

South African female prisoners' experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree *Master of Arts in Positive
Psychology* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West
University

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May 2017

Section 1

Literature Review



**“My greatest humiliation - being sent to prison - was
the beginning of God’s greatest use of my life; He chose
the one thing which I could not glory for His glory.”**

- Charles W Colson (Founder of Prison Fellowship)

SECTION 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background and Introduction

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) (2015) reveals that offenders are in need of restorative justice programmes that can support and empower prisoners mentally, emotionally and spiritually to cope with the many challenges they face in prison and also when reintegrating back into society. It further stresses the importance of changing offending behavioural patterns through these support systems. One such programme is the Sycamore Tree Project (STP) which was originally developed to assist prisoners to take responsibility for their crimes and understand the full meaning of the constructs of forgiveness and repentance.

For the purpose of this research, the STP was adapted to include strength-based activities in order to enhance the programme and to explore and describe the experiences of female prisoners with regard to the STP and inclusion of strength-based activities. Although prison is intended as punishment, it is important to keep in mind that these individuals' well-being is still important. Prisoners are still entitled to certain rights and many of them will be released back into society where they should then be able to function in a constructive and healthy manner. Due to the fact that there is limited availability of effective, positively-aimed programmes and research in this regard, this study's significance lies in the fact that it contributes towards our understanding and knowledge of how female prisoners experience the STP with the inclusion of strength-based activities in a South African context.

The following sections will explicate background information on prison conditions and female prisons to highlight the need and importance of restorative justice programmes. Thereafter, restorative justice will be discussed and special attention will be given to the STP.

Positive Psychology and strength-based activities will be discussed in terms of the potential they have to enhance restorative justice programmes such as the STP.

Poor Prison Conditions

Prisoners are an understudied and sometimes forgotten population. Various sources point to the dire conditions in prisons worldwide. Across the world, prisons and prison inmates face challenges that include social isolation, overcrowding, violence, poor hygiene and sanitary conditions, breakdown of human dignity, prison suicide, health problems such as HIV infection, and rape (Goyer, 2002; Haney, 2006; Huey & McNulty, 2005; Kupers, 1999, 2005; Lines, 2006; Muntingh, 2012; Steinberg, 2005; Stern, 2001).

There is enough evidence that poor conditions in prisons, such as overcrowding, may lead to more rather than less crime. Research done by Goyer (2002), Haney (2006), Huey and McNulty (2005), Kupers (1999, 2005), Lines (2006), Muntingh (2012), and Stern (2001) confirm that deprivation and overcrowding is a critical problem in prisons worldwide, dramatically contributing to mental and emotional disorders and increasing the risk of prison suicide. South African prisons share the same challenges.

A study by Steinberg (2005) confirms that overcrowded prisons are a problem in South Africa and states that our prisons are 161% full. Articles by Benatar (2014), Dissel and Ellis (2002), and Goyer (2002) confirm this finding. These authors state that South Africa's overcrowded prisons have poor ventilation and house thousands more inmates than they should. Health problems such as TB and HIV/AIDS are a reality. Living in an overcrowded environment without privacy induces psychological suffering and a loss of dignity. It also strains the prison administration's capacity to maintain good order and security, causing the environment to be more dangerous and violating inmates' right to safety. Although inmates are able to move freely in the cell and sleep comfortably, it may still be too crowded for the

prison administration to assess each inmate's needs when designing programmes for their reintegration into society.

Katz, Levitt, and Shustorovich (2003) stress the fact that the deterrent effect of poor prison conditions is not necessary for deciding whether the current prison conditions are too benign or unjustifiably inhuman. Yet, existing literature and research indicate that it is not the deterrent conditions in prisons that will bring a change in the crime rates and well-being of prisoners, but rather programmes to empower prisoners towards changing and rehabilitating (Haney, 2006; Huey & McNulty, 2005; Katz et al., 2003; Shaw, 1997; Steinberg, 2005). Lab (2014) stresses that crime prevention works, but the extent of success varies across time and place and from one approach to another. He argues that the secret in developing effective intervention programmes could lie in the ability of matching the appropriate subjects to the proper treatment. In light of this, it should be noted that although female prisons share the challenges discussed above, there are also challenges that are unique to female prisons.

Female Prisons

According to Manaleng (2014), only 3% of prisoners in South Africa are women. Manaleng (2014), Van den Bergh, Moller, and Hayton (2010) and Vetten (2008) stress the fact that there are few laws, regulations, and insufficient policy framework to tailor to the needs of women in prison. It is important to note that female prisoners differ from males regarding specific health care and needs, including pregnancy, child birth, breast feeding, menstruation and caregiving. Department Correctional Services (DCS) former Deputy Minister, Mr Mkhize (2010), argues that prisons in South Africa were designed and built for men and are not suitable for women's needs. This was confirmed by research done at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research that stated that women are neglected with regard to the formulation of rules and policies for prisoners (Vetten, 2008).

Although not true in all cases, imprisoned women, when compared to men, sometimes differ in their criminal pathways, which are often non-violent in nature and fraud-related. These crimes are often directly related to poverty and the need to provide for their children (Dirsuweit, 1999; Moloney, Van Den Bergh, & Moller, 2009). Morris (2015) confirms these studies and states that 81% of imprisoned women are sentenced for non-violent offenses. In this regard, they are generally not a threat to public safety. The profiles of women within the criminal justice system are very complex and highlight the primary role of trauma, socio-economic deprivation, traumatic family dysfunction and mental and physical ill health, in offending behaviour of women (Moloney et al., 2009; Morris, 2015; Reno, Fisher, Robinson, & Gist, (n.d.); Vetten, 2008).

Trauma is directly and indirectly linked to the female criminal pathway. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a major problem in the criminal justice system. Ford, Grasso, Elhai, and Courtois (2015) report on a treatment study done on a group of imprisoned women to “enhance women’s skills for managing reactive emotions in their current lives as well as to educate them about how using these skills can enhance their personal effectiveness and help them to gain control of post-traumatic stress reactions” (p. 479). They also found that imprisonment of women with children and a history of victimization can have serious mental health effects. A study done by Feasey and Williams (2009) suggests that female prisoners experience and face different problems compared to male prisoners, including pain and mental health problems because their imprisonment challenges their capability to parent and care for their children.

Kupers (2005) identifies a big difference between men and women offenders to be the concept of toxic masculinity that has a strong relationship with socially regressive male traits that foster domination and the devaluation of women. This leads to wanton violence that manifests more in male than in female prisons and contributes to treatment resistance. Former

Correctional Services Minister, Mr Ndebele (2013), said that he will not cease encouraging studying and training in prison for female offenders. He argues that the oppression of women hinders national prosperity and should not be allowed. This is proof that people in central roles in the DCS do what they can to improve the conditions of women in prison.

The discussion above illuminates how the poor quality of life in prisons can have a severe negative impact on inmates' well-being. A large number of the inmates will be released back into society where they should then be able to make a positive contribution and function in a healthy manner. Poor conditions in prisons can be destructive, but effective programming can be reconstructive as it is not imprisonment in itself that damages individuals, but a lack of effective programming and treatment which can be supportive and empowering (Haney, 2006). According to Zehr and Gohar (2003), the principles of restorative justice reflect certain values that are needed to function in a healthy manner.

Restorative Justice

The aim of DCS (2015) is to join forces with stakeholders, including Restorative Justice Orientation Programmes. A lot has been done in South Africa by the DCS regarding different correctional programmes with well stated objectives, goals and outcomes (White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, 2005). These programmes have been standardized and are based on needs identification. They include anger management programmes, crossroads correctional programmes, preparatory programmes on sexual offenses, pre-release programmes, substance abuse correctional programmes, restorative justice orientation programmes, and new beginnings orientation programmes. To evaluate the respective programmes, an assessment is conducted at the beginning and after the completion of the programme. The evaluation is done by progress reports which are written by the programme implementers on participants' attendance, participation and analysis of progress towards targets. The DCS stresses the fact that the responsibility to learn and benefit from the

programmes lies within the individual. It is important for offenders to take responsibility for their offences in order to understand and gain insight into their dysfunctional and deviant behaviour.

Prisons all over the globe have a unique opportunity to use the principles of restorative justice to contribute to the well-being of prisoners. Restorative justice can be defined as “to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible” (Zehr & Gohar, 2003, p. 40). In short, restorative justice aims to repair the harm done by crime (Gavrielides & Artinopoulou, 2013; Zehr & Gohar, 2003).

Most prisoners languish under extremely difficult circumstances. Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are in prison because of offenses, but might also have been victims at one stage of their lives (Morris, 2015; Spiegler, 2012). Haney (2006) stresses the fact that powerful social contexts, such as prisons, have the power to shape and transform the people that exist in that context. “When prison environments become unduly painful, they also become harmful and prisoners carry the effects or consequences of that harm back into the free world once they have been released” (p. 265). A statement by Gavrielides (2013) explains that restorative justice does entail pain, because the offender realizes that the offense had caused harm, but it is pain of a different kind. This pain is not triggered by punishment, but it is the consequence of recognition, self-insight, self-observation and self-reflection. Restorative justice is a gift that cannot be imposed, but that can be nurtured.

Offenders that experience change through restorative justice principles can rehabilitate successfully, exit prison and make a positive contribution in their community. Coetzee (2015) writes about an official who persisted with a training mission and who is running a very successful textile production workshop with four colleagues and forty-five offenders. The prisoners are trained in sewing and knowledge of sewing machines. In another case study, Coetzee (2015) reports on twelve offenders who were trained as assistant chefs. This is

indicative of the importance of Restorative Justice programmes and why such programmes are welcomed and participation therein encouraged.

Table 1 provides an overview of the differences between restorative justice, non-restorative justice and retributive justice. According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2014), retributive justice is a theory of justice that entails punishment.

