.

And while private, silent prayer is a beneficial remedy for stress, you may also choose to participate in group worship activities, services, or discussions. These types of social interactions offer their own unique form of stress relief.

Social worship aids stress management by providing a sense of community, fostering emotional regulation, and promoting a more positive outlook. Collective activities like prayer, singing, and shared rituals create social support systems that reduce feelings of isolation and can have a calming effect on the body, while also offering a structured way to find hope and meaning.

Being part of a religious community can decrease feelings of loneliness and alienation, which are significant contributors to stress and anxiety. Worship gatherings can also offer a structured environment to connect with others, share experiences, receive encouragement, and talk through the stressors that you may be experiencing. Additionally, feeling accepted and valued within a spiritual or religious community can boost emotional well-being and create a stable social network to rely on during stressful times.

So, whether alone or along with a congregation, focusing on your faith is a great way to manage stress in a healthier way.

Affirmations

As is discussed in this issue’s article titled, “The 2026 Resolution Solution,” the use of affirmations can benefit your mental health. Affirmations can also be used strategically to support yourself in managing your stress level.

Simple, positive, affirming thoughts such as, “I release what I can’t control,” “My mind and body are at peace,” or, “I will not allow stress to steal my joy” can make a big difference in how you perceive and experience stressful situations.

Sometimes affirmations may take the form of a simple prayer, such as “The Serenity Prayer” that is often recited during Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

It goes, “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

This is a positive affirmation that can be helpful to anyone, whether they are in recovery or not, and even if you are not a religious person, you can still benefit from this mantra by rephrasing it slightly. Instead of “God grant me the serenity...” you can simply tell yourself, “Today, I will try my best...” The important thing is that you create an affirmation that works for you and that will help you stay positive and resilient in stressful times.

Turn Negative Self-Talk into Positive, Empowering Affirmations.

~~"My past mistakes have ruined my future."~~

"I am working hard everyday to make sure that my future is better than my past." ✓

"I will seize every opportunity available to me to ensure a better future for myself." ✓

"The mistakes of my past are lessons that allow me to make better choices moving forward." ✓

~~"Because I'm incarcerated, I can't do anything to improve my life."~~

"I have a wealth of programming opportunities available to me." ✓

"I can do my future self a favor by enrolling in classes and programming." ✓

"I can make positive choices everyday that will improve my present and my future." ✓

~~"I'm not smart enough to get my GED or college degree."~~

"I can achieve great things through self-discipline and determination." ✓

"I have access to teachers and tutors who want to help me succeed." ✓

"Now is the perfect time for me to try to achieve my educational goals." ✓

Read more in this issue's article titled "The 2026 Resolution Solution."



Get Some Fresh Air

When you're incarcerated, it's important to take every opportunity available to you to access the outdoors.

According to a study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, even a short, 15-minute walk outdoors is enough to reduce stress and fatigue. The release of endorphins and other "feel good" hormones (generated by exercising) and the exposure to nature combine to make a brisk outdoor stroll an effective stress reliever.

Don't forget, too, that sunshine and vitamin D are known to be powerful mood-boosters.

So, don't skip yard time and consider signing up for any programming opportunities that will allow you to spend some time outdoors.

Try Gargling Water

This sounds weird, but hear us out...

According to Heidi Hanna, PhD, Executive Director of the American Institute of Stress, the vagus nerve is the long, wandering nerve that facilitates the relaxation response, or parasympathetic nervous system.

Dr. Hanna explains that "When we are stuck in chronic stress, we can get hijacked by our stress response, or sympathetic nervous system, and similar to muscles that go unused for a long period of time, the vagus nerve can lose its strength or tone." According to Dr. Hanna, "gargling stimulates

the nerve, increasing your ability to shift to a state of calm."

Maybe that's why, in old movies, characters would often be shown gargling after brushing their teeth before bed. But it certainly seems like an easy, free thing to add to your stress-management practice. So, why not give it a try?

