

# Reforming Narratives



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# A new song: Breathe Life

You keep my head afloat when all I want is to sink...  
(confession of need)

Breathe life into me. (petition?)

You breathe life into me. (thanks)

You're my wife, you're my all, you're my something  
wonderful. (adoration)

You breathe life into me. (thanks)

I'll always be your dancer, your partner, your lover, and  
step by step we'll circle the fire, and the heat from the  
flames steals the air from my lungs, and you breathe life  
into me. (mutual commitment)

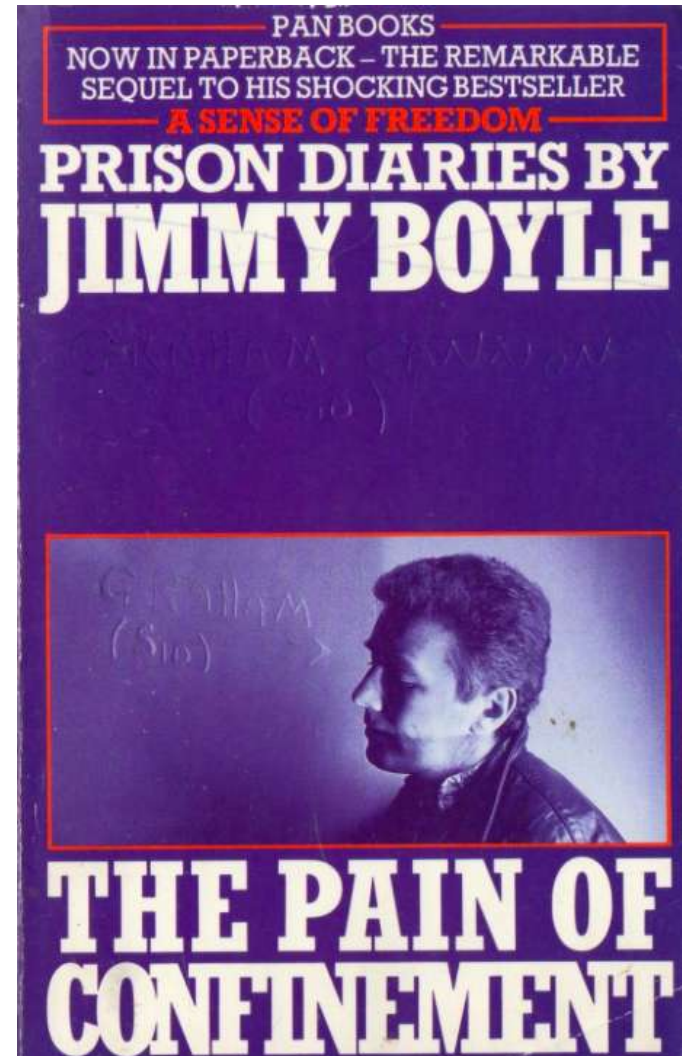
# An old song: Psalm 51



- 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right<sup>b</sup> spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.
- 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

# But changing songs/ stories is hard

- Not just because of repeated and reinforced social exclusion, constraining and diminishing resources for change...
- Also because of **the pains of the change process itself**



1. A **process** of personal, **human development**
2. That takes place in and is shaped by its social and cultural contexts; hence also a **social transition**
3. That involves movement **away from offending** (volume, frequency, severity) and **towards...?**