Table 1

Differences between Restorative Justice, Non-Restorative Justice and Retributive Justice
(Johnstone & Van Ness, 2006)

Restorative Justice	Non-Restorative Justice	Retributive Justice
Crime causes harm.	Crime is law-breaking.	Crime should be punished.
Offender accountability means taking steps towards repairing that harm.	Offender accountability means accepting the infliction of harm.	Offender accountability equals suffering.
The people most affected by the crime should be able to participate in its resolution.	The two important parties are the government and the defendant.	The most important party is the government.
Crime violates people and relationships.	Crime violates the state, its laws and community.	Crime violates the state and its laws.
Justice aims to encourage offenders to take responsibility so that things can be made right.	Justice aims to increase governmental order.	Justice focuses on establishing guilt so that pain will vindicate.
Focus on healing of individuals, victims and offenders.	Focus on one side wins and the other loses.	Focus on establishing blame or guilt on past.

According to Johnstone and Van Ness (2006), the implementation of restorative justice programmes complements the criminal justice system and can be adapted to various cultural contexts. One of the main objectives is the healing of individuals and relationships that are made possible through forgiveness and offender accountability (Zehr & Gohar, 2003).

Existing restorative justice programmes vary in formality, relation to the criminal justice system, the way they are operated, and level of involvement and objectives. There must be a balance in the development of the programme in order to fit the circumstances (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2006). One such programme is the Sycamore Tree Project (STP) which will be discussed next.

Sycamore Tree Project

STP was developed by Prison Fellowship in Washington DC, U.S.A. during 1976. Prison Fellowship is a global faith-based association that currently works in more than 127 countries and more than 140 national prison fellowship organisations and is indicated as one of the ten most inspiring prison programmes, according to the Criminal Justice Degrees Guide (n.d.). The founder of Prison Fellowship, Charles W. Colson, former minister of President Nixon, initiated this movement after being released from prison in 1975. During his time in prison, he became aware of injustices done to prisoners and rehabilitation shortcomings. He became convinced that he had to develop a ministry for reaching inmates in prison and felt a calling to make a difference in the prison community (Colson, n.d.). He associated with some of the most influential people in the world, but while speaking at a prison event, he reflected:

But all at once I realized that it was not my success God had used to enable me to help those in this prison, or in hundreds of others just like it. My life of success was not what made this morning so glorious - all my achievements meant nothing in God's economy. No, the real legacy of my life was my biggest failure - that I was an ex-convict. My greatest humiliation, being sent to prison, was the beginning of God's greatest use of my life; He chose the one thing which I could not glory for His glory.
(Cole, 2008, p. 65)

The STP is suitable for offenders (people imprisoned for crime) and victims (people in the community that have been wronged by offenders) of all ages and both genders. It was

originally designed to assist prisoners to take responsibility for their crimes and to understand the full meaning of the constructs of forgiveness and repentance. They initially promoted victim-offender reconciliation to enable prisoners to return to their communities with greater success after being released. This means that victims should actually also do the programme with the offenders. This is not always an easy way of doing it, because the victims are leading independent and normal lives outside prison. Their circumstances are quite different from offenders that are sentenced for crime and locked up in prison. Another challenge is that offenders do not always know their victims and/or that the victims do not want to meet with the offender. Victims are also fearful and anxious to participate in the STP programme, seeing that it is presented in a prison environment and the fact that they have to share their stories with offenders (Resch, 2014). To compensate for these obstacles, the victim participants do not need to be the actual victims, but can be unrelated victims of other crimes, although the programme also works well with offenders only.

Research done by Brigg, Chadwick, and Griggers (n.d.) in the Solomon Islands with the STP, demonstrated the importance of both introduced and traditional processes in promoting reconciliation. Further research shows that there has been relatively little involvement of women; a situation that might be ascribed to the focus on ex-combatants. Participation of women therefore becomes more important as STP work expands.

The STP has been evaluated by Feasey and Williams (2009) in the United States of America by using Crime PICS 11. The study showed that the STP positively contributes to the rehabilitation of prisoners. Crime PICS 11 is a structured questionnaire with 35 items measuring different attitudes towards offending, including general attitude, anticipation of future offending, victim empathy, evaluation of crime as worthwhile, and problem inventory or perceptions of current problems. The tool has already been approved in 2003 to evaluate accredited offending behaviour programmes nationwide. The sample size consisted of 5007

participants with 13% being women prisoners. The results indicated that the STP has a positive impact on all of the above mentioned scales. This study suggests that results will differ from institution to institution and it motivates further evaluation of the programme with self-evaluation and feedback from the participants.

The core of the STP is group work, but sometimes a more individual approach is required. According to Brigg et al. (n.d.), it has been brought to the Solomon Islands by trained facilitators and represents a tested model built on psychosocial counselling principles that are widely recognised. Research done by Resch (2014) in Europe indicated that Sycamore Tree facilitators need to require a number of skills. A good facilitator keeps sessions focused on the subject, has good time-management, manages the process, gives the group a sense of accomplishment and includes all participants equally in the group process. A good facilitator must have a general understanding of restorative justice principles and must be able to handle difficult situations. He or she should be an active listener that can manage stories of crime which are powerful narratives. Resch (2014) states that through storytelling and discussion of topics, such as forgiveness and repentance, offenders engage in each other's realities in a controlled environment and space.

The STP and strength-based activities can complement each other. Forgiveness, gratitude and kindness are only some of the well-known positive psychology Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), as stated by Peterson and Seligman (2004), that can be taught to individuals in a prison context through strength-based activities. As the statement by the former Correctional Services Minister earlier indicated, key role players welcome restorative justice programmes and encourage inmate participation. STP is a well written programme with a detailed curriculum and comprises eight sessions, which are discussed in the second section of this dissertation. Marshall, Marshall, Serran, and O'Brien (2013) report on the successful use of positive psychology principles and strengths in their treatment with

offenders in prison. Research done by Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, and Gordon (2015) suggests that a strength-based approach to prisoner re-entry may help reduce risk and contribute to the offenders' ability to change. Strength-based activities may therefore have the potential to contribute to the effectiveness of restorative justice programmes such as the STP and higher rates of rehabilitation success. Furthermore, the VIA-IS in which these strengths are described, can contribute to a theoretical background for this type of intervention or programme from a psychological perspective.

Strengths in Scientific Perspective

Literature clearly states the need for interventions in South African prisons and especially in female prisons. With the introduction of positive psychology, prisons all over the world have a unique opportunity to use strength-based activities to foster aspects in order to contribute to the well-being of prisoners.

Wissing (2014) describes positive psychology as "an exciting and explosively developing new discipline in psychology as a science" (p. 4). Biswas-Diener, Linley, Govindji, and Woolston (2011) stress the fact that the validity and effectiveness of positive psychology as a force for social change have been proved for individuals in the western pursuit and that it should now be expanded to larger and other groups. Positive psychology has drawn the attention of researchers, practitioners and psychologists all over the world. Duckworth, Steen, and Seligman (2005) define positive psychology as the scientific study of positive experiences. They stress that persons with heavy burdens need more in life than only relief of their suffering. They want more life satisfaction and not only less sadness and worries. Suffering does not need to be removed to live a life of meaning and purpose. This can be achieved by building strengths and not only correcting weaknesses.

Building of strengths may help alleviate suffering and soften the effects of the root causes. We cannot reflect on life and fulfilment of life without knowing the meaning of one's

existence and that counts for any community, including the prison community. In the same manner, it could be more challenging to grow or develop as a person without a basic understanding of the influence of strengths such as forgiveness, gratitude and kindness. Ruth and Vescovelli (as cited in Psychlopedia, n.d.) indicate that these strengths can foster post-traumatic growth. They contribute to social change because individuals experience support and they are also found to strengthen relationships. According to Lyubomirsky (2007), and Lyubomirsky and Layous (2013), strengths encourage moral behaviour, the savouring of positive life experiences, boost self-worth and self-esteem, deter anger and bitterness, and contribute to eudaimonic adaptation. Relational repair strategies such as forgiveness, kindness and gratitude can be employed to restore a sense of meaning.

Available research indicates that simple and intentional positive activities can increase people's happiness and well-being (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Research that has been done on positive psychology and strength-based intervention programmes in terms of challenged groups indicates that strength-based approaches contribute to individuals' empowerment. The focus is not on what is wrong, but on strengths such as resilience, change and building on identified assets that can be used to overcome challenges (Hunter et al., 2015). Research confirms that a strength-based approach may help reduce the risk of previous inmates to re-offend and return to prison and that such an approach is beneficial for trust, respect and the ability to change. Research on other challenged groups supports the above findings. A study done by Huffman et al. (2014) on depressive suicidal inpatients with positive activities (e.g. writing a gratitude letter, writing a letter of forgiveness, acts of kindness, counting your blessings and best possible self), showed positive results regarding improvement of patients' optimism and hope. Other research done by Huta and Hawley (2010) investigated the relationship between vulnerabilities and psychological strengths and the contribution thereof to well-being. Strengths such as forgiveness had stronger

relationships with positive emotions versus vulnerabilities with negative emotions. The study also revealed striking results in the improvement of depression symptoms. It concluded that strengths may play a major role in the recovery of vulnerable groups.

Offenders can benefit from the use of strengths on a daily basis, recognizing how it contributes to their well-being. Maladaptive core beliefs can be identified and longstanding patterns of thought and behaviour can be changed (Huta & Hawley, 2010). A study done by Gander, Proyer, Ruch, and Wyss (2012) confirmed that well-being can be enhanced and depressive symptoms lessened through a variety of strength-based activities. This statement is also supported by research done by Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009). After a research study on the success of strength-based activities, Layous and Lyubomirsky (2012) concluded that the end goal of these activities is not to eliminate negative emotions, but to assist individuals in their emotional maintenance. When experiencing a negative emotion, an individual can recall a strength-based activity to cope with this emotion. Seligman and Steen (2005) did a research study on the empirical validation of strength-based activities and found that participants tended to be less depressed and happier after doing an activity for one week.

The DCS states that programme implementers have to evaluate programmes and make changes where necessary. Taking the above into consideration, the inclusion of strength-based activities in Restorative Justice Programmes presented in prison may contribute to the effectiveness of programmes like the STP. It may also prove to be a useful resource in this regard, especially within the context of a female prison, as research indicates a low level of female inmate involvement in the STP (Brigg et al., n.d.). For the purpose of this study, the following strength-based activities were included in the STP sessions and are briefly discussed below: Narratives, writing a gratitude letter, mindfulness (specifically savouring), drama, writing a letter of forgiveness, acts of kindness, counting your blessings and best possible selves.

