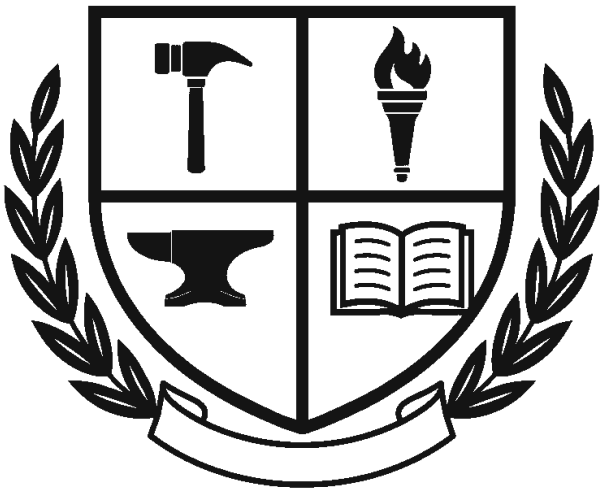
FORGE



INTRODUCTION TO FORGE

WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

Know Yourself
A Man of Your Word
Purpose and Legacy

Twelve sessions

Name: _____

How to use this book

This book goes with **Introduction to FORGE**, the class every man in a FORGE dorm takes: twelve sessions, one a week. You can start at any session and go round until you've done all twelve.

Each session has a page with the big idea, the key points, any tool the session teaches, and your homework. After it come the **worksheets** the homework uses. Use the **Notes** pages at the back for anything the homework asks you to write about.

Every session ends with one question: what is your legacy? Write one line about it on the **My Legacy** page after each session. In Session 12 you turn your lines into your legacy statement. The day you finish all twelve, you read it to the circle.

Your deadlines: start within 3 months of moving into the dorm, and finish all twelve sessions within 6 months. Missed a session? Make it up in person, on a make-up day, with other men in the room.

This book is yours. Nobody collects it or reads it without asking. If writing isn't your thing, work your pages out loud with a partner who writes for you.

OUR OPENING WORDS

FORGE: Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth and Empowerment.
We're building a new prison experience, where men lead by example, support one another, and prepare to make a positive impact, both inside these walls and beyond them. Our goal is simple: to turn time served into time that serves others. Our purpose: to know ourselves, keep our word, and leave a legacy of service.

We say these together at the start of every session.

FORGE — Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth and Empowerment.
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My Legacy

After every session, write one line: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** In Session 12 these lines become your legacy statement.

Orientation
Why it matters what I leave behind

Session 1
Thinking Controls Behavior

Session 2
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Session 3
The Anger Beneath the Anger

Session 4
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Session 10
Finding Purpose

Session 11
The Stakeholder Identity

Session 12
What Is Your Legacy?

PART 1

Know Yourself

How your thinking, your anger and your coping work.

Everything starts here. Between what happens to you and what you do, there's a thought. These four sessions are about seeing your own thoughts, feelings and habits clearly, so you choose what you do instead of your worst moment choosing for you.

Session 1 — Thinking Controls Behavior 6
Session 2 — Thinking Errors 8
Session 3 — The Anger Beneath the Anger 10
Session 4 — Coping and Safety 13

Thinking Controls Behavior

BIG IDEA *Between every situation and every reaction there is a thought, and that thought, not the situation, drives what you feel and do.*

KEY POINTS

- **Your thinking controls your behavior.** Not the situation, not the other person, not what happened to you. The facilitator called this the single most important thing in FORGE: "If you get nothing else from FORGE, get this."
- **The Think-Feel-Act cycle.** Something happens. You have a thought about it, usually fast and automatic. The thought creates a feeling. The feeling drives an action. The action brings a consequence. Every time.
- **Same situation, two outcomes.** A group laughs as you walk through the dorm. Man A thinks, "They're laughing at me," gets angry, and ends up in a confrontation. Man B thinks, "Has nothing to do with me," and keeps his peace. The only difference was the thought.
- **Automatic thoughts feel like facts, but they are stories.** "He's disrespecting me" feels like reality. It is an interpretation, and your brain might be wrong.
- **Many automatic thoughts were once survival strategies.** If disrespect could get you hurt growing up, your brain learned to scan for it. Those habits made sense then. Most of them are not serving you now.
- **The first step is to see the thought before it takes over.** You can't change what you can't see.
- **Ask whether a thought is helpful, not only whether it is true.** Even if the other man really was disrespecting you, a thought that leads to a consequence you don't want is not serving you.
- **The goal is not to stop reacting.** It is to choose your reaction instead of having it chosen for you.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Automatic thought** — a thought that shows up on its own, fast and convincing, before you have chosen it.
- **Consequence** — what happens as a result of what you did.

TOOL: THE THINKING REPORT

Situation	Thought	Feeling	Action	Consequence
What happened? Just the facts, no interpretation.	What went through your mind?	What did you feel? Name it.	What did you do?	What happened as a result?

Write what actually went through your mind, not what you think you should have thought. The point is honesty, not perfection. Your thinking reports are private; no one reads them without your permission.

HOMEWORK

1. **Write 3 more thinking reports** about situations from your own life where you had a strong reaction. It does not have to be a fight: getting frustrated, shutting down, or stewing all day counts.
   Workbook: Thinking Report, page 7
2. **Notice your automatic thoughts as they happen.** Don't try to change them yet. Just say to yourself, "There it is again."

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Thinking Report

Pick a real situation where you had a strong reaction. Write what actually went through your mind, not what you think you should have thought. Honesty, not perfection.

Situation	Thought	Feeling	Action	Consequence
Another man cut in front of me in the chow line.	*"He thinks I'm soft. If I let this go, everyone will see."*	*Anger. Embarrassment.*	*Got loud. Told him to get to the back.*	*A CO came over. I was worked up all day.*

Session 2: next to each thought, name the thinking error, if there is one.