# Three aspects

Primary/Formal

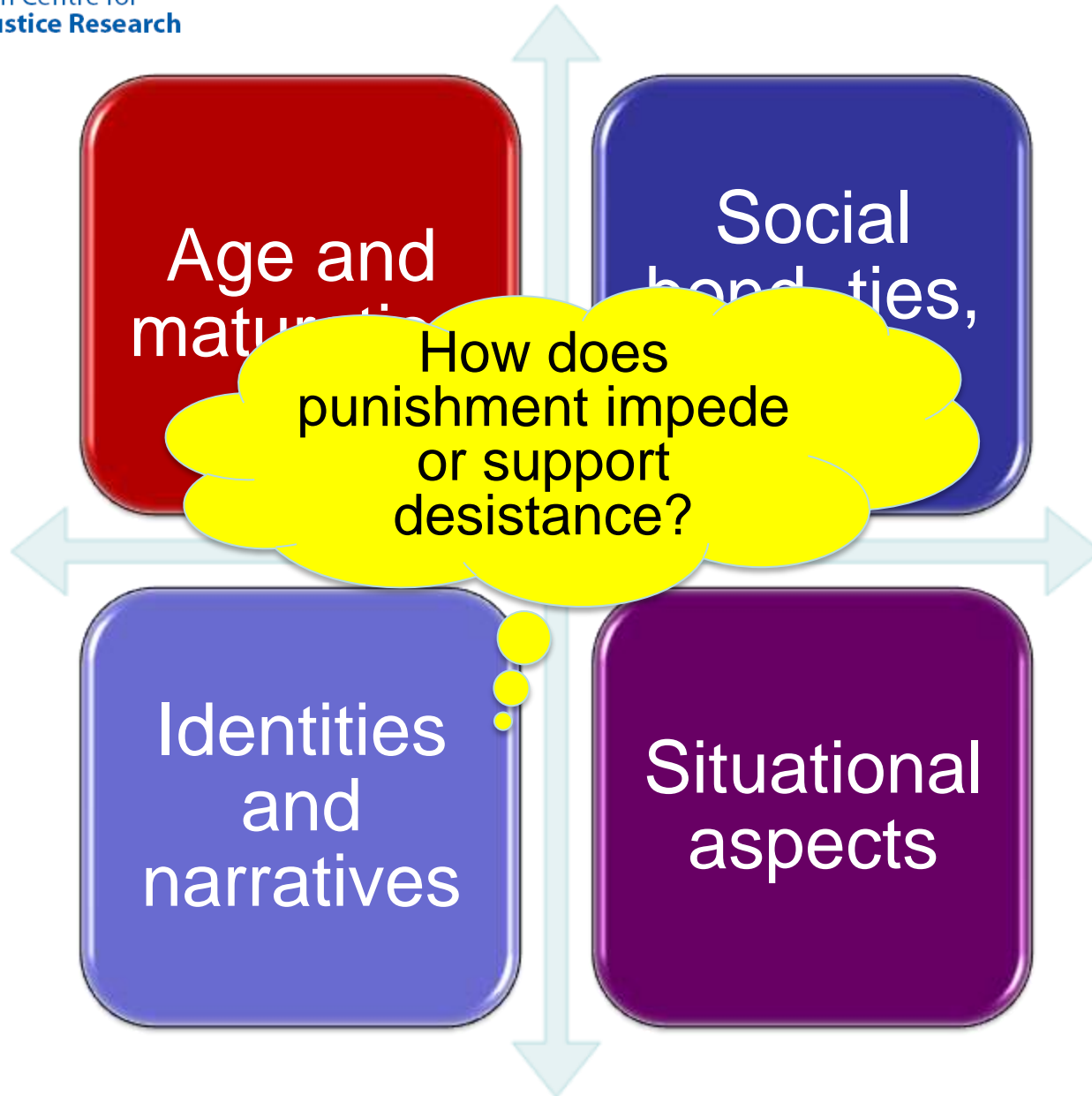
- Behaviour