Laugh it Off

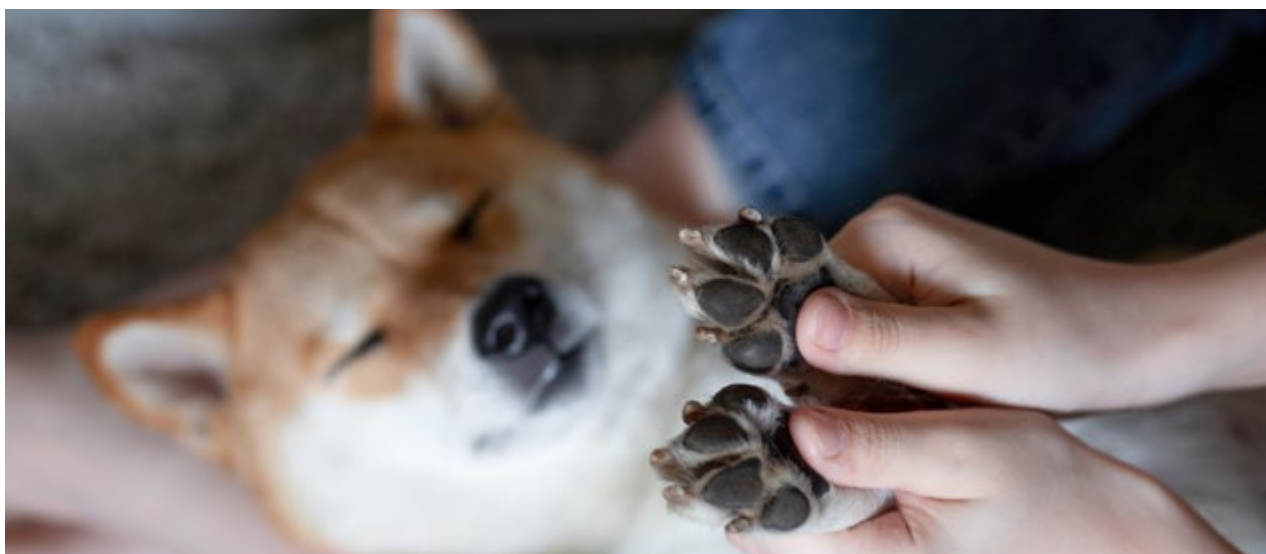
Laughter is widely recognized as good medicine; it helps you relax your mind and body, lowers your levels of the stress hormone called cortisol, and increases your levels of the "feel-good" hormones called endorphins.

So, the next time you decide to watch a movie or TV show, why not make it a comedy? Or ask your kids or other family members to tell you a funny story during your next phone call or visit. A good laugh will do you good.

"Paws" for a Stress Relieving Break

Does your facility have a dog training or foster program? If so, consider taking some time each day to interact with – or simply watch – the dogs. Or even consider seeing if you might be eligible to become a trainer or foster! (Ask your Unit Manager how to apply.)

Petting, playing, and interacting with pets lowers stress hormones like cortisol, increases "feel-good" hormones like serotonin and oxytocin, and can even lower blood pressure.



Pets have a magical way of melting away stress, just by being in our presence.



2026

2027

**A YEAR FROM NOW,
YOU'LL WISH YOU
HAD STARTED TODAY.**

EDUCATION

GED / HSE
COLLEGE

CAREER TECH

TRADE
CERTIFICATION
LICENSE
ICEV App

REENTRY

TRANSITIONS CLASS
IDENTIFICATION

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

IOP
RDAP
TRANSITIONS
ATLAS

Ask Education
how you can get started
today!

Caring for a dog can help you focus on living in the present moment, and since they're always doing goofy things, spending time with a dog is bound to make you laugh on the regular (remember, "Laughter is the best medicine").

Training or fostering a dog will also require you to take them for walks, which will increase your own stress-relieving physical activity.

Check out the article titled, "Teacher's Pet" in Volume 1, Edition 2 of *Parallels* (April 2025), which is about the various dog training programs that are available across the state.

Mindfulness Exercises

Similar to breathing techniques and the use of affirmations, mindfulness exercises are a free and easy way to ground yourself when faced with stressful situations.

One very simple yet effective mindfulness exercise is a "5-4-3-2-1" grounding exercise.

First, focus on slow, deep breaths. Then, identify five things that you can see around you. Then find four things that you can touch or feel. Next, identify three things that you can hear. Then, recognize two things you can smell, and finally, one thing you can taste.

This type of exercise helps ground you where you are, can help calm your body and mind, and can help relieve stress. This technique can also help you focus your mind on problem-solving and, if you tend to experience racing thoughts, it can help bring you back to the present moment.