Going further: the restructured version. Take one report above and rewrite it with a better thought. Ask: Is the thought accurate? Is it helpful? Is there another way to see this?

Situation	Better thought	Feeling	Action	Consequence

Thinking Errors

> **BIG IDEA** *Everyone has thinking errors; the man who grows is the one who learns to catch the error before it drives the action.*

KEY POINTS

- **Thinking errors are habits, not signs of being stupid or crazy.** Everyone in the room has them, the facilitator included. We name them so we can catch them.
- **Closed thinking: "I'm right, period."** Refusing to hear another side. If you are always right, you never grow.
- **Victim stance: "It's not my fault."** Seeing yourself as always acted upon, never the actor. Some men here were truly harmed, and that is real. Victim stance is staying stuck there. "I was harmed, and I need to heal" is honest. "Everything is everyone else's fault" is a thinking error.
- **Lack of empathy: "I don't care how they feel."** Like the man who plays his music loud at midnight and, when someone asks him to turn it down, says "Deal with it." Often it is not cruelty, just not thinking about others at all.
- **Minimizing: "It's not that serious."** "I only pushed him." It is the error that lets you sleep at night after doing something you know was wrong.
- **Power thrust: "I'll make them do it."** Using intimidation or threats to control people. It feels like strength. Real strength is holding power and choosing not to use it destructively.
- **Entitlement: "I deserve it."** Believing the rules don't apply to you. Entitlement is the enemy of service.
- **Cognitive indolence: "I don't want to think about it."** Mental laziness. "I'll talk to him tomorrow" becomes next week, and next week the problem explodes.
- **Discontinuity: "I meant to, but..."** The gap between what you say and what you do. Meaning it is not enough.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Thinking error** — a habit of thinking that bends the facts and pushes you toward harmful behavior.
- **Cognitive indolence** — big words, simple idea: being too lazy to think a problem through.
- **Discontinuity** — good intentions with no follow-through.

HOMEWORK

1. **Catch yourself in 3 thinking errors** before the next session. When you notice one, write down the situation, the thought, and which error it was.
   Workbook: The 8 Thinking Errors, page 9
2. **Learn all 8 thinking errors by name.** Review the reference sheet.

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The 8 Thinking Errors

FORGE · WEEK 2 · SESSIONS 5 AND 6 · HOW THINKING WORKS

Every one of us has thinking errors. They aren't signs of being stupid or crazy. They're habits: patterns your mind falls into, usually without you knowing it. We name them so you can catch them. Most situations involve more than one. Write the name next to the Thought column of your thinking report.

1 Closed thinking

"I'm right. I don't want to hear it. My mind is made up."

SOUNDS LIKE "That's just the way I am." "I already know what happened. I don't need to hear their side."

IN THE DORM He decides his bunkmate is stealing from him. He won't listen to any explanation.

THE CHALLENGE "Do I really know? Or am I assuming? What would it cost me to listen for 2 minutes?"

2 Victim stance

"It's not my fault. This was done to me. I had no choice."

SOUNDS LIKE "She made me do it." "If I'd had a different upbringing, I wouldn't be here."

IN THE DORM He gets into a fight and says, "He started it. I didn't have a choice."

THE CHALLENGE "I can be angry about the sentence and honest about my choices." ("I was harmed, and I need to heal" is honest.)

3 Lack of empathy

"I don't care how they feel. That's their problem."

SOUNDS LIKE "That's not my problem." "She'll get over it."

IN THE DORM He plays his music loud at midnight. Asked to turn it down: "Deal with it."

THE CHALLENGE "If I was in his situation, how would I feel? What kind of man do I want to be?"

4 Minimizing

"It's not that serious."

SOUNDS LIKE "I only pushed him." "Nobody got hurt. What's the big deal?"

IN THE DORM He borrows something without asking: "Relax, I was going to give it back."

THE CHALLENGE "How did he experience it? The impact matters, not just the degree."

5 Power thrust

"I'll make them do it. I'll force the outcome I want."

SOUNDS LIKE "Nobody's going to punk me." "I need to show these people who's in charge."

IN THE DORM He doesn't like how someone looked at him, so he gets in his face.

THE CHALLENGE "What am I actually trying to accomplish? Is intimidation going to get me what I want?"

6 Entitlement

"I deserve this. I shouldn't have to wait, work, or earn it."

SOUNDS LIKE "I've been here longer, so I get first pick." "I shouldn't have to clean. That's beneath me."

IN THE DORM He takes the best seat in the common area and won't move for anyone.

THE CHALLENGE "Why not? What makes me special? Am I living by Service Over Self?"

7 Cognitive indolence

"I don't want to think about it. I'll deal with it later."

SOUNDS LIKE "Whatever, I'll figure it out." "It'll work out somehow."

IN THE DORM "I'll talk to him tomorrow." Tomorrow becomes next week. Next week the problem explodes.

THE CHALLENGE "Is it going to go away or get worse? What would the man I'm becoming do?"

8 Discontinuity

"I meant to, but..."

SOUNDS LIKE "I was going to apologize, but then I got busy." "I know I said I'd be there, but something came up."

IN THE DORM He promises his kid on the phone he's changing, then acts exactly the same.

THE CHALLENGE "Did I really forget, or did I choose not to? What am I going to do differently right now?"

Three honest questions (Session 6) for any thought: **Is it accurate?** Do I have all the facts, or am I filling in blanks? **Is it helpful?** Even if it's true, is it leading me toward the outcome I want? **Is there another way to see this?** What would a calm, clear-headed version of me think? The man who grows learns to catch the error before it drives the action.