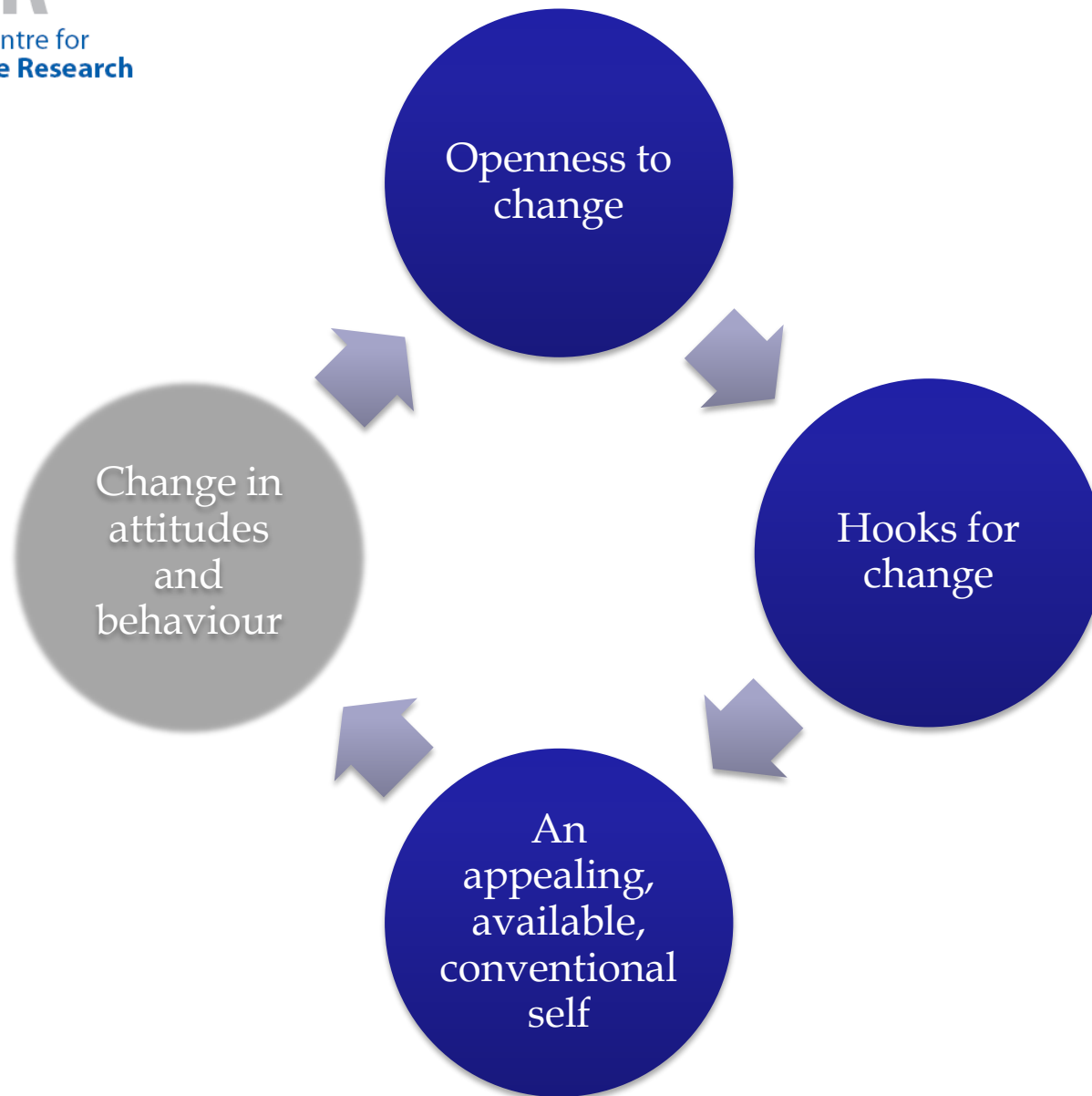
Secondary/Substantive

- Identity

Tertiary/Secure

- Belonging