Narratives. Many studies confirm that people construct stories in order to gain insight into setbacks and suffering that they have experienced (McAdams, 2008). Angus and Greenberg (2011), Duvall and Béres (2011), Gottschall (2013), and Hicks, Turner, and Stratton (2013) confirm the importance of storytelling. Most people are motivated to interpret their own experiences in terms of a meaningful life story. Narrative storytelling has been found to contribute to logical thoughts by combining words and sentences into meaningful language (Masicampo & Baumeister, 2011). Research done by Duvall and Béres (2011) on narrative therapy in group settings confirmed the success of these practices. The questions and events that fill our lives have meaning within narratives and are the framework that gives meaning to our lives (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2006). By becoming authors of our own stories, reflecting on our past and dreaming about a future with possibilities, a selfhood may be reproduced (Angus & Greenberg, 2011). Medical journals stress that the writing of narratives and taking authorship of your story can no longer be seen as science, but as a necessary ingredient of health and inner healing. Some researchers state that it can have more benefits than prescribed medication and refer to it as narrative-medicine (Harter, Japp, & Beck, 2005; Rawlins, 2005).

Writing a gratitude letter. Gratitude is described as an awareness of the good things in life. It is characterised by expression of thanks for everything that has been received in life. It can also be described as a mind-set of appreciation and goodwill for benefits derived from other people (Rashid, 2005). Evidence suggests that gratitude can enhance happiness, emotional well-being, energy levels, and hope. Research validates this strength as beneficial and useful for well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Watkins, Sparrow, & Webber, 2013; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). There are ways in which gratitude can be increased therapeutically, for example by writing a “gratitude letter”, which have been found to be effective in increasing well-being and there is evidence that the “gratitude letter” is one of the most

successful strength-based activities (Proyer, Ruch, & Buschor, 2012; Seligman & Steen, 2005; Wood et al., 2010). There is evidence that grateful people handle difficult circumstances more efficiently and are good at reframing negative events to decrease the unpleasant emotional impact, which can finally lead to closure (Watkins et al., 2013). Research also suggests a strong relationship between gratitude, positive moods, and mindfulness in enabling people to find meaning in life (Bryant & Veroff, 2007).

Mindfulness (Savouring). Baer and Lykins (2011), Brown and Ryan (2003), and Lyubomirsky (2007) report that mindfulness plays a significant role in many different aspects of mental health and contributes to increased well-being and improved psychological functioning. According to Fredrickson (2009), mindfulness is scientifically tested to successfully suppress negative thoughts. It can also be practiced in meditation, but it does not require meditation. It is a skill that opens your mind and this openness is closely related with resilience and results in an upward spiral. It can also be described as purposeful attention in a particular way in the present moment. Mindfulness can be considered as a very important ingredient of well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Although mindfulness and savouring do not have the same meaning, mindfulness is closely related to savouring, especially absorption, where one gets completely immersed in the present moment. Positive experiences can be savoured through mindfulness. It is important to note that in order to enhance savouring's quality; mindfulness awareness during positive experiences should be increased (Bryant & Veroff, 2007).

Drama. Drama can be defined as a composition of words to tell a story through dialogue, involving conflicts and emotions in dramatic form (Drama, 2016). Research done by Snow, D'Amico, and Tanguay (2003) confirms the benefits of drama regarding increased self-esteem, happiness, renewed energy, optimism and enthusiasm. Drama plays an essential role in acting out and relieving stress, also known as drama therapy. According to the

Counselling Directory (2016), it allows an individual to deal with emotional difficulties through the medium of drama and, more specifically, role play when you act the part of a certain character in a certain situation. Schrader (2015) stresses the necessity of drama for releasing emotions and for enhancing well-being, while O'Hanlon and Wootten (2007) explain that drama helps to feel and express emotion and to understand other people's feelings. The strength-based activity for session four of the STP consist of a play in which the participants perform the parable of the prodigal son. Bartholomey and Goheen (2006) describe the Bible as a creative world with stories that reflect God's glory and that can be reinforced and made more understandable through drama.

Writing a letter of forgiveness. Wissing (2014) describes forgiveness and gratitude as important repair- and building strategies to repair damage done in relationships and in rebuilding positivity. Admitting where one has wronged people and forgiving oneself can help in the process to forgive people who have wronged you (Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011). It is to extend mercy toward an offender, accepting the shortcomings of others and giving people a second chance (Rashid, 2005). Lyubomirsky (2007) and McCullough and Witvliet (2006) stress the fact that forgiveness is something that you will benefit from, and not the person who has wronged you. Forgiving others is essential, but forgiving yourself is a step in the right direction (Lyubomirsky, 2007). If you cannot forgive yourself for things that happened in the past or wrong choices that you have made, it will be difficult to have meaning and without meaning you cannot experience well-being (Van Tongeren, Green, Hook, Davis, & Ramos, 2015). It can become a repetitive cycle where the factor of forgiveness has an impact on other important factors that directly influence well-being.

Acts of kindness. Kindness consists of doing good deeds and favours for others without the expectation of personal gain. This requires respect for others and includes emotional affection (Rashid, 2005). Kindness is classified as one of the character strengths of the VIA

Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), under the virtue humanity. It is a psychological assessment that was created by two well-known positive psychology researchers, namely Peterson and Seligman (2004). Kindness is found to be closely linked to mindfulness and the two promote each other (Baer & Lykins, 2011). Kind people are happy if they can help other people, regardless of similarity or relatedness (Rashid, 2005). To give yourself and your time to add meaning to somebody else's life can be very rewarding and adds to your meaning and purpose in life. A Hindu proverb as stated by Lyubomirsky (2007) supports this: "True happiness consists in making others happy" (p. 126).

Counting your blessings. Research done by Watkins, Grimm, and Kolts (2004) reported that it is easier to recall positive memories when being grateful and counting your blessings regardless of how small they are. The ability to think about blessings will counter stressful or challenging events. The gratitude exercise of counting your blessings has a sustained effect of higher positive emotions and less depression, even long after the end of the treatment (Seligman, 2010). This is a positive exercise that is self-sustaining and enjoyable (Wood et al., 2010). According to Seligman's authentic happiness theory, we think too much about negative things and things that go wrong. Happiness is not a construct, but a measurable thing defined by a set of measures such as positive emotions. Fredrickson (2009) explains how this activity can cause a mental shift from experiencing ordinary daily life events to veritable gifts that can be enjoyed and cherished. A study done by Layous and Lyubomirsky (2012) supports the idea that counting your blessings can be used as a tool and deployed when needed. The study further indicates that if this way of thinking can become a habit, it will become mostly effortless and one will automatically use this tool practically in difficult times.

Best possible self. Lyubomirsky (2007) describes this activity as a mental exercise where a person thinks about different domains of life, visualizing the future as he or she would want

it to be. A longitudinal quantitative study conducted by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) on visualizing best possible selves showed a significant increase in positive affect. Participants, who could identify with this exercise, enjoyed it and showed interest in continuing doing this exercise in the long term. This is closely linked to the person-activity fit model where the participant's personality, interests and goals play a major role. Lyubomirsky (2007) reports findings that showed a positive relationship between people that did this exercise for twenty minutes per day over several days and a lift in mood that led to greater happiness. Further research studies conducted by Lyubomirsky (2007) in this regard further proved the benefits of this activity.

Problem Statement

In the female prison in question, which is located in Pretoria, a lot has been done to improve the well-being and the dignity of the women inmates. The researcher presented the STP there as a volunteer and is therefore familiar with the context. The visiting area has recently been painted by artists with drawings of animals and nature. Medical care, psychological counselling and welfare services are available. The officials are mostly caring and give assistance where needed, although rules have to be obeyed. They motivate and support spiritual care and restorative justice programmes, such as the STP. The women can attend different spiritual care programmes, because it is considered extremely important for rehabilitation (Mashabela, 2015). Despite this, there is room for improvement and there is limited knowledge on how the female prisoners in the prison in question experience the STP and what can possibly be done to enhance the programme through the inclusion of strength-based activities, the potential use of strength-based activities in such a programme and how to adapt the programme for this specific prison context. The developers of the STP are also planning to adapt the programme and therefore the proposed study's findings can be valuable

in this regard. This study's aim was therefore to explore and describe the experiences of female prisoners with regard to the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities.

Conclusion

The research is presented in article format and the first section consisted of a literature review and problem statement to establish the background and basis of this study. The following section presents the journal guidelines of the intended journal for submission as well as the manuscript to be submitted to the intended journal.

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Good Books.

Section 2

Manuscript



**“A person does not have to be behind bars to be
a prisoner. People can be prisoners (slaves)
of their own concepts and ideas.”**

- Prem Rawat

SECTION 2

INTENDED JOURNAL, JOURNAL'S GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS AND MANUSCRIPT

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References

The Prison Journal.(2016). *The Prison Journal: An international forum on incarceration and alternative sanctions*. SAGE Publications. Retrieved July 16, 2016, from
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MANUSCRIPT:

**SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE PRISONERS' EXPERIENCES OF THE SYCAMORE
TREE PROJECT WITH STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITIES**

For publication in

The Prison Journal

Choosing to Forgive . . .

Unlocks the Cell to the Prison inside your heart – it sets YOU free!



MANUSCRIPT

Please note that for examination purposes, certain sections of the manuscript, such as the abstract and ethical considerations are discussed in detail and will be shortened before the manuscript is sent to be considered for publication. The manuscript structure is as follows: Title page; abstract (including key words); introduction/problem statement and aim; method (research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations); results; discussion; conclusion; and references.

TITLE PAGE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

South African female prisoners' experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities

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Author contribution: The manuscript was written for and formed part of a dissertation that the student (first author) submitted in partial fulfilment of degree requirements. The second author acted as the supervisor and was continually involved in the process of the study.

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Abstract

The Sycamore Tree Project (STP) was originally developed by Prison Fellowship to assist prisoners to take responsibility for their crimes and to understand the meaning of constructs such as forgiveness, confession and repentance. For the purpose of this research, the STP was adapted to include strength-based activities. The aim of this study was therefore to explore and describe South African female prisoners' experiences of the STP with strength-based activities. An explorative and descriptive qualitative research design was applied. The participants were sampled through the use of a voluntary, purposive sampling technique and included 19 ($n = 19$) female offenders between 20 and 65 years of age. Data were collected through written narratives and the world café method and thematically analysed. The results identify two main themes from the narratives (experiences of the STP as a whole and experiences of the strength-based activities) and four main themes from the world café (experiences of STP with strength-based activities, new discoveries as a result of participation in the STP with strength-based activities, experiences of strength-based activities and recommendations regarding the STP with strength-based activities).