The Anger Beneath the Anger

BIG IDEA *Once you name what is underneath your anger, "it stops controlling you from the dark."*

KEY POINTS

- **Three things you can do with pain.** Process it: feel it, name it, grieve it. That is the healthy way and the hardest. Numb it: "The bill comes due later. Always." Or convert it into anger, which most men do, "not because they're weak — because they were never taught another way."
- **Stored pain looks for an exit.** Every time you went from zero to a hundred over nothing, "that was stored pain looking for an exit." Like a pressure cooker, it blows at the wrong person, at the wrong time.
- **Four feelings men most often turn into anger:**
  1. **Shame:** "I am bad," not "I did something bad."
  2. **Rejection:** "I'm not wanted." She stops writing; the parole board says no.
  3. **Powerlessness:** "I have no control." Aggression gives a fake power: "I can't control my sentence, but I can control what happens in this dorm."
  4. **Grief:** "I've lost something I can never get back." "You can't punch grief. You can't outrun it."
- **The daughter on the phone.** His daughter sounds distant; her stepdad is taking her to the movies. He feels grief and fear, and he shows anger: he punches his locker. If he can name it, the pain doesn't disappear, but it doesn't explode on innocent people. "Both men hurt. One destroys things. The other endures it with dignity."
- **Recognize, regulate, understand.** That is the whole idea: recognize the emotion (the wheel, body signals), regulate it (breathing, grounding, STOP), and understand it (what's beneath the anger).

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Emotional literacy** — being able to read yourself: recognize what you feel, regulate it, and understand where it comes from.

TOOL: BENEATH MY ANGER

Pick a time you were really angry and write:

1. **What happened?** Describe the situation.
2. **What did you show?** What did your anger look like on the outside?
3. **What was underneath?** Shame? Rejection? Powerlessness? Grief? Fear? Hurt? Name it.
4. **Where did that deeper emotion come from?** Does it connect to something older, from your childhood, your family, your history?
5. **If you could go back with what you know now,** what would you do differently? What would you let yourself feel?

HOMEWORK

1. **Keep an emotion tracking log.** By next session, have at least 5 days of entries, 3 a day. Look for patterns: times of day, situations or people that bring up the same emotions.
   Workbook: Emotion Tracking Log, page 11
2. **Use 4-4-4 breathing or 5-4-3-2-1 grounding at least once a day.** Write down the result on the notes pages in your book.
3. **Write a second "Beneath My Anger" entry** about a different situation, using the same 5 prompts.
   Workbook: Beneath My Anger — Writing Exercise, page 12
4. **Sit with this question:** "What is one thing that happened to me that I've never fully let myself feel about?" You don't have to write about it yet.

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Emotion Tracking Log

Three times a day (morning, midday, evening), stop and write: What time is it? What's happening? What am I feeling? (Use the wheel.) Where do I feel it in my body? How strong is it, 1 to 10? Write the date before each day's first entry.

Going further: when a reaction seems bigger than the situation, ask yourself, "Is this about what just happened, or about something older?"

Time	Situation	Emotion	Body signal	Intensity 1–10
7:30 am	*Mail call. Nothing from home again.*	*Disappointed, lonely*	*Heavy chest*	*6*

Time	Situation	Emotion	Body signal	Intensity 1–10

Patterns I notice (times of day, situations or people that bring up the same emotions):

SESSION 3 WORKSHEET

Beneath My Anger — Writing Exercise

Write this in your notes. It is private unless you choose to share it. Pick a time you were really angry: a time your anger led to something you regret, or felt bigger than the situation. Use these five prompts:

1. **What happened?** Describe the situation.
2. **What did you show?** What did your anger look like on the outside? What did you do?
3. **What was underneath?** Peel back the anger. Shame? Rejection? Powerlessness? Grief? Fear? Hurt? Name it.
4. **Where did that deeper emotion come from?** Is it new, or does it connect to something older: your childhood, your family, your history?
5. **If you could go back** with what you know now, what would you do differently? Not just the action. What would you let yourself feel?

Stuck? Start with what happened. The rest will come.

After each entry, note what you found. Keep the details in your notes.

Entry	Date	What I showed	What was underneath
1 (in session)			
2 (homework)			

Coping and Safety

BIG IDEA *Everyone copes; what matters is whether your way handles the pain without creating bigger problems.*

KEY POINTS

- **Unsafe coping works, for a while.** Substance use, violence, isolation, gambling and debt, manipulation, self-harm. "They work — until the consequences hit. And the consequences always hit." If you are hurting yourself, tell the facilitator, "not for punishment, but for help."
- **Safe coping is in your control today.** Exercise, breathing and grounding, journaling, talking to one person you trust, prayer or meditation, creative work, a routine, helping someone else, naming the emotion. "The question isn't whether you have options. The question is whether you'll use them."
- **Self-care in here is basic.** Drink water, eat at chow, get outside when yard is open, sleep at night, keep yourself clean, and say "I'm not okay" to one person. "You can't pour from an empty cup — even in here."
- **FORGE is trauma-aware, not therapy.** It helps you understand trauma, not treat it. Nightmares, flashbacks or suicidal thoughts call for professional support, "and there is no weakness in that."
- **When a friend is struggling: listen, and get him help.** You are not his therapist. Get help when someone talks about hurting himself or someone else, has flashbacks or severe dissociation, is in a mental health crisis beyond a bad day, or tells you about ongoing abuse, including sexual abuse in the facility. Stay with him, keep him safe, and get help.
- **Your toolkit.** A thinking error: challenge it and replace it. Escalating: breathe or ground. A decision under pressure: STOP. A trauma response firing: "This is my survival system. I'm not in danger right now. I have a choice."

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Safe coping** — handling pain in a way that doesn't create more problems.
- **Trauma-aware** — understanding how trauma affects people, without trying to treat it.