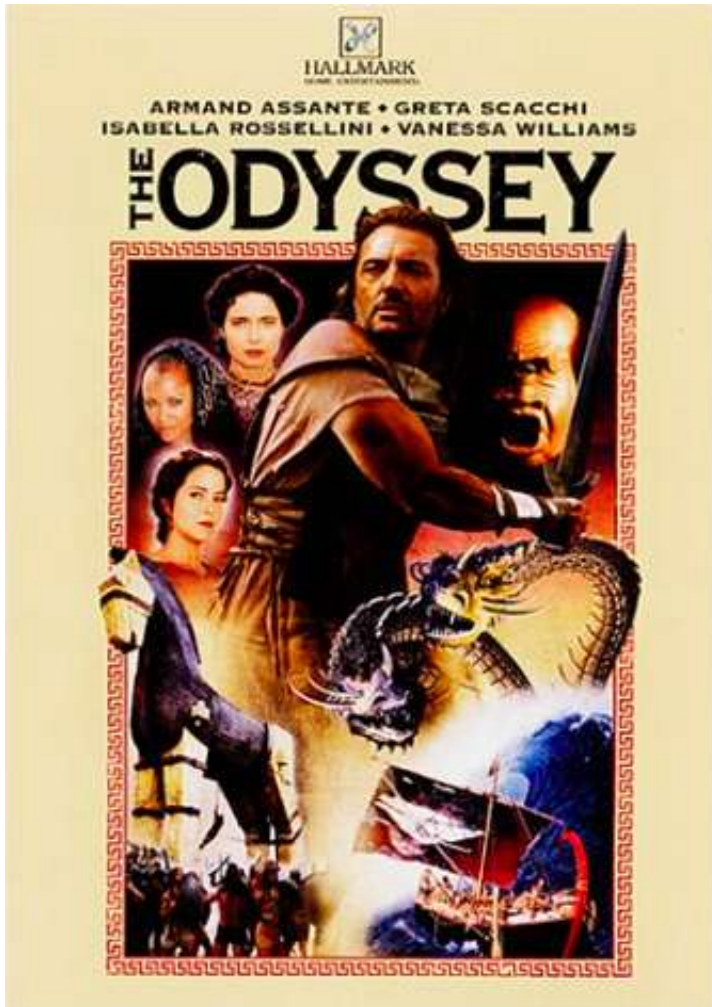


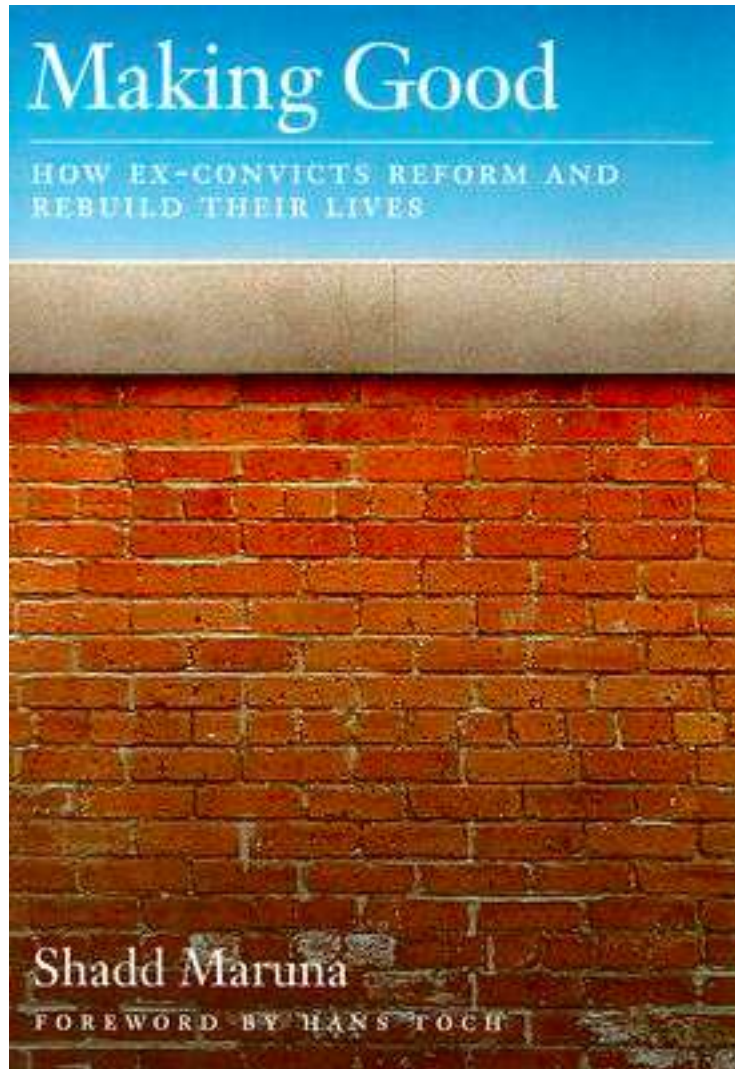


(From Giordano et al, 2002)