Keywords: female prisoners, positive psychology, Prison Fellowship, strength-based activities, Sycamore Tree Project (STP)

Introduction and Problem Statement

Doing research in prison can be challenging and, as a result, prisoners are an often understudied and sometimes forgotten population. Prison inmates worldwide, also in South Africa, are confronted with dire conditions. They face many challenges such as social isolation, overcrowding, violence, poor hygiene and sanitary conditions, breakdown of human dignity, prison suicide, and health problems such as HIV infection and rape (Goyer, 2002; Haney, 2006; Huey & McNulty, 2005; Kupers, 1999, 2005; Lines, 2006; Muntingh, 2012; Steinberg, 2005; Stern, 2001).

Laws, regulations and policy framework are insufficient to tailor to the needs of women in prison since they differ from males regarding specific health care needs (e.g. pregnancy, menstruation, caregiving) (Manaleng, 2014; Van den Bergh, Moller, & Hayton, 2010; Vetten, 2008). Correctional Services former Deputy Minister of South Africa, Mkhize (2010), states that prisons in South Africa are not suitable for women's needs, because they were designed and built for men. A study done by Feasey and Williams (2009) confirms that female inmates face different problems than males, for example emotional pain and mental health problems due to their care-giving role as mothers.

Evidence indicates that the deterrent conditions in prisons do not bring about positive change in crime rates or in the well-being of prisoners, but that effective rehabilitation programmes have the potential to empower prisoners to change for the better (Haney, 2006; Huey & McNulty, 2005; Katz, Levitt, & Shustorovich, 2003; Shaw, 1997; Steinberg, 2005). In light of this, the available literature clearly indicates the need for rehabilitation programmes and interventions in South African prisons and especially in female prisons.

Restorative Justice Programmes such as the Sycamore Tree Project (STP) are important in order to support and empower prisoners mentally, emotionally and spiritually (Department of Correctional Services, 2015). Prisoners need to cope with many challenges in prison and

also when reintegrating back into society, especially to change offending behavioural patterns. Although prison is intended as punishment, it is important to keep in mind that these individuals' well-being is still important. Prisoners that are released back into society should be able to function in a constructive, healthy manner that can be facilitated through restorative justice principles (Zehr & Gohar, 2003). Restorative justice aims to repair the harm done by crime (Gavrielides & Artinopoulou, 2013; Zehr & Gohar, 2003). Gavrielides (2013) explains that restorative justice entails pain, but it is pain of a different kind - this pain is not a result of punishment, but the consequence of recognition, self-insight, self-observation and self-reflection. Positive psychology principles and interventions have the potential to contribute to the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes and restorative justice, potentially providing a unique opportunity to contribute to the well-being of prisoners.

Positive psychology is "an exciting and explosively developing new discipline in Psychology as a science" as described by Wissing (2014, p. 4). Biswas-Diener, Linley, Govindji, and Woolston (2011) stress that the validity and effectiveness of positive psychology as a force for social change have been proved for individuals, from a western pursuit, and should be expanded to larger and other groups. Research indicates that simple and intentional positive activities can increase people's happiness and well-being (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Huta and Hawley (2010) explain that positive activities and strengths may play a major role in the recovery of vulnerable groups such as prisoners.

Offenders can benefit from the use of strengths on a daily basis by recognizing how it contributes to their well-being. According to Huta and Hawley (2010), through the use of strength-based activities, maladaptive core beliefs can be identified and longstanding patterns of thought and behaviour can be changed for the better. Several studies confirm that well-being can be enhanced and depressive symptoms lessened through a variety of strength-based

activities (Gander, Proyer, Ruch, & Wyss, 2012; Seligman & Steen, 2005; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Marshall, Marshall, Serran, and O'Brien (2013) find positive psychology principles and strengths in their treatment with offenders in prison to be very successful. Research done by Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, and Gordon (2015) argues that a strength-based approach to prisoner re-entry may help reduce risk, such as criminogenic variables that can increase the likelihood of re-offence, and contribute to the offenders' ability to change for the better. Taking this into consideration, the inclusion of strength-based activities in Restorative Justice Programmes such as the STP may contribute to the effectiveness of such programmes, also within the context of female prisons.

The STP was originally developed by Prison Fellowship during 1976 to assist prisoners to take responsibility for their crimes and to understand the meaning of constructs such as forgiveness, confession and repentance (Parker & Van Ness, 2010). It is a well written programme with a detailed curriculum consisting of eight sessions that include an introduction to STP; what is crime; responsibility; confession and repentance; forgiveness; making amends; toward reconciliation; and celebration. The STP has been evaluated by Feasy and Williams (2009) and their findings provide evidence that the programme positively contributes to the rehabilitation of prisoners.

For the purpose of this research, the STP was adapted to include strength-based activities in order to enhance the programme. An outline of these activities is provided in Table 3 in the method section of this article. Considering the limited availability of effective, positively-aimed programmes and lack of research regarding restorative justice programmes - specifically the STP with the inclusion of strength-based activities - this study's significance lies in the fact that it contributes to our understanding and knowledge of how female prisoners experience the STP with the inclusion of strength-based activities in a South African context.

Research Question and Aim

In light of the above, the research question posed is: What are the experiences of female prisoners with regard to the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities? The aim of this study was therefore to explore and describe South African female prisoners' experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities.

Method

The method describes the research design, an outline of the STP and strength-based activities, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design

A research design serves as a plan, outline or strategy that is used to investigate a research problem (Christensen, 1997). An explorative and descriptive qualitative design was applied for this study. An exploratory study is conducted to collect new data if little previous research has been conducted with regard to the topic of inquiry (Botma, Greeff, Maluadzi, & Wright, 2010). Terre Blance, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006) explain the descriptive approach as accurately describing phenomena. Qualitative research serves the purpose to study real-world situations as they naturally unfold and can be described as naturalistic, holistic and inductive (Durrheim, 2006). The design is therefore fitting for the study and the aim of the study.

STP Programme with the Inclusion of Strength-Based Activities

Forgiveness, gratitude and kindness are only some of the well-known positive psychology Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) as stated by Peterson and Seligman (2004) that can be taught to individuals in a prison context through strength-based activities.

The researcher presented the STP with added strength-based activities that complement the existing STP sessions in meeting different individual needs (see Addendum A for a copy of this adapted session guide). The main objective for including these activities was to enrich

the existing STP with practical skills from which the participants could benefit while in prison and when released. Different positive activities and another activity every week, as conducted in this study, seem to be more effective than only one activity running over a long period (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005; Lyubomirsky, 2007). Table 1 provides an overview of the original STP sessions and the strength-based activities that have been included while Table 2 provides more details with regard to the activities.

Table 1

Sycamore Tree Programme Sessions and Strength-based Activities Included

Session	Existing STP continued as previously	Activities included in the STP
1	Introduction to STP: Prepares offenders to participate in the Sycamore Tree Project.	Narratives: Sharing a positive life story
2	What is crime?: Explores a restorative understanding of crime.	Writing a gratitude letter
3	Responsibility: Explores what it means to take responsibility after an offense.	Mindfulness: Savouring
4	Confession and repentance: Understanding the meaning, power, and importance of confession and repentance.	Drama: Parable of the prodigal son
5	Forgiveness: Understanding the meaning, power, and importance of forgiveness.	Writing a letter of forgiveness
6	Making amends: Understanding making amends as a response to crime.	Acts of kindness
7	Toward reconciliation: Understanding how to begin moving toward healing, restoration and reconciliation.	Counting your blessings
8	Celebration and testimonies: Reflecting on and celebrating what has been learned about crime and healing.	Best possible selves

Table 2

*Explanation of the Strength-based Activities Included in the Existing Sycamore Tree Project
(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)*

Activity	Explanation of the Activity
Narratives: Sharing life stories	The introduction of the first session included explaining narratives to the participants. The participants were instructed to close their eyes for about three minutes and think back to something that made them very happy. An opportunity was then given to some of the participants to willingly share their story.
Writing gratitude letters	Participants were requested to write a letter to a specific individual to whom they wanted to express feelings of gratitude. This was done to afford participants an opportunity to express their gratitude in a thoughtful and purposeful manner that had meaning. Participants were given the option to send the letter to this person, but it was not compulsory to do so.
Mindfulness (savouring)	The mindfulness activity consisted of giving each participant a bite size chocolate. They were instructed to close their eyes and feel the paper the chocolate was covered in, then slowly open it, smell it and taste it while concentrating on the whole process. By doing this activity, they became aware of the importance of savouring a moment like this and reminding themselves continuously about the importance of being mindful.
Drama: Parable of the prodigal son	Although drama is not a new addition to the existing project, the researcher has adapted the activity to be more strength-based. A new play has been written by the student researcher with a story teller. The participants portrayed the different roles and dressed accordingly for the play. Participants were given an opportunity beforehand to volunteer to play the different roles.
Writing letters of forgiveness	Participants were instructed to either write a letter of apology asking for forgiveness or a letter of forgiveness to someone they had wronged. This letter is important to get rid of anger, bitterness and blame; for ethical reasons, the letters were not sent.
Acts of kindness	Participants were asked to do at least five deeds of kindness per day for the duration of one week (e.g. comforting somebody that looks distressed, let somebody stand in front of you in a queue, pick up something that someone had dropped, etc.).
Counting your blessings	Participants were motivated to “count their blessings” and write down three good things, in general, that went well that day and why it went well. They were instructed to do this every evening before they went to sleep for a period of seven days.
Best possible selves	Participants had to sit down and think about their best possible life in one year’s time, five years’ time and even longer and think what goals were needed to accomplish this. This activity was done over a period of seven days for twenty minutes per day (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Population and Sampling

The population included female prisoners of a South African female prison. Participants were sampled through the use of a voluntary, purposive sampling technique (Botma et al., 2010) and participants who met the inclusion criteria were recruited by a prisoner who had previously done the STP. Participants had to meet the following criteria:

They:

- Had to be an adult female prisoner at the South African female prison in question and remain imprisoned for at least six months in order to be able to complete the programme and participate in data collection;
- Had not previously completed the Sycamore Tree Project;
- Had to participate in and complete the coming STP (with the inclusion of strength-based activities);
- Had to be efficiently fluent in and able to read and write English since the programme and data collection were in English; and
- Had to be willing to participate.