TOOL: YOUR SAFE COPING CARD

Your personal safety plan, small enough to keep in your pocket or in this book. When you feel yourself starting to climb, pull it out.

1. **My top 2 thinking errors** — the ones I fall into most.
2. **My main trauma response** — fight, flight, freeze or fawn.
3. **My body's early warning signal** — jaw tightens? Chest gets hot? Stomach drops?
4. **My 3 go-to safe coping strategies** — things I will actually do here.
5. **My person** — one person I can talk to when things get heavy.

HOMEWORK

1. **Carry your Safe Coping Card.** Use it at least once before next session. Write what happened on the notes pages in your book.
2. **Try one new safe coping strategy,** one you have never tried. Push yourself a little outside your comfort zone. Write down the result on the notes pages in your book.
   Workbook: Safe vs. Unsafe Coping Strategies, page 14
3. **Keep up your emotion tracking log and thinking reports.** If they aren't habits yet, recommit. They are the evidence of your growth.
4. **Write a reflection, at least half a page:** "What I understand now about myself that I didn't understand a month ago."

Worksheet: My Safe Coping Card, page 14

SESSION 4 WORKSHEET

Safe vs. Unsafe Coping Strategies

Unsafe coping works for a while, until the consequences hit. Safe coping handles the pain without creating bigger problems, and all of it is in your control today. Check what you already do, on both sides. Then circle one safe strategy you have never tried, and try it before the next session.

Safe coping	Unsafe coping
☐ Physical activity: push-ups, walking the yard	☐ Substance use: drugs, alcohol, pruno
☐ Breathing and grounding: 4-4-4, 5-4-3-2-1	☐ Violence: letting the pressure out on someone
☐ Journaling	☐ Isolation: not eating, sleeping all day
☐ Talking to one person you trust	☐ Risk-taking: gambling, debt, rule-breaking
☐ Prayer or meditation	☐ Manipulation and control
☐ Creative work: drawing, writing, music	☐ Self-harm
☐ Routine and structure	
☐ Helping someone else	
☐ Naming the emotion: “This is shame.”	

If you are hurting yourself, tell the facilitator. Not for punishment. For help.

SESSION 4 WORKSHEET

My Safe Coping Card

Your personal safety plan, small enough to carry. Copy it onto a card or inside the cover of this book and keep it with you. When you feel yourself starting to climb, pull it out and use it.

What goes on it	Mine
1. My top 2 thinking errors — the ones I fall into most	1.
	2.
2. My main trauma response — know your default	fight · flight · freeze · fawn *(circle one)*
3. My body’s early warning signal — jaw tightens? chest gets hot? stomach drops?	
4. My 3 go-to safe coping strategies — things I will actually do, in here, now	1.
	2.
	3.
5. My person — one person I can talk to when things get heavy	

PART 2

A Man of Your Word

Accountability, integrity, making it right, seeing others.

A man whose word is good is a man people build around. These four sessions are about owning what you did with no 'but,' letting your values, words and actions line up, repairing what you broke, and seeing how what you do lands on the people around you.

Session 5 — Personal Accountability 16
Session 6 — Integrity Under Pressure 19
Session 7 — Making Amends and Moving Forward 20
Session 8 — Empathy Development 22

Personal Accountability

BIG IDEA *Accountability means honestly owning the harm your choices caused and committing to change, and it sets you free instead of crushing you.*

KEY POINTS

- **What accountability is not.** Not self-punishment; that is "shame wearing a costume." Not a performance for a parole board. Not a trade: "Real accountability doesn't come with a receipt." Not selective: you own all of your part.
- **What accountability is.** Honestly admitting that your choices created harm, to yourself, to others, and to your community, plus a real commitment to behave differently.
- **Accountability is liberation.** As long as you deny, minimize, or blame, you carry the weight of a lie, and the lie takes energy to keep up. When you put it down, the weight lifts. "Not the consequences. The weight."
- **Watch the small words.** "Just" is "a verbal eraser." "Every word after 'but' erases what came before it." And blaming the other man doesn't hold up: "He didn't reach inside your brain and move your fist."
- **Full accountability holds two truths.** "I grew up in violence, I was addicted, I had no support — AND I chose to rob that man. Both things are true. My background explains how I got there. It doesn't excuse what I did."
- **Guilt says "I did something bad." Shame says "I am bad."** Guilt is about what you did, and it pushes you to change. Shame is about who you are, and it pushes you to hide, numb out, or do more harm. A quick test: if this work makes you feel determined, that is guilt doing its job. If it makes you feel worthless, that is shame. Say something; don't sit in it alone. "Shame thrives in isolation. It dies in the light."

TOOL: THE ACCOUNTABILITY SPECTRUM

Level	What it sounds like
1. Denial	"I didn't do it." "The system set me up."
2. Minimization	"It wasn't that serious." "Nobody really got hurt."
3. Blame-shifting	"He started it." "I had no choice."
4. Partial ownership	"I messed up, but..." Where most people get stuck.
5. Full accountability	"I did this. It caused this harm. There is no excuse. I am committed to being different."

Wherever you are is where you start. There is no judgment for being at a 2 or a 3, "only judgment if you stay there and pretend it's a 5."

Your accountability statement is about one specific harm you caused. No excuses, no "but," no shame spiral: "I [specific action]. This caused [specific harm to specific people]. I take full responsibility for this choice. I am committed to [specific change]." It is private, but "accountability that stays inside your head is half-finished."