It's easy, simple, and free, so it's definitely worth a try when you're feeling a bit wound up.

Do a Little Day Dreaming

While it's a good idea to create as much structure and routine as possible for your day-to-day life in prison, remember to also give your mind a chance to just wander now and then.

Between programming, work, classes, clubs, worshiping, and other activities, your life inside can actually become quite busy (which is good). But in between all of your scheduled tasks, be sure

to allow your brain some time to just relax and explore your own thoughts.

Allowing your mind to drift, you may find that you're able to make unexpected creative connections; come up with new ideas; and identify unique ways to solve problems.

So, whether you kick back on your bunk and close your eyes for a while; spend some time staring out the window of your facility's library; or let your mind wander during your mealtime or shower, make sure you're giving your brain a "mini vacation" now and then. Doing so will help keep stress at bay.

Help Someone Else

One of the best ways to relieve your own stress is to shift your focus onto helping someone else.

Call your family if you're able, write a letter to a friend, make a gift for a loved one, find a way to volunteer in your facility, become an Education Tutor or Peer Mentor, apply to enroll as a dog trainer or foster, or simply find small everyday ways to show kindness to your fellow inmates or facility staff.

You will likely be amazed by how helping someone else will be a win-win: kindness for them, and stress relief for you!

With this list of stress relieving ideas, you're bound to be able to assemble your own customized stress management practice. Take an idea from here, and one from there, and before you know it, you will have created your own unique stress management tool kit that you can tap into whenever you need it.

If you have found some of your own easy, free, and accessible stress management techniques that are not mentioned in this article, be sure to write up your ideas and submit them to your Supervisor of Education (SOE) for possible inclusion in future issues of *Parallels*. Someone else may be able to benefit from your experience!

PARALLELS



Skilled Tradespeople Wanted

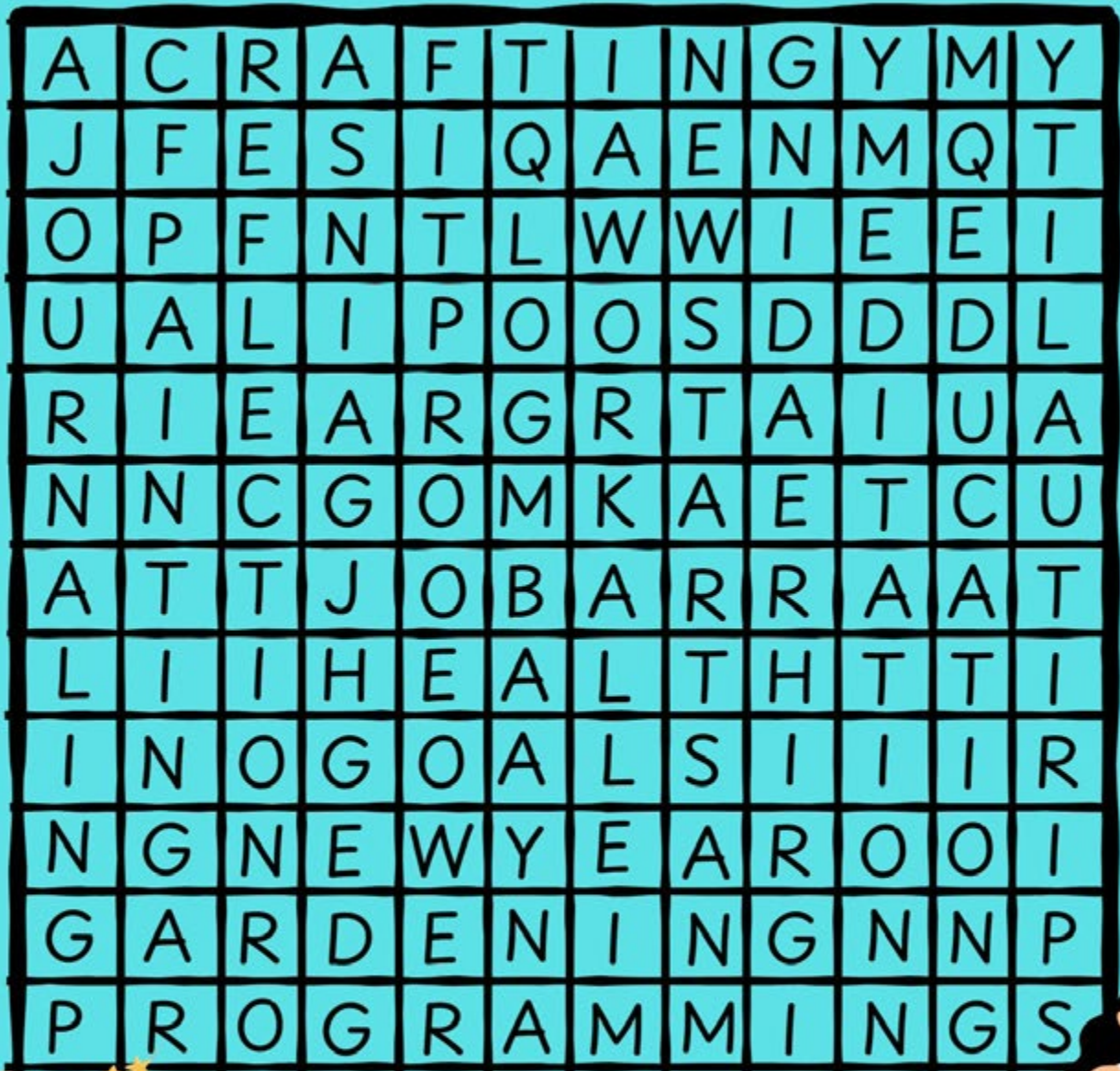
Have a trade, skill, license, or certification?