Apart from the indicated inclusion criteria, there were no other exclusion criteria. To ensure that the sample size was not too large for the data collection techniques to be implemented, a maximum of twenty participants ($n = 20$) were selected for data collection. Table 3 provides an overview of the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 3

Demographic Profile of Participants (n = 20)

Item	Category	Percentage (%)
Age	20 to 25 years old	15.0
	26 to 30 years old	15.0
	31 to 40 years old	30.0
	41 to 50 years old	30.0
	51 years and older	10.0
Highest level of education	Grade 10/Grade 11	15.0
	Grade 12	65.0
	Graduate	20.0
Marital status	Single	30.0
	Steady relationship	10.0
	Married	30.0
	Divorced/Separated	15.0
	Widowed	15.0
Children	None	25.0
	1 or 2	55.0
	3 or 4	15.0
	5	05.0
How often do you practice religion?	Seldom	05.0
	Occasionally	25.0
	Regularly	70.0
Work status before imprisonment	Unemployed	35.0
	Full time employed	60.0
	Other	05.0
Years already in prison	Less than 1 year	45.0
	Between 1 and 2 years	20.0
	Between 2 and 3 years	15.0
	Between 3 and 4 years	05.0
	Between 4 and 5 years	05.0
	Longer than five years	10.0
Years sentenced	1 to 2 years	05.0
	3 to 4 years	30.0
	5 to 6 years	35.0
	7 to 10 years	10.0
	11 to 15 years	20.0

Data Collection

Narratives and the world café method (The World Café, 2008) were used for data collection. This provided the participants with an opportunity to answer the questions individually and in a group setting.

Narratives. Botma et al. (2010) and Atkinson (1998) state that the value of narratives as a qualitative data collection technique, lies in the fact that it acts as an effective means to gain insight into people's experiences and can reveal exceptionally rich data. The use of written narratives in this study was appropriate as they provided insight into the participants' experiences. Data collection through narratives occurred before the world café session to ensure that individual responses were not influenced by group responses. The participants were provided with the following guidelines: Please write a short narrative of one to two pages in length based on the following question: When reflecting back on your participation in the STP, can you describe - as detailed as possible - what your experiences were during and after the programme? You can include examples in your discussion. The researcher will collect the narrative from you.

After the narratives had been collected from the participants, they were numbered and any information that could identify the participants was removed and stored separately in an attempt to protect participants' identities. Examples of narratives are provided in Addendum G.

World café. Research indicates that the method is suitable for all cultures, different age groups, many purposes, and in many types of communication settings (Wheatley, 2005). The method consists of a structured conversational process to share and link ideas to create a collective wisdom. The focus is on exploring themes and questions, rather than on problem-solving (Tan & Brown, 2005).

Due to the fact that the method was not initially intended as a qualitative data collection technique, the supervisor of this research contacted the founders of the method via electronic mail to make sure that using the method for such purposes would be appropriate. Furthermore, enquiries were made pertaining to copyright policies before commencing with the manuscript on the use of the method as a qualitative data collection technique (Koen, Du Plessis, & Koen, 2014). The founders replied that she and her co-author could keep using the technique as such and also that the technique had been applied in other contexts and by other researchers; they (the founders) were also undertaking qualitative research studies through academic partners at Fielding Graduate University (A. Lenzo, personal communication, September 1, 2013). The method has also been implemented as a qualitative data collection technique in other South African studies (Chigeza & Claasen, 2015; Du Plessis, Koen, & Bester, 2012; Froneman, 2013; Van Graan, 2014).

This method was ideal for discussing and reflecting on the completed eight weeks' STP with the inclusion of the strength-based activities for the following reasons: 1) The STP was presented in a group setting and therefore data collection done with groups could provide valuable insight from the group's perspective; 2) during the eight weeks of the STP, the participants had an opportunity to get to know one another, which contributed to a comfortable atmosphere for data collection within a group; 3) the questions that were posed to the participants were not of a sensitive or personal nature. The world café session was opened by the researcher who welcomed the participants and explained the purpose and process of the session to them and gave them an opportunity to ask any questions. Participants were also asked to establish group rules and had the opportunity to indicate what they did not want to share. They were requested not to discuss what might be revealed during the session.

There were four tables with five participants and a table host at every table. Each table was provided with a paper tablecloth and coloured crayons for the participants' contributions. Employees of the university who are trained in qualitative data collection and the use of the world café method, acted as table hosts together with the researcher. They signed confidentiality agreements (see Addendum B for a copy of this standard agreement). Twenty-five minutes were given to discuss one question at every table. The researcher was responsible for keeping time. During the sessions, the participants were asked to make contributions and answer the question through group discussion and by making drawings, drawing symbols or writing phrases, ideas or words on the paper tablecloth. Participants were requested to explain their contributions to the table hosts and to add short written explanations to any symbols or drawings they made so that their contributions were not misinterpreted during data collection and data analysis. After the session had expired, participants were requested to shuffle and to move to a different table where a different question was discussed. After each session, the table hosts at the respective tables were responsible for indicating what the question was and what the previous group's contribution consisted of, guiding the discussion with the new group. This process was followed until all the participants had an opportunity to answer all the questions. The questions posed during the world café were as follows:

1. How did you experience the Sycamore Tree Project with the inclusion of strength-based activities?
2. What did you find most useful in the programme and why?
3. What did you expect from the programme and how did the programme meet those expectations?
4. What recommendations do you have with regard to the presentation of the programme with female prisoners in future?

The table set-up of one of the tables during the world café is presented in Figure 1.

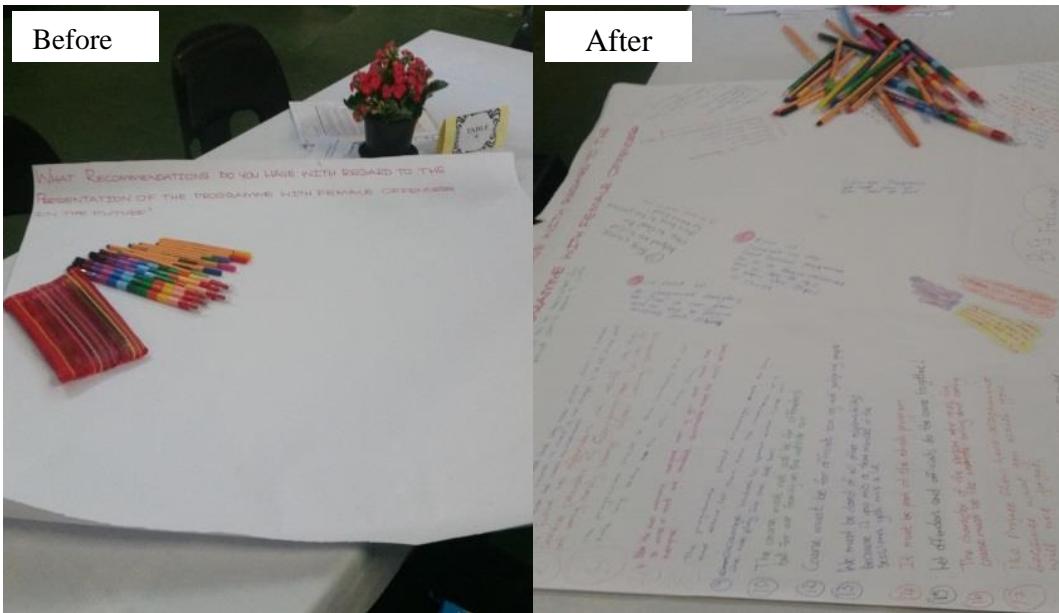


Figure 1. Table set-up during world café

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected through narratives and the world café. Thematic analysis can be seen as the foundation for qualitative analysis and is the first method with core skills that researchers should learn. It is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data which organises and describes data in rich detail (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006) list six steps when conducting a thematic analysis, which has been followed in this study:

Familiarization. Know your data well by reading and/or listening to it.

Coding. Analyse the data in order to assign a code to the text.

Theme exploration. Similarities in the data are identified and grouped through the development of themes.

Theme review. It is important that the themes accommodate the data. Characteristics of themes and interconnectedness should be defined to either put them together or to split them.

Theme naming. The details of each theme must be written down to evaluate the way it fits into the data.

Writing. Use the data to make a comparison with the literature and to tell a narrative.

An independent, experienced co-coder was appointed to co-code the data and was provided with a work protocol on how to conduct the analysis. The researcher and co-coder each analysed the data independently. Thereafter, a consensus discussion took place between the researcher and co-coder to ensure that they agree on the themes. The co-coder signed a confidentiality agreement (see Addendum C for a copy of this protocol and confidentiality agreement).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence researchers have in their data (Botma et al., 2010). Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that trustworthiness involves establishing:

Credibility. Credibility refers to confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. The researcher ensured credibility through the application of: 1) Reflexivity (she was honest and critical in her reflection on the entire process); 2) Peer examination (she consulted regularly with her supervisor for assessment and evaluation of the study); 3) Member checking: the world café session concluded with a member checking session where the findings were checked with the participants; 4) Structural coherence: A literature integration has been conducted to account for similar or contradictory findings in research and to link the findings to other research findings.

Transferability. Transferability refers to showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts. The researcher ensured transferability through the use of a dense and detailed description of the whole process and different procedures when reporting the research.