HOMEWORK

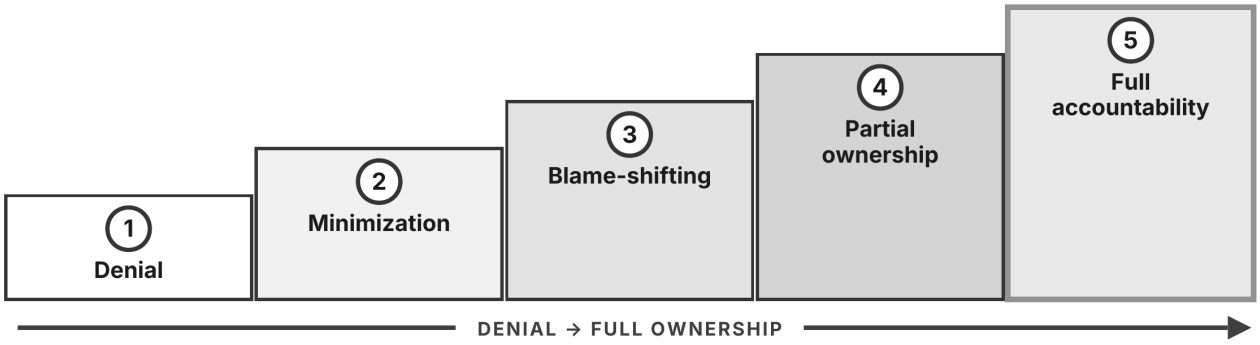
1. **Identify one area of your life where you're still in denial or minimization.** Write about it on the notes pages in your book. Don't try to fix it yet. Just see it clearly.
   Workbook: Accountability Spectrum, page 17
2. **Re-read your accountability statement.** Does it hold up? Is there a "but" hiding in it? If so, rewrite it without the qualifier.
   Workbook: My Accountability Statement, page 18

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The Accountability Spectrum

FORGE · WEEK 7 · SESSION 19 · PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability isn't a switch you flip from off to on. It's a spectrum. Most people move along it over time. Five levels, from denial to full ownership:



1 · DENIAL

"I didn't do it." "It wasn't me." "The system set me up."

You can't change something you won't admit exists.

2 · MINIMIZATION

"It wasn't that serious." "Nobody really got hurt." "It was just..."

"Just" is a verbal eraser. The people who were harmed don't experience it as small.

3 · BLAME-SHIFTING

"He started it." "She made me do it." "I had no choice."

He didn't reach inside your brain and move your fist. You decided.

4 · PARTIAL OWNERSHIP

"I messed up, but..." "I take responsibility for my part, but he..."

Every word after "but" erases what came before it. Where most people get stuck.

5 · FULL ACCOUNTABILITY

"I did this. It caused this harm. There is no excuse. I am committed to being different."

No "but." No conditions. Your background explains how you got there. It doesn't excuse what you did.

> **Full accountability holds two truths.** "I grew up in violence, I was addicted, I had no support — AND I chose to rob that man. Both things are true. My background explains how I got there. It doesn't excuse what I did. I caused harm. I own that."

Wherever you are is where you start. There's no judgment for being at a 2 or a 3. There's only judgment if you stay there and pretend it's a 5. **Growth means movement. Not perfection.**

WHERE I STAND · private: nobody has to share

Be honest with yourself. Not where you want to be. Not where you think you should be. Where you actually are. This is between you and the page. (Rather keep it off this page? Write the number in your journal.)

1 2 3 4 5

One area of my life where I'm still in denial or minimization *(Session 19 homework: don't try to fix it yet — just see it clearly; keep writing in your journal)*

My Accountability Statement

Pick one harm you know you are responsible for: the crime that brought you here, something you did to family, or to someone in this facility. It is private. You share it only if you choose to, and you can write it in your notes instead.

The rules. Name what you did, specifically. Name the harm and who it hurt. No excuses, no "but." No shame spiral: "I did this, and this is what it caused," not "I'm a terrible person." End with a commitment.

I ... ***(what I did, specifically)***

This caused ... ***(the specific harm, to specific people)***

I take full responsibility for this choice.

I am committed to ... ***(a specific change)***

Homework: does it hold up? Re-read it. Is there a "but" hiding in it, or an excuse? If so, rewrite it without the qualifier.

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Integrity Under Pressure

BIG IDEA *Integrity means your values, your words, and your actions match, even when it costs you, because pressure doesn't build character, it reveals it.*

KEY POINTS

- **Integrity is the alignment between your values, your words, and your actions.** Your values are what you say matters to you. Your words are your promises. Your actions are what you actually do, every day, when nobody's watching. When the three don't line up, "that gap is where trust dies."
- **Integrity is not perfection. It is consistency.** The man who admits he messed up and works to repair it has more integrity than the man who never makes a mistake because he never takes a risk.
- **It is tested every day in here.** You face moments when the easy path and the right path are different: cutting corners, going along with something you know is wrong, staying quiet when you should speak up.
- **"Pressure doesn't build character. It reveals character."** Who you are when you're scared, angry, or unwatched is who you really are. FORGE cares about who you are when doing right costs you something.
- **Run the 4 tests.** None of them is about what other people think of you. If a choice fails even one, reconsider.
- **Hard choices have no clean answers.** In groups you worked through four: holding a friend's bag before a shakedown, seeing a man in your dorm take another man's commissary, being invited into a rule-breaking hustle, and being tempted to lie in an interview to get an opportunity. In real life, integrity often costs you a friendship, an opportunity, comfort, or belonging. "The pressure is the cost."
- **Nobody gets it right every time.** The man with integrity makes the hard choice more often than not. When he fails, he admits it, learns from it, and recommits.

TOOL: THE 4 TESTS OF INTEGRITY

1. **The Mirror Test.** Can you look yourself in the eye after this choice? Tonight, lying in your bunk, can you live with it?
2. **The Public Test.** Would you do this if everyone was watching? Even when no one is, you're watching yourself.
3. **The Child Test.** Would you want your child to see this, or to do this? If you have no children, think of a nephew, a younger brother, or a young man in this dorm who copies you.
4. **The Legacy Test.** Is this the man you want to be remembered as? Every decision is building or destroying the man you're becoming.

