Reforming Narratives

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A new song: Breathe Life

You keep my head afloat when all I want is to sink…
(concession 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 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
Desistance

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
How does punishment impede or support desistance?

- Age and maturation
- Social bonds, ties, relations
- Identities and narratives
- Situational aspects
Openness to change

Hooks for change

An appealing, available, conventional self

Change in attitudes and behaviour

(From Giordano et al, 2002)
Key aspects of desistance journeys
Desistance stories

Making Good
HOW EX-CONVICTS REFORM AND REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Shadd Maruna
FOREWORD BY HANS TOCH
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
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, few 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

Personal Re/Integration
- The re-development of the self
- Capacity building

Social Re/Integration
- Desistance supporting communities
- Collective efficacy and reciprocity

Judicial Re/Integration
- Formal de-labeling
- Certification and ritual

Moral Re/Integration
- Negotiating shared values
- Building solidarity

Desistance

http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/useful-resources
Integrated, collective stories

From Ager and Strang (2008)
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?)