Dependability. Dependability consists of showing that the findings are consistent and can be repeated. The researcher attempted to ensure that the findings were consistent and could

be repeated by making use of dense description and the use of the code-recoder procedure as described earlier.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not by researcher bias, motivation, or interest. The researcher applied reflexivity, stayed neutral and viewed information objectively in order to shape the findings of the study by the respondents and not the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest. The use of different data collection techniques contributed to confirmability by allowing the researcher to look at the topic of inquiry from different perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

This was a medium risk study as the participants were sampled from a vulnerable population (Botma et al., 2010). The ethical principles and considerations of the study are discussed in detail below as explained in the Helsinki Declaration (Burns & Grove, 2005). The research study carries institutional ethical approval (NWU-00018-16-A1) and has also been approved by the Department of Correctional Services, Policy Coordination and Research (please see Addendum D for a copy of the approval letter). Participants were recruited by a prisoner who had done the STP with the implementation of a voluntary, purposive sampling technique. It was done in a manner that had fair inclusion criteria regarding race, religion, class and sexual orientation (Botma et al., 2010). Informed consent was obtained by a trained outside party who explained the study, its aim and the possible contributions of the study to the participants. They were granted an opportunity to ask questions and were given a week to study the informed consent form (please see Addendum E for a copy of the informed consent).

Participation was voluntary and the participants were not forced or coerced to take part; they were informed that they may choose to withdraw from the research at any stage without

consequences and without providing an explanation. Narratives that were collected from participants were given numbers and information that could identify participants was removed. Due to the fact that the world café data collection occurred in a group setting, only partial confidentiality could be ensured. In light of this, participants were requested not to discuss what might be revealed during the research. They signed a Basic Standard of Conduct which includes the concept of confidentiality (please see Addendum F for a copy of the Basic Standard of Conduct). Participants were not identified in the dissertation or reporting or publishing of the research. The co-coder and table hosts signed confidentiality agreements. Only the members of the research team have access to the data and the hard- and electronic copies of data and other documents are stored securely on university premises and will be destroyed according to institutional specifications by a member of the research team seven years after publication of the results.

The benefits of the study outweighed the risks. The possible risks to participants were, however, carefully considered. In the event that any of the participants should have experienced boredom or fatigue during the collection of data, participants were given an opportunity to take a break; efficient planning and time management by the researcher limited this possibility. If any of the participants suffered adverse psychological effects as a direct result of their participation in this study, support services by a qualified professional located at the female prison were available to participants.

The research had direct benefits for the participants as they completed the STP that included strength-based activities that may contribute to their well-being. An indirect benefit is that the knowledge gained through this research may benefit other offenders, researchers and other audiences (such as restorative justice programme developers and prison officials) by providing insight into the STP and the inclusion of strength-based activities in such a programme. The researcher did not falsify, manipulate, exaggerate, fabricate or plagiarise

data and was honest when conducting, reporting and publishing the findings (Botma et al., 2010). A typed format summary of the results will be made available to management of the South African female prison and the developers of the STP and may be presented to them on request. The results of the study will also be made available to the participants in the form of a presentation by the researcher once the study has been completed.

Results

This section presents the findings of the research. The themes and sub-themes that were identified through data analysis are discussed with the inclusion of direct quotes from participants in support of these themes.

Narrative Findings

Table 4 provides an overview of the themes and sub-themes for the personal written narratives. The themes are discussed in more detail after the table.

Table 4

Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for Narratives

Themes	Sub-themes
Experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project as a whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God loves sinners; no condemnation • A restorative understanding of crime • What it means to take responsibility after an offense • Understanding repentance • Understanding forgiveness • Making amends • Experienced change and healing • Felt grateful and blessed • Experienced love and kindness • Experienced God's love • Valued group dynamics and -sharing
Experiences of the strength-based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives/life stories were insightful • Writing a gratitude letter is a meaningful experience • Mindfulness (savouring) is to savour special moments • Drama: Parable of the prodigal son <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fun through role play ○ Group interaction ○ Experienced God's love • Writing a letter of forgiveness was a healing and freeing experience • Acts of kindness teaches kindness • Counting your blessings brings gratefulness

Note. Please note that the participants' comments are placed verbatim and have not been subjected to language editing.

Theme: Experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project as a whole. The participants' experiences of the sycamore tree project as a whole are described under the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme: God loves sinners; no condemnation. Through the story of Zaccheus, who climbed into the Sycamore tree to see Jesus, the participants indicated that they could associate with Zaccheus. God still loved Zaccheus even though he was a sinner and it made them aware that they could also be forgiven for their past actions. Forgiveness seemed to be

the most important value that the participants learnt from the story. Participant 14 wrote:

"...God knew that he was there. He knew he was a sinner and did not judge him but instead told him that He will have dinner in his house. People did not want to be associated with Zaccheus because of his work, but God did not see what man saw. I learnt God looks at your heart and is ready to forgive no matter what you have done all you need to do is ask."

Participant 18: *"I was Zaccheus in the tree, but God saw me. He knew I was there and He saved me from my sinful life and my selfish life and even forgave me for all. He loves me as I am and He doesn't judge me. He just loves me for me."* Participant 6 commented: *"...Jesus was humble and not judgmental towards him. Jesus was with him, forgave him and his sins and set him free."*

Sub-theme: A restorative understanding of crime. This session of the STP includes the story of Paul who met Philemon's slave, Onesimus. Both offenders and victims were discussed in this session and the participants indicated a tentative restorative understanding of crime, which is reflected in the following statements: Participant 1: *"Victims and offenders, God love both of us with the same love..."* Participant 14 wrote: *"Crime has effect to both the victims and offenders. This is clearly shown on the story of Philemon and Onesimus..."* Participant 17 communicated in Afrikaans, but were translated verbatim into English and appear directly after the Afrikaans comment: *"Ek kan my vereenselwig met Philemon wat 'n sakeman was en suksesvol was. Ek was self 'n sakevrou en ook suksesvol. My opsomming van Philemon en Onesimus: As beproeing, teleurstellings moet ons stilraak voor die Vader en leiding van Bo vra en sensitief raak en vra vir leiding van die Vader en nie deur ons eie krag en mag die saak wil regstel nie."* English: *"I can identify with Philemon who was a successful businessman. Personally I was a businesswoman and also successful. My summary of Philemon and Onesimus: With trials, disappointments we have to become silent before the*

Father and ask for guidance from Above and become sensitive and ask for guidance from the Father and not settle the matter by our own strength and power.”

Sub-theme: What it means to take responsibility after an offense. In the session which focuses on taking responsibility after an offence, the difference between not taking responsibility and taking false responsibility is stressed. Participants shared the following experiences of the STP with regard to taking responsibility after an offence: Participant 6 wrote: “*I learn about the ripple effect of crime and I learn about not taking responsibility and taking false responsibility.*” Participant 9: “*...God gives us a second chance in life and He guides us all the time in realizing our mistakes and taking responsibility of our actions.*” Participant 14 shared: “*...We should learn to take responsibility and not make excuses for our wrong actions, or take false responsibility that bad things happen because reason that we can come up with...*”

Sub-theme: Understanding repentance. Participants shared the following at the session which focused specifically on the understanding of the meaning, power, and importance of confession and repentance: Participant 4: “*...most of us have got more problems than other, but in God our problems are the same level and we need to repent so that God can forgive us...*” Participant 14 stated: “*...but when we are wrong we have to repent and ask for forgiveness. Before we ask for forgiveness we have to reflect on what we have done and, when we do, we have to humble ourselves and ask Him to forgive you.*”

Sub-theme: Understanding forgiveness. The participants shared a great deal in their narratives on having an improved understanding of forgiveness. They indicated that they experienced freedom/relief, God’s forgiveness and how to forgive themselves and others. Participant 5: “*Forgiveness opens doors for everything. It leaves a person light, free and relieved. Forgiveness also brings change to an individual.*” Participant 15 stated: “*It also made me realize that by actually forgiving someone was actually offloading a heavy weight*

on my shoulders and freeing my soul and spirit." Participant 18 wrote: "Forgive, even if someone doesn't deserve it, you deserve to be free." Participant 19: "Once you accepted God into your life, you will feel like a mountain was lifted from your shoulders." Participant 3: "I feel relieved like I was carrying a burden on my shoulders; during Sycamore Tree I did know to forgive person, but after I can forgive easy..." Participant 13 described it as follows: "Forgiveness is not about the victim whether they forgive you or not, is about you – offender - to get healing and find peace and happiness." Participant 10: "Forgive others not because they deserve forgiveness, but because you deserve peace." The participants also shared the importance of knowing and understanding that God forgives us our sins if we repent: Participant 14 wrote: "I learned God looks at your heart and is ready to forgive no matter what you have done; all you need to do is ask." Participant 16 described it as follows: "It was the best 'medication' I have received and realizing that the Lord has forgiven me." Participant 1: "...God say if you confess with your mouth He will forgive you and you have to forgive those who sinned against you." Participant 19 shared the following: "God forgives you every single time. He does not judge you." Participant 2: "We have to choose to forgive the people who wrong us, hurt us, so that we can be able to move on about our lives, because we want God to forgive us for our sins, so God want us to forgive and let go so that the Holy Spirit can start to do His work." The findings suggest that participants found it more difficult to forgive themselves, but that they realised the importance of doing so. Participant 15 explained: "The project helped me to realize the importance of sincere forgiveness, coz out of this I actually learned that by forgiving someone, I first had to forgive myself so as to be able to forgive the next person." Participant 7: "... but what you need is to forgive yourself."

Sub-theme: Making amends. The STP session which focuses on making amends consists mostly of changed behaviour, restitution and generosity and participants shared their realization of the need to make amends, which is reflected in the following statement by

Participant 5: “*When offending someone, you need to look back and apologize...*” It is important to note that while the women are imprisoned, it is difficult to make amends in the manner they might prefer.