HOMEWORK

1. **Write about the ethical dilemma that was hardest for you** on the notes pages in your book. Walk through your thinking. Where did you get stuck? What did the tests reveal?
2. **Notice one moment where your integrity is tested** before the next session. It can be small. Write about what you did and whether it passed the tests.

Making Amends and Moving Forward

BIG IDEA *You can't undo the harm you caused, but you can live so the rest of your life stands in contrast to it.*

KEY POINTS

- **This is not punishment.** It is "the difference between regret that destroys you and accountability that transforms you."
- **Restorative accountability asks three questions punishment never asks:** Who was harmed? What do they need? Whose obligation is it to meet those needs? It doesn't replace your sentence. It adds understanding.
- **Harm ripples out like a stone thrown in water.** First your primary victims, the people you directly harmed. Then secondary victims, the people connected to them: the woman you robbed has a daughter who saw her come home shaking. Then your own family, who are "serving time too." Then the community.
- **Don't let the ripple push you into shame.** "You did cause harm. You are also here, doing the hardest work of your life. Both things are true."
- **An apology is words. Amends is action.** "An apology alone, without change, is just a sound."
- **Direct amends may never be possible.** The person may not want to hear from you, or may have passed away. "It changes the form of amends, not the obligation."
- **Living amends** means the rest of your life stands in contrast to the harm. Every act of service, every conflict you de-escalate, every young man you help turn away from the path you took. It doesn't erase the past. It means "the past doesn't get the last word."
- **The impact awareness letter is for you.** It is not sent, not for a parole board, not for your victim. It may bring up tears, anger, or numbness; stop and breathe if you need to. Don't write what you think someone wants to read. Keep it. In 6 months, read it again and see how you've grown.

TOOL: THE IMPACT AWARENESS LETTER

1. **What I did.** Plain, specific truth. No minimizing, no legal language. "I [did this] to [this person]."
2. **The impact on my primary victim(s).** What did your actions do to their life, safety, trust, body, mind? If you don't know, imagine honestly. Don't make it better than it was.
3. **The ripple: who else was affected?** Their family, their community, your family, your community. Name each and describe the impact.
4. **What I understand now that I didn't then.**
5. **Who I am becoming.** Not who you wish you were, but who you are actively working to become. What does living amends look like for you?

HOMEWORK

1. **Complete the impact awareness letter.** All five parts. Take your time. Be thorough. Be honest.
   Workbook: Impact Awareness Letter, page 21
2. **On the notes pages in your book, answer this:** "What is one thing I can do this week — one specific act — that represents living amends?"
3. **Read ahead in your book, the Session 8 pages on empathy.** You turn from looking inward to looking outward.

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Impact Awareness Letter

Write it in your notes. The letter is not sent, not to a parole board, not to the person you harmed. It is for you. Don't write what anyone wants to read; write what's true. Check off each part when it's written.

- ☐ **Part 1 — What I did.** The action, the harm, in plain words. No minimizing, no legal language. "I [did this] to [this person]."
- ☐ **Part 2 — The impact on my primary victim(s).** What did it do to their life, safety, trust, body, mind? What did they lose? If you don't know, imagine it honestly. Don't make it better than it was.
- ☐ **Part 3 — The ripple: who else was affected?** Their family, their community, your family, your community. Name each one and the impact.
- ☐ **Part 4 — What I understand now that I didn't then.**
- ☐ **Part 5 — Who I am becoming.** Not who you wish you were: who you are working to become. What does living amends look like for you?

If it gets heavy, stop and breathe. Talk to the facilitator or a man you trust afterward.

Empathy Development

BIG IDEA *Empathy is not something you are born with or without; it is a skill you can rebuild, and it starts with seeing the other person as fully human.*

KEY POINTS

- **Accountability needs empathy.** You can't fully own the harm you caused until you can see it through the eyes of the people you harmed. Empathy is not a soft skill. It is a survival skill and a leadership skill.
- **Cognitive empathy is understanding what someone thinks.** Your bunkmate is angry about a write-up he says he didn't earn. You don't have to agree. You can still see why he's angry: he feels falsely accused, powerless, disrespected. This is the empathy that keeps a small thing from turning into a fight.
- **Emotional empathy is feeling some of what he feels.** A man tells you his mother just died, and your chest gets tight. Too little and you come across as cold. Too much and you drown in it. The goal is to feel it and stay grounded.
- **Compassionate empathy is being moved to help.** Understanding and feeling lead to action, not out of pity or to look good, but because you see his humanity. This is Service Over Self in action.
- **Empathy is a skill, not a personality trait.** Some of you had it trained out of you by your environment, by trauma, by survival. That doesn't mean it's gone. It means it needs rebuilding.
- **Most harm happens when someone stops seeing a person as human.** The other man becomes "an obstacle. A target. A means to an end." Empathy doesn't make you a pushover. It means you deal with people as people.
- **Seeing every side doesn't mean everyone is right.** In some situations someone clearly did wrong. But understanding why lets you respond instead of just react. "A man who can only see his own perspective is a man who will keep making the same mistakes."

TOOL: FOUR VIEWPOINTS

Take one situation and look at it through four sets of eyes: **the person who caused the harm, the person who was harmed, a bystander who saw it, and a family member** of someone involved. For each one, ask:

1. What is this person thinking?
2. What is this person feeling?
3. What does this person need?

HOMEWORK

1. **Write half a page from the perspective of someone you've harmed,** anyone, any time in your life. Not your view of what happened; theirs. What were they thinking? What were they feeling? What did they need that they didn't get from you? It will be uncomfortable. "That's how you know it's working."