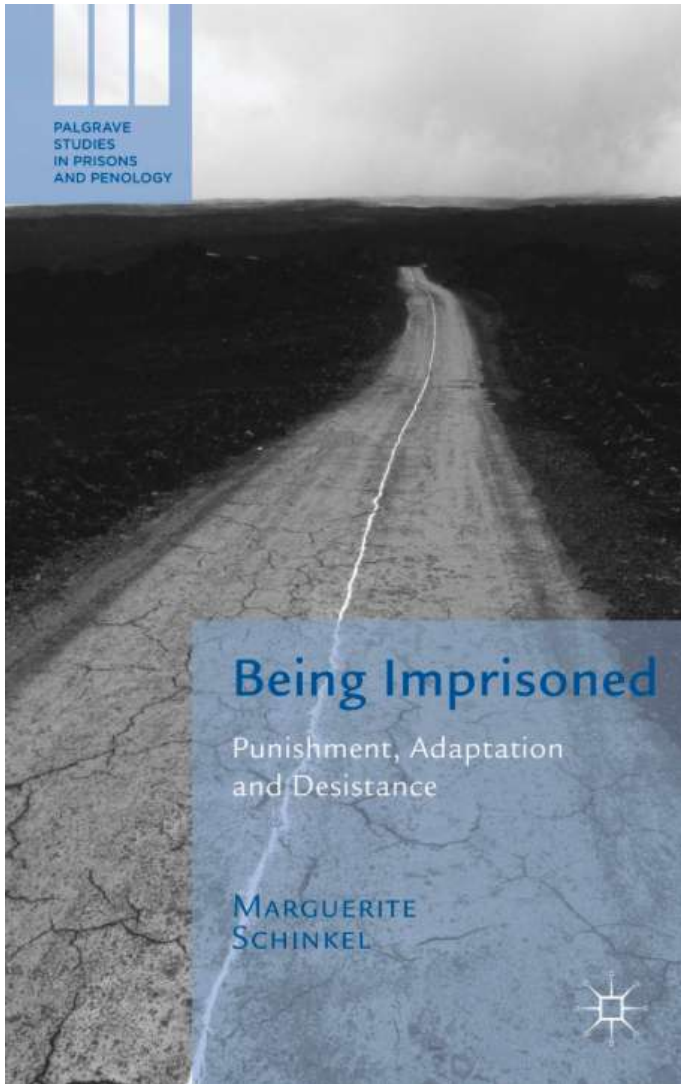


# Key aspects of desistance journeys





# Who needs in-prison transformation?



- Not the non-criminal
- Not the well resourced
- Not the hopeless
- **Those for whom prison is all that stands between a spoiled past and a positive future**
- But the realities of release involve narratives of disintegration, and suggest the problems of investing in imprisonment as an agent of change



Subjects Books Journals eProducts Resources Info & Help

## Offending and Desistance

### The Significance of Social Relations

By **Beth Weaver**

Routledge – 2015 – 224 pages

Series: [International Series on Desistance and Rehabilitation](#)

 Recommend to Librarian

Description Contents Subjects

The study of desistance from crime, the process through which a person ceases offending, is a key aspect of international criminological research and is of central concern to penal policy and practice. While there is consensus across the body of desistance research that social relations, such as friendship groups, marriage, parenthood, employment and religious communities have a role to play in variously constraining, enabling and sustaining desistance, no desistance studies have adequately analysed the dynamics or properties of social relations, or their relationship to individuals and social structures. This book aims to reset this balance.

In this book, Elizabeth Weaver examines the role of a naturally forming group in shaping and influencing offending and desistance and explores the life stories of six Scottish men (in their forties) who were part of a naturally forming group, focusing on three phases of their criminal careers: onset, persistence and desistance. In examining their social relations, Weaver reveals the central role of friendship groups, intimate relationships and families of formation, employment and religious communities. She shows how, for different individuals, these relations triggered reflexive evaluation of their priorities, behaviours and lifestyles but with differing results.