Sub-theme: Experienced change and healing. The participants indicated that they experienced change and healing as a result of their participation in the STP with strength-based activities. Participant 8 explained: “*I didn’t know how to do it, but Sycamore Tree made me change my life and to recognize that God doesn’t judge us even if the world can judge me, but God is there for me... After Sycamore Tree I will be able to change my life to depart from my old ways and to be a new and changed person... After the Sycamore Tree project I am a free person...*” Participant 16: “*In this research I could be myself, we have cried, laughed (drama) but most of all I have healed.*” Participant 18: “*Sycamore Tree definitely changed my life thinking about a lot of things.*” Participant 19: “*Thinking back on my experience again, I became a woman again, I became a child of God.*” Participant 2: “*In our efforts to change, improve and develop, we have to remember that human effort alone is never enough. Many people do not realize that there is help available from a truly Omnipotent Source – God. So invest in yourself, involve God.*” Participant 19 shared: “*If you want to become your best possible self, be kind, get to know God and ask God to help you so that you can become your best possible self. No-one can change you, not even yourself, only God is capable of that.*” Participant 10: “*Sycamore project taught me a lot of things. ...every session is enjoyable; every time when we meet for session I learn new thing that is change me to a better person.*”

Sub-theme: Felt grateful and blessed. The findings suggest that, through their participation in the STP with strength-based activities, the women experienced feelings of gratitude and being blessed. Participant 5 reflected: “*This course taught me to appreciate every little thing we have. Above all we know that we all have God as our Father and we*

know where to run to in times of need. He loves all of us.” Participant 7: “The Sycamore Tree course is the best of them all, cause it makes us think of ourselves and forgiveness, the blessing that God give all the time.” Participant 10: “...God has a purpose in everything that is happening in our lives and to be grateful each and every day, understanding about life and about eternity.” Participant 11: “I would first like to express my deepest gratitude for an extensively well thought out and presented course. I have nothing but praise for this programme and say once more, please can I do it again...?” Participant 15: “I’m thankful and grateful for taking part and don’t have any regrets about taking part.” Participant 18: “Thank you for an awesome time, for all your sharing and the hugs and understanding. Most of all, thank you God our Father for this time of love, learning, forgiveness and prayers.”

Sub-theme: Experienced love and kindness. The results are indicative of the love and kindness that the participants experienced while participating in the STP. Participant 6: “*You showed us love, I am grateful to have you in my life. I thought when you are in this place you don’t deserve love, but you showed me love, not only me to everyone... ” Participant 15: “I never thought I could find so much joy, peace and love in this project, because I just entered the project just to pass time, but not knowing that I’m gonna learn a lot from this project.” Participant 16: “This project was the best experience of my life. I constantly told my fellow inmates about the love, humbleness and kindness I have received. Thank you for allowing me to be part of such a wonderful programme, the love I have received and the acceptance.”*

Sub-theme: Experienced God’s love. Participants shared that as a result of their participation in the STP, they experienced God’s love. Participant 1 wrote: “*I experience that God love us.” Participant 2: “Sycamore Tree Project help us to know who we are and that we can trust God and lean on him, not on our own understanding, because God is love, God give us peace that surpasses all human understanding.” Participant 4: “With this Sycamore Tree Project I’ve learned a lot that God can forgive, protect, guide... ” Participant 6: “During*

Sycamore Tree I have learn a lot... It was very nice experience. I found Lord and I'm at peace." Participant 17 communicated in Afrikaans, but it was translated verbatim into English and appears directly after the Afrikaans comment: "*Ek wil ook baie dankie sê vir Sycamore Tree, want sy (aanbieder) het weer deur die projek laat besef dat daar net een God Drie-Enig is en sonder liefde, vrede, vergifnis en omgee en Geloof is ons maar niks.*" English: "*I also want to thank Sycamore Tree, because its (presenter) through the project has once again confirmed that there is only one Holy Trinity and without love, peace, forgiveness and caring and Faith we are merely nothing.*" Participant 18: "*I know now that I am not the only one with sadness, problems, heartache and so on, there are more of us, but God is with us, God is saving us, God is helping us, best of all, God loves us.*" Participant 16: "*Every session I have learned something, whether it was new or realizing that the Lord is there for us, ready to hold me in His Arms.*"

Sub-theme: Valued group dynamics and -sharing. The group dynamics and sharing in the group were reportedly experienced as positive by all participants. Participants seemed to sense a special confidentiality and trust between the group members which contributed to their confidence. Participant 3: "*I learn to share with the group first. I was shy to talk in front of people, but since the Sycamore Tree Project I learn to know each other in the group.*" Participant 5: "*During the sessions we were all participating and we really did enjoy every part of our meetings.*" Participant 18: "*I loved our sharing time in the group. I will miss this, but I am thankful for what I learned by just sharing.*" Participant 5: "*Since I attended at Sycamore Tree, I realize that opening up make a person free.*" Participant 18: "*Fun, o we had fun, we had fun, laughter, sharing, tears and so much more.*"

Theme: Experiences of Strength-Based Activities. The findings highlight the participants' overwhelmingly positive reactions and feedback with regard to the strength-based activities. Participant 15 wrote: "*When we started on the strength-based activities, it*

was then that I realised that I actually was not wasting my time, but I was actually there for a reason." Participant 11: "*I could have sat and discussed and/or dealt with any of the strength-based activities for the majority of the day, if not more.*" The participants' experiences of the strength-based activities are discussed under the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme: Narratives/life stories were insightful. This activity was an important preparation for the rest of the project and everything that would follow. Participants reported that they gained insight through writing their life stories. They found the activity encouraging and by sharing their experiences, they seemed to develop empathy and understanding for others. Participant 9: "*The day when we shared life stories, it has touched me because God loves us all and He has his ways of doing things.*" Participant 11 shared: "*When we finished our session, I was decidedly disappointed and just plain wished for more of the same. Sharing life stories was eye-opening...*" Participant 12 described the activity as follows: "*When we were sharing our life stories I realised...everybody has a life story, everyone has hurt and pain, good times and bad times and hurt that he must overcome.*" Participant 16: "*There are people that have so much pain and hurt just by listening to their life stories and one always think that your problem is too big for the Lord to solve.*" Participant 19: "*The day when we shared our life stories, there was a different side to each and every person that you don't realize. Nobody has a 'perfect' life.*" Participant 8: "...sharing life stories...I would feel emotional, but then there are people who can comfort you and make you a better person."

The narrative/life story activity can also be facilitated by presenters or facilitators being willing to share meaningful parts of their own life stories. Through sharing your life story, you can build trust in the group and explain something about life which the participants can identify with. For this reason, the researcher shared a part of her life's story with the participants in the form of Lorinda's story, a story about her daughter, which the participants reported positively on. Participant 9 wrote: "*Lorinda's story has touched me in my heart... I*

thank God that He has sent Mariëtte (presenter) to come here and do this project with us and share Lorinda's story with us." Participant 10 reflected: "*Lorinda's story was the one made me change to show love to other... I wish to have her heart. She is brave even she lost lot of things but she still smile and pray for us.*" Participant 15 shared: "*When mommy Mariëtte told us the story of her daughter, the challenges she's faced with; yet she still manage to smile broadly so because of the peace in her heart and most importantly the fact that she always smiles because she has Jesus Christ. The story made me realize that it's Jesus Christ that I actually need more in my life; to dedicate all of me to Him in order to have that inner peace, coz that inner peace is the one that's going to put a smile on my face.*" Participant 18 wrote: "*Lorinda, thank you for sharing love by prayer for us, our prayer warrior. Thank you Lorinda, I will never forget the example you are to me.*"

Sub-theme: Writing a gratitude letter is a meaningful experience. The participants found the activity of writing a gratitude letter to be meaningful and reported that the activity helped them open up and express gratitude in a different way. Participant 5: "*For the gratitude letter, it gave me an opportunity to express myself in a different way...*" Participant 4: "*Write a letter of gratitude I've learnt to thank the people that helps me in times of sadness, neglecting, feeling lonely...*" Participant 9: "*It has reminded me on how to appreciate a person that is supportive and caring for you. When writing that letter, you feel touched in your heart and it brings a lot of memories...*" Participant 13 wrote in the third person: "*She also wrote a gratitude letter and realised how much she had to be thankful for, it made her sad and happy at the same time, coz she realised that God never left her...*" Participant 16: "*Gratitude letter, my eyes has been open totally. I have lots to be grateful for...*" Participant 19: "*When I wrote the gratitude and forgiveness letters, I got to know a new part of myself. It opens you deep inside. All the things you won't speak, but you will be able to write it.*"

Sub-theme: Mindfulness (savouring) is to savour special moments. This activity was meaningful and participants learned how important the moment is. The chocolate eating made it even more memorable. Participant 11 wrote: “*Mindfulness (savouring) is a stroke of genius! I LOVE chocolate, so the mood was set to receive the lesson in its totality and I did – it was scrumptious.*” Participant 12: “*The mindfulness make me remember how many moments I savoured...*”

Sub-theme: Drama: Parable of the prodigal son. This activity was part of the existing STP and adapted as a strength-based activity. The participants reported enjoying the activity and the findings indicate that it was a learning experience for many of the participants. For clarity reasons, the discussion of this activity is divided into the following three headings:

Fun through role play. Participants indicated that they really enjoyed this activity and there was a lot of laughter as they were performing this activity. Participant 1 wrote: “*Come to drama, it makes you laugh and learn something about life itself.*” Participant 11: “*The drama just added to the fun. We had pigs and we used toothpaste for pig “snot” and laughed like mad, but at the same time the lesson went home.*”

Group interaction. Participants described the activity as strengthening the group interaction. Participant 19 explained: “*I loved the drama. It was so nice to see that all people can work together no matter what their circumstances are.*” Participant 3: “*I learn to know each other to the group; the part I love most the parable lost son by the time we act drama I enjoy that day...*” Participant 9: “*The drama that we did together as a group has helped us to connect together and see our talents and has taught us how to work as a team.*”

Experienced God’s love. The participants shared that through this activity, they experienced God’s love. Participant 2: “*I also like about the story that we did and drama about the lost son, that even though we turn away from God and live our own life, if we realize that God does care about us no-matter what and even when we go back to Him, God*

still welcome us." Participant 4: "*I saw on the act that even if you can't have anything and anyone in your life, even if your friends have rejected you, but you must know that God loves you...*" Participant 12: "*With the drama when the lost son came back, I knew that our Father God is waiting for us always with open arms to come back to Him.*" Participant 14: "*The story of the lost son shows us the love of a parent. Our parents love us unconditional, so does God.*" Participant 8: "*The story of the prodigal son taught us that our God can give us our second chances.*"

Sub-theme: Writing a letter of forgiveness was a healing and freeing experience. The writing of forgiveness letters was reportedly a healing and freeing experience for the participants. Participant 18: "*I learn to forgive in words is good, but to also write it down and know the person has my forgiveness for them on paper...it really finally freed me.*" Participant 16: "*The forgiveness letter was lifting a big block off my shoulders by writing things on paper and talking about it, you actually realize there are things I have not dealt with.*" Participant 8: "*When writing the forgiveness letter, I felt that I am free and relieved coz sometimes you don't realize that what you are doing hurts other people who have been there for me.*" Participant 13 shared her experience in the third person: "*She started writing a forgiveness letter to the ones she has wronged. It was so different from just doing, seeing it on paper, made her feel more certain and more at peace.*"