Worksheet: Perspective-Taking, page 23

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Perspective-Taking

Your group gets one situation. Get inside the head of each of the four people and answer three questions for each one: What is this person thinking? What is this person feeling? What does this person need? This is not about who is right. It is about seeing the whole picture.

Circle your group's situation:

1. A man steals another man's commissary while he is at a visit. Confronted, he denies it. Witnesses saw it happen and say nothing.
2. A newer man sits in the chair of a man with status and changes the channel without asking. The man with status threatens him loudly in front of everyone.
3. A man three months into FORGE curses at a CO in front of the dorm. He gets written up and sent to the hole for 10 days.
4. A man learns from a letter that his wife is leaving him. He goes quiet for three days: stops eating, stops talking. His bunkmate tells everyone to leave him alone because "he just needs space."

Viewpoint	Thinking	Feeling	Needs
The person who caused the harm			
The person who was harmed			
A bystander who saw it			
A family member of someone involved			

Which viewpoint was hardest to get into? Why?

Homework (in your notes): think of someone you have harmed, anyone, any time in your life. Write half a page from *their* view. What were they thinking? What were they feeling? What did they need that they didn't get from you?

PART 3

Purpose and Legacy

Service over self, purpose, and what you leave behind.

What is your life for, and what are you leaving behind? These four sessions are about service over self, finding a purpose bigger than getting through the day, seeing this dorm as partly yours, and choosing your legacy.

Session 9 — Service Over Self 25
Session 10 — Finding Purpose 26
Session 11 — The Stakeholder Identity 28
Session 12 — What Is Your Legacy? 30

Service Over Self

> **BIG IDEA** *Service Over Self means "I choose to use my time, my energy, and my influence for something bigger than my own comfort."*

KEY POINTS

- **What service is not.** Not submission: you are not a doormat, and you don't give up your safety or your dignity. Not performing: "If you're only helping when someone's watching, that's image management, not service." Not control: not fixing people or telling everyone what to do because you went through a program.
- **What service is.** "A daily decision to make things better for the people around you — even when it costs you something." The man who cleans the common area when it isn't his turn. The man who tells a scared new arrival, "Let me show you how things work here."
- **Service is not a sacrifice.** Men who practice it say it is what finally made them feel free. "Not free as in released. Free as in unburdened."
- **Other programs found the same thing.** PEP in Texas, GRIP at San Quentin and RSVP in San Francisco all run on men who have changed teaching and mentoring the men coming in behind them. PEP calls it "servant leadership." "The most powerful force for change in a prison is not staff, not programs, not policies. It's one man who's changed his life showing another man that he can change his."
- **Service needs no permission.** Help a man read a legal document. Check on someone who has gone quiet. Help someone write a letter home. Settle a small dispute before it grows. "The question is: will you do them?"

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Servant leadership** — leading by serving: you learn something, then you serve others by teaching it.

HOMEWORK

1. **Write your commitment on the notes pages in your book:** how you finished the sentence "The kind of man I'm committed to becoming through FORGE is..." On the hard days, read it.
2. **Do 3 deliberate acts of service in your dorm** before next session. It has to be for someone else's benefit, not yours. Don't ask for credit. Write about each one on the notes pages: what you did, how it felt, and how the other person responded.
3. **Learn the opening words by heart.**
4. **Read ahead in your book, the Session 10 pages on finding purpose.**

Finding Purpose

BIG IDEA *Tools show you how to change, but purpose is the "why" that keeps you on the path when the old way is calling.*

KEY POINTS

- **Mindset gives you the how. Purpose gives you the why.** When you're exhausted and someone is pushing your buttons, tools and knowledge won't hold you. "It's not even discipline — discipline runs out." A reason bigger than the moment will.
- **Goals are not purpose.** Goals are things you achieve: a GED, parole, a job. You can reach one and still feel empty. Purpose is something you live. "Goals are destinations. Purpose is the direction." Under the goal "I want to be a good father" might be the purpose "I exist to break the cycle."
- **Viktor Frankl.** A psychiatrist sent to Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp. His wife, parents and brother were killed. He saw that the survivors were not always the strongest. They were the ones with a reason to live. He wrote: "Those who have a WHY to live can bear almost any HOW."
- **The last freedom.** Frankl said no one can take away your freedom to choose your attitude. You can let this time be the thing that defined you, or the thing that refined you. "You're not just doing time — you're using time."
- **Purpose protects you.** Research shows people with a sense of purpose are less likely to reoffend, use substances, or turn to violence. It works like an anchor that holds you when the current pulls. It gives you one question for every decision: "Does this serve my purpose, or does it undermine it?"

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Purpose** — the ongoing reason behind everything you do; your answer to "why does my life matter?"

TOOL: LETTER FROM MY FUTURE SELF

Picture the man you'll be 5 years from now. He writes to you, today. Start with "Dear [your name]..." and have him answer:

1. Where are you now, 5 years later? What does your life look like?
2. What did you have to let go of to get here?
3. What did you have to hold onto?
4. What do you wish you could tell your present self about the hard days?
5. What is your purpose — the reason you kept going?
6. What are you most proud of about the man you've become?

Write at least a full page. "Don't write what sounds good — write what's true." You never have to share it.

HOMEWORK

1. **Re-read your letter from your future self, then write a letter back.** The you sitting here today writes to the man you're becoming. Tell him what you commit to, what you're afraid of, and what you need from him.
   Workbook: Letter From My Future Self, page 27
2. **Keep the letter in this book.** When the hard days come, read it.