# Supporting re-storying

## Realism

- Manage lapses and setbacks

## Individualisation

- Respect subjectivity and diversity

## Hope and agency

- Build self-determination

## Relationships

- Social relations and social capital

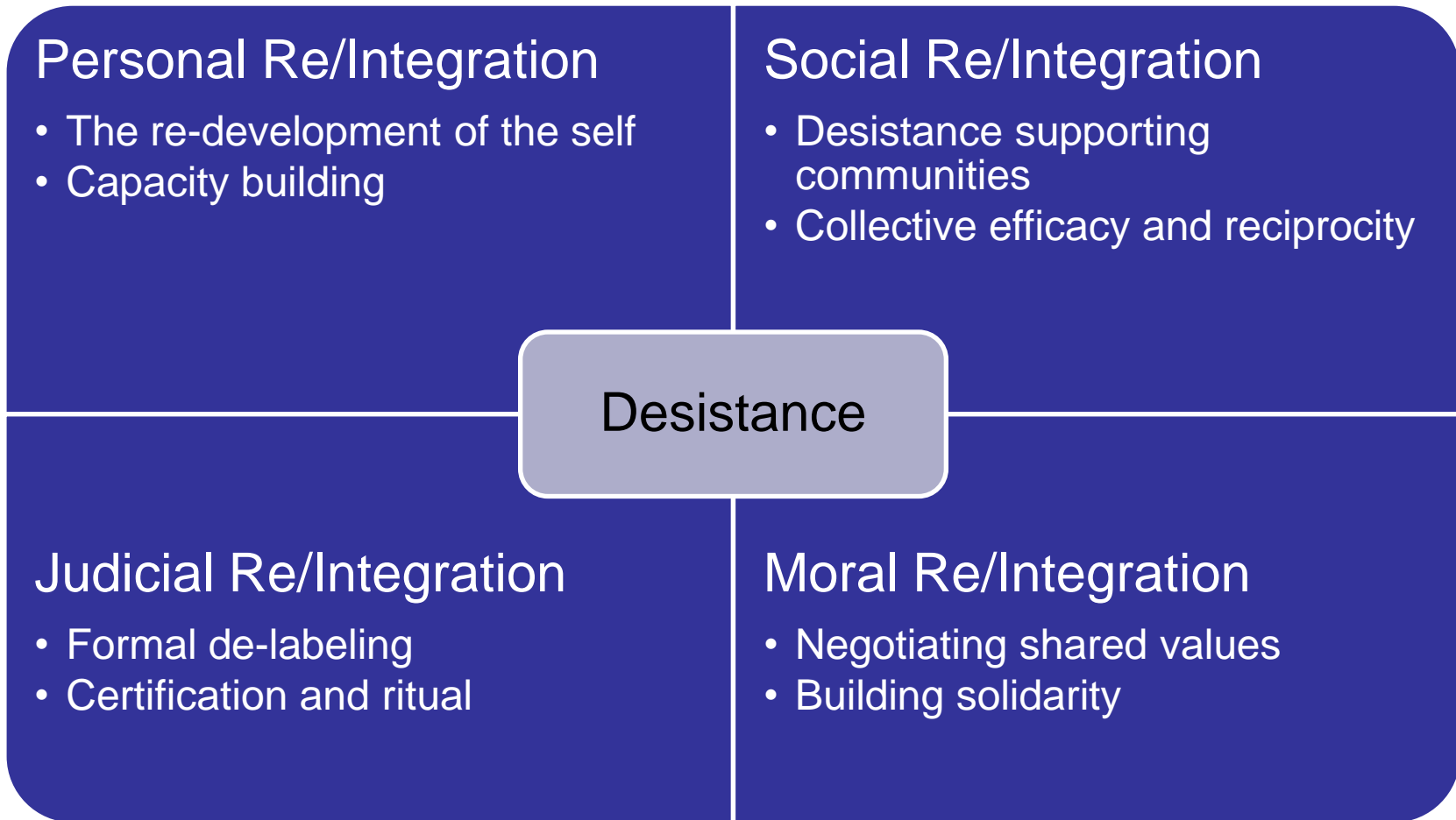
## Recognition

- Language and representation matter

## Routines

- Practical supports

# Four forms of story-making



<http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/useful-resources/http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/files/2011/09/McNeill-2012-Four-forms-of-offender-rehabilitation.pdf>

# Integrated, collective stories

## A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration



# Reforming narratives





# What if my best isn't good enough?

Better sit still than rise up and fall?

(fear?)

Or better to fail than not try at all?

(hope... of hope?)

Can anybody help me?

(response?)