Sub-theme: Acts of kindness teach kindness. Participants shared that the acts of kindness activity was a meaningful learning experience that taught them to be kind and humble. Participant 2: "*We sometimes struggle to be kind to other people and kindness is one of fruit of the Holy Spirit that we must produce if we are the follower of Christ.*" Participant 10: "*Showing me the act of kindness each and every day, it taught me lot of things not to be greedy...*" Participant 11: "*Acts of kindness is a concept I base my daily behaviour on...*" Participant 12: "*We don't realize how many acts of kindness we give every day and receive*

every day." Participant 14: "*I learned that it's nice and good to be kind to people and now I always practice. When you are kind, others are kind, but not always, but regardless... I have learned to be kind. And in being kind I have become loving, grateful, mindful of other people...*" Participant 16: "*On the acts of kindness, it was so much nice to actually see how people actually adored me...*"

Sub-theme: Counting your blessings brings gratefulness. By counting their blessings, the participants reported the experience of joy and becoming aware of what they have to be grateful for. Participant 5: "*God says in the Bible that we must count our blessings. Counting our blessings is not only about things that we have as material. Never even our physical body e.g. we complain that we are in prison and we do not have 100% of our freedom... At least we can say we are fortunate, because we can see, we have all our body parts.*" Participant 2: "*Counting our blessings that God bless us in every area of our lives. The best gift or blessing that God gave us is life...*" Participant 4: "*Counting my blessings, because I can see that God loves me...*" Participant 10: "*If I want more from life, I must start by counting my blessings instead of counting your losses, deficits and want.*" Participant 15: "*...the part where we were talking about how to count our blessings...this part hit me hard, because it made me realize that I've actually been complaining a lot in my prayers rather than thanking God for all the things He's been doing for me since my arrest.*" Participant 19: "*I learnt that you must count your blessings each and every day. Even when you are in prison, you are still blessed with more than a lot of people of the outside.*"

World Café Findings

Table 5 gives an overview of the themes and sub-themes of the world café as identified through data analysis of world café outputs. Since the data were obtained in a group setting, the quotes have not been marked according to participants' individual contributions. An example of one of the world café outputs is presented in Figure 2.

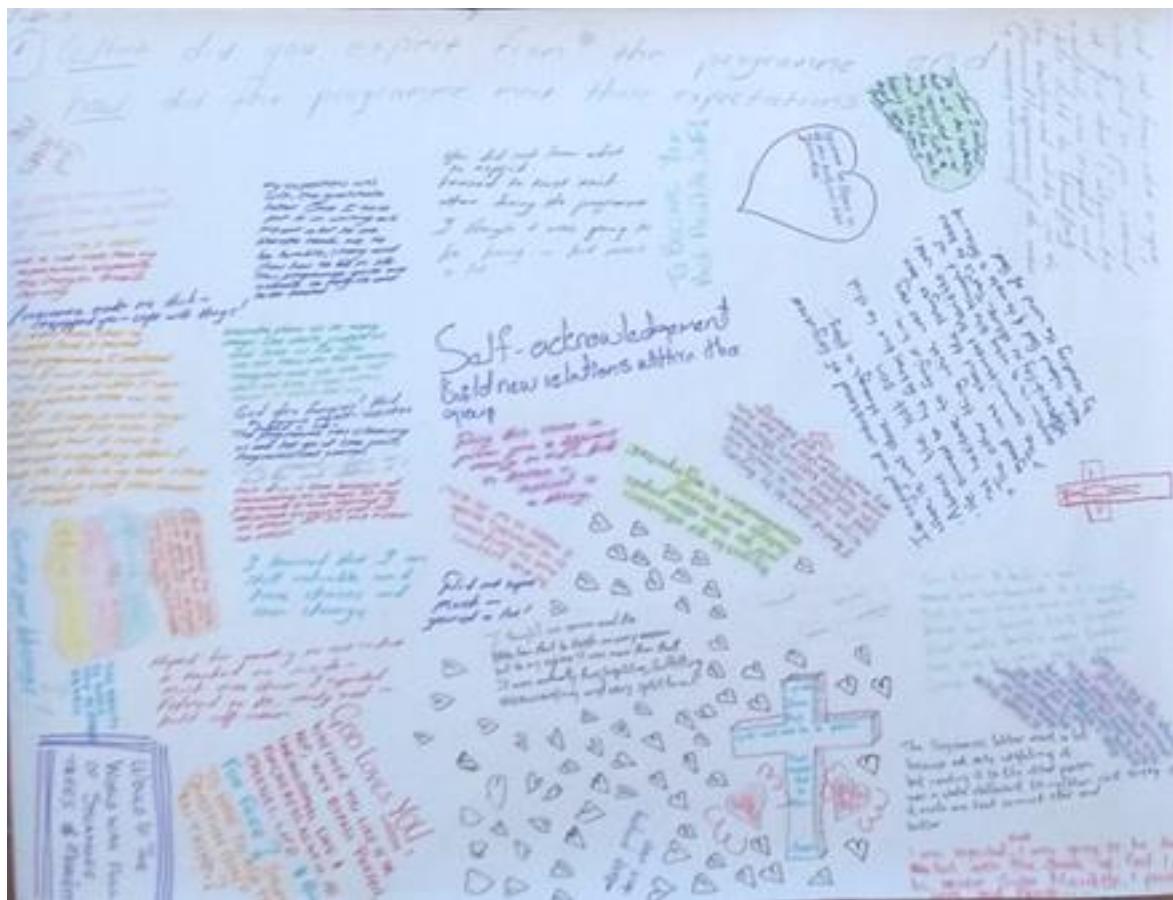


Figure 2. Example of world café output

Table 5

Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for the World Café

Themes	Sub-themes
Experiences of STP with strength-based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experiences • Spiritual experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Love and trust in God ○ Changed lives ○ Connectedness to God • Group cohesion and sharing • Positive emotions
New discoveries as a result of participation in the STP with strength-based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiveness and conviction • Realised that families are precious • Experienced personal growth
Experiences of strength-based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives (life stories) • Writing a gratitude letter • Mindfulness (savouring) • Drama: Parable of the prodigal (lost) son • Writing a letter of forgiveness • Acts of kindness • Counting your blessings • Best possible selves • General experiences of activities
Recommendations regarding the STP with strength-based activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continuity and time is important ○ Should also be presented to others • Facilitator must have the right characteristics

Note. Please note that the participants' comments are placed verbatim and have not been subjected to language editing.

Theme: Experiences of the STP with Strength-based Activities. The participants' experiences of the STP with strength-based activities are discussed in the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme: Positive experiences. The participants emphasised their positive experience of the STP with strength-based activities, which is supported by the following quotes: “*Learn to deal with work through things in a positive way; Feel recognised and important and noticed. Felt trusted (even as offender); Can see that it was a joyful experience for others in group; Uplifting for your heart; Peace that stay with us; Peace and humbleness; Thank you for this programme. It does change lives! Hoped for something to eat – but it touched me inside – more than I expected – built self-esteem; Would if the world was full of Sycamore Trees; Programme made me think – equipped you to cope with things! Did not expect much – gained a lot! You did not know what to expect – learned to trust each other during the programme. I thought it was going to be boring, but meant a lot! Sycamore Tree Project is the most lovely course – was remarkable; I expected the course to be boring, but when time goes by I enjoyed it. I couldn't wait to come to the sessions. I enjoyed it very much; It was an overwhelming good and positive experience. This was the best thing that ever happened to me here; It was a positive experience, not only for me, but also for other people.”*

Sub-theme: Spiritual experiences. The participants reported having and undergoing spiritual experiences as a result of their participation in the STP. One participant wrote: “*I thought we are going to read the Bible from start to finish on every session, but to my surprise it was more than that. It was actually fun, inspiring, fulfilling, encouraging and very spiritual.*”

Love and trust in God. Through participation in the STP, the participants reported that they learned to trust God and experienced His love: “*God's love is unconditional. We are very grateful; God loves us all. He has plans for us; God's love as an everlasting love and He's always giving the act of kindness by restoring my life and soul every day of my life; I truly love God; God's love for everyone; God never forsake us, no matter what we do; Realize that God is always with us. Rely on God; I realised who and what I am in the Lord. I*

have to concentrate on myself. I thank the Lord for this miracle; You don't have to be perfect to know God; Thank you God for everything that You have done to me."

Changed lives. During the world café, one of the women testified how a visitor that often visits her noticed the change of expression on her face. He asked her what happened and she told him that she is doing a course called the Sycamore Tree Project. He told her that she should never stop with the project. The way this programme reportedly contributed towards changing the women's lives, was remarkable: "*I thought this is some kind of psychological programme, but it was not. At first I thought of what people would think of me, but it does not matter. This project helped me to discover myself and change my life to God; You don't go there for an expectation, but when you start with the programme, it really touches you and change things inside of you; When I entered the project, I thought it was just wasting time. After the introduction, something started to change inside me. You started thinking about stuff you never thought about – it changed my mindset; You don't go there for an expectation, but when you start with the programme, it really touches you and change things inside of you.*"

Connectedness to God. The participants shared that they felt recognised by God and some accepted Him for the first time. "*Found God; Made you feel connected to God and other people; With God everything is possible. When God came to Zaccheus, it felt to me that I got recognised by God and other people; Without God you are nothing; Ask God He will set you free; God's spear will always be a part of your heart, free and clear. Should we so desire, let Him in. If you can talk the talk, make sure you can walk the walk; I found Jesus and love and now I'm in peace. That meant a lot to me...Amen; This course helped me to get closer to God.*"

Sub-theme: Group cohesions and sharing. The effectiveness of participation and sharing in the group was pointed out by the women and reportedly contributed to the success of the

programme for them. They shared: “*I did not know what to expect. Was scared to join, worried at first about religion, but everybody was accepted and ideas could be shared freely; Took time to get to know others in the group and truly take notice of them; Don't feel lonely anymore (feel included in group); I never participated in anything with fellow inmates when I came in. I would not