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Letter From My Future Self

His letter to you (in session). Picture the man you will be **5 years** from now. Not what you hope happens to you: who you have become. He writes to you, the man sitting here today. Start with "Dear [your name]..." and have him answer:

1. Where are you now, 5 years later? What does your life look like?
2. What did you have to let go of to get here?
3. What did you have to hold onto?
4. What do you wish you could tell your present self about the hard days?
5. What is your purpose — the reason you kept going?
6. What are you most proud of about the man you've become?

Write at least a full page. Don't write what sounds good. Write what's true.

Your letter back (homework). Re-read his letter. Then write back to the man you're becoming. Tell him what you commit to, what you're afraid of, and what you need from him.

The Stakeholder Identity

BIG IDEA *A stakeholder says, "What happens here is partly my responsibility. And I'm going to act like it."*

KEY POINTS

- **"We are stakeholders in this system."** You heard it at Orientation, and you were told you wouldn't believe it because someone said so; you'd believe it because you lived it. Today the shift is from "I" to "we."
- **A stakeholder has an investment in how things go for everyone.** He is not a passenger hoping things turn out okay, and not a victim waiting for someone else to fix it.
- **The prison default is the opposite.** "I have no power. Nothing I do matters." That's understandable, and it's a trap. When you believe you have no power, you give up the power you actually have.
- **What you control.** Not the sentence, the policies, or the COs. You do control how you respond, whether a conflict gets resolved or escalates, whether a new arrival gets tested or helped, and "whether the man sleeping ten feet from you feels safe tonight." When 10 or 15 men in a dorm choose this, the space changes.
- **What changes.** You stop saying "that's not my problem." You stop waiting to be saved: "The only people who can change the culture of a dorm are the people who live there."
- **You're responsible for what you can influence, not for everything.** "With tools comes responsibility — not to fix everything, but to use what you have." Every skill you learned has a community use: your calm becomes contagious when the dorm is heated.
- **Said out loud, commitments become real.** You read your 5 commitments to the circle. Those men are now your witnesses.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Stakeholder** — someone with a real investment in how things go for the whole community, who acts on it.
- **Bystander** — someone who watches things happen and says, "That's not my problem."

TOOL: MY STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT

Write 5 specific actions you will take as a stakeholder in your dorm, starting now and continuing as long as you live here, and beyond. Each one should be:

1. **Specific** — not "be a good person." What will you actually do?
2. **Observable** — someone else could see you doing it.
3. **Consistent** — something you do regularly, not once.
4. **Connected to your skills** — use what you've learned in FORGE.
5. **Honest** — what you'll really do, not what sounds impressive.

For example: "I will welcome every new arrival personally and orient them to the dorm." "I will refuse to participate in gossip, and I'll redirect conversations that tear other people down."

HOMEWORK

1. **Start living your stakeholder commitment every day for the next two weeks, and write about it every day on the notes pages in your book,** even if it's just three sentences: What did I do today as a stakeholder? What was hard? What impact did it have?
   Workbook: My Stakeholder Commitment, page 29

My Stakeholder Commitment

Five specific actions you will take as a stakeholder in your dorm, starting now and continuing as long as you live here, and beyond. Make each one **specific** (what will you actually do?), **observable** (someone else could see you do it), **consistent** (something you do regularly, not once), **connected to your skills**, and **honest** (what you'll really do, not what sounds impressive).

I will…	How often	The skill I'll use
I will check in with one man in my dorm who seems to be having a hard time.	*Every day*	*Seeing his side*
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Every day for two weeks, write about it in your notes, even if it's just three sentences: What did I do today as a stakeholder? What was hard? What impact did it have?

What Is Your Legacy?

BIG IDEA *A legacy is what's left in people after they've been around you, and you are leaving one right now, whether you mean to or not.*

KEY POINTS

- **A legacy is not money or a name on a building.** It's what's left in people after they've been around you. The people who shaped you are still with you, years later, because of what they left in you.
- **You are leaving one now.** In this dorm, in your family, in every younger man who watches how you carry yourself. When you transfer or go home, something will get said about you. You are writing it every day.
- **Every dorm has a culture, and every man adds to it.** Most of the time nobody chooses it; it gets set by the loudest and most aggressive. But culture is just what a lot of men do every day, added up. Walking away from a fight, helping a new man instead of testing him, keeping your word: that's culture too.
- **The ripple effect.** One man's change reaches his bunkmate, his children, the officer on his unit, and men he'll meet years from now. Somebody you'll never meet will make a better decision because of something you did in here.
- **What you did is part of your story, not the end of it.** Legacy is about what you build from here.
- **A legacy is built on purpose, every day, from four things:** know yourself, keep your word, see others, serve.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Legacy** — what's left in people after they've been around you.
- **Ripple effect** — the way one person's choices spread out to people he will never see.
- **Culture** — what a lot of people do every day, added up.

TOOL: THE FOUR PARTS OF A LEGACY

Know yourself	Keep your word	See others	Serve
Catch the thought before it chooses for you.	Own it with no "but." Let your values, words and actions line up. Repair it when you break it.	See how what you do lands on the people around you.	Service over self. A purpose bigger than getting through the day. Build others up.

HOMEWORK

1. **Do the one thing you wrote** in your legacy statement, every day this week. Make a mark for each day you did it.
   Workbook: My Legacy Statement, page 31
2. **Tell one person what your legacy is going to be.** A man in this dorm, or family on a call or in a letter. Saying it out loud makes it real.

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My Legacy Statement

Read your lines on the My Legacy page first. Then answer three questions, and write your statement: three to five sentences, starting with "My legacy will be..."

1. When I leave this dorm, what do I want the men here to say about me?

2. What do I want my family to say about me?

3. What is one thing I will do every day to build it?

My legacy will be...

The week after: a mark for each day I did my one thing

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7

Notes

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