We are looking for you!
Teach others the skills you have.
Make a difference in someone's life.

Ask Education how you can get started today!

PARALLELS WORD SEARCH

YOU WILL FIND THE ANSWERS TO THE WORD SEARCH
ON THE NEXT PAGE.



HAPPY
NEW YEAR

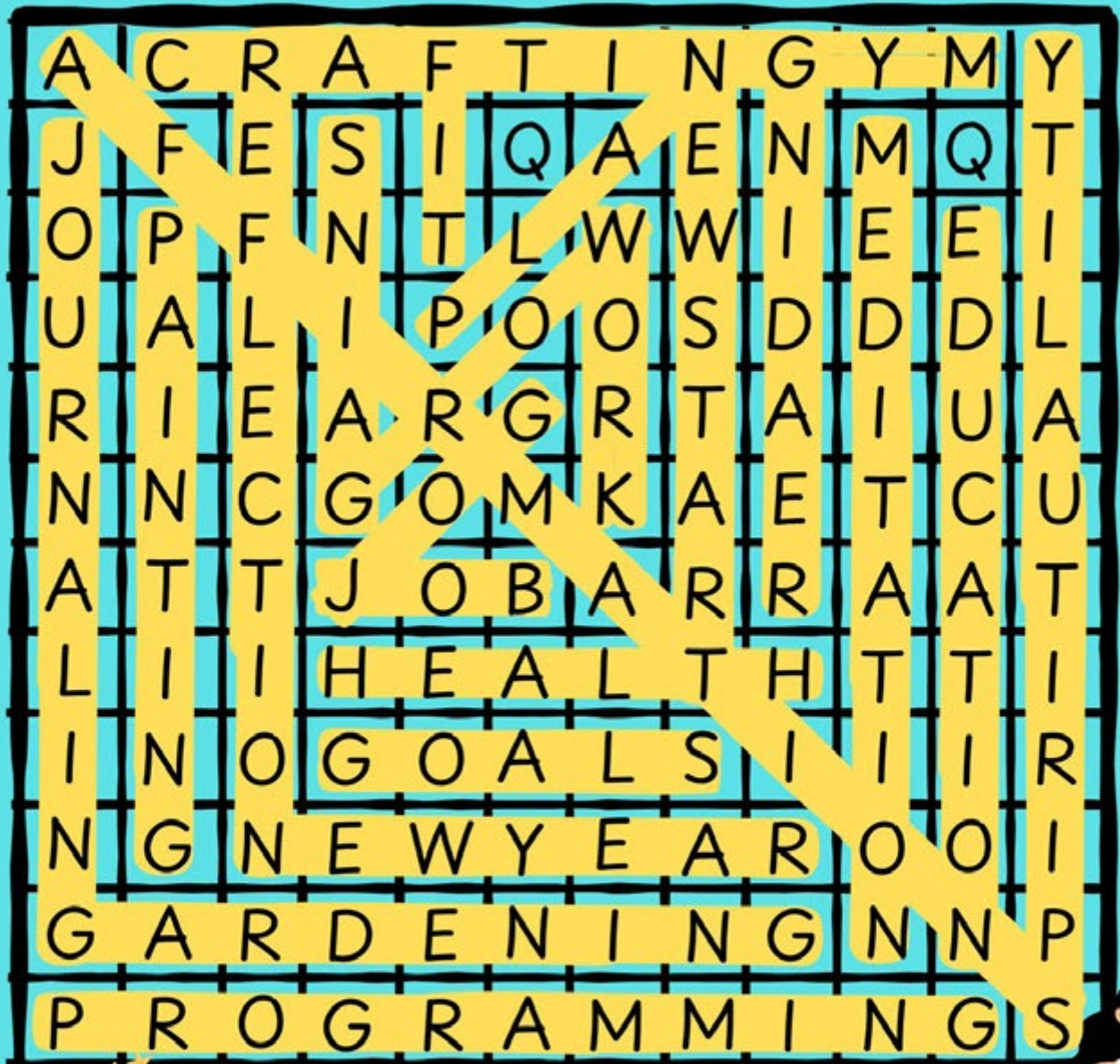
FIND THESE WORDS:

NEW YEAR	CRAFTING	FIT	GAINS
GYM	JOURNALING	JOG	WORK
READING	SPIRITUALITY	JOB	PAINTING
HEALTH	MEDITATION	PLAN	GOALS
EDUCATION	REFLECTION	CRAFTING	
AFFIRMATIONS	GARDENING		
NEW START	PROGRAMMING		



PARALLELS WORD SEARCH

ASK YOUR EDUCATION STAFF
FOR A PRINTED WORD SEARCH,
THEN CHECK YOUR ANSWERS HERE.



HAPPY
NEW YEAR

FIND THESE WORDS:

NEW YEAR	CRAFTING	FIT	GAINS
GYM	JOURNALING	JOG	WORK
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HEALTH	MEDITATION	PLAN	GOALS
EDUCATION	REFLECTION	CRAFTING	
AFFIRMATIONS	GARDENING		
NEW START	PROGRAMMING		



Reflections on Corrections

“

***Accept
responsibility for your life.
Know that it is you
who will get you
where you want to go,
no one else.***

-Les Brown

”



www.cd.nm.gov

Vocab Zone

This glossary of terms provides the definition of some of the words used throughout this issue of Parallels and will help you GROW your vocabulary.

Accentuate: make more noticeable or prominent.

Accountable: required or expected to justify actions or decisions; responsible.

Affirmative: supportive, hopeful, or encouraging.

Avid: having or showing a keen interest in or enthusiasm for something.

Cognitive: relating to the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses.

Deliverance: the action of being rescued or set free.

Exorcise: drive out or attempt to drive out from a person or place.

Glossary: an alphabetical list of terms or words found in or relating to a specific subject or text, with explanations; a brief dictionary.

Initiative: an act or strategy intended to resolve a difficulty or improve a situation; a fresh approach to something.

Liable: likely to do or to be something.

Mindfulness: the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.

Pandemonium: wild and noisy, disorder or confusion; uproar.

Perspective: a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view.

Physiological: relating to the branch of biology that deals with the normal functions of living organisms and their parts.

Resilience: the capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Resolution: a firm decision to do or not to do something.

Self-mandating: the act of an individual or group creating and imposing a rule or requirement upon themselves.

Transformative: causing a marked change in someone or something.

PARALLELS



NEW MEXICO
CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

DIGITAL MAGAZINE

PARALLELS

VOLUME 2 / EDITION 1

JANUARY 2026

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Special thanks to the NMCD Wardens and staff members who granted interviews and facilitated access to incarcerated interviewees. The statements provided by justice-involved individuals within the NMCD have been published with their permission.

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Note that the names of justice-involved people have been excluded for privacy, safety, and / or security purposes, as well as out of respect to those directly impacted by their crimes.

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For any questions on Parallels, please contact the NMCD Reentry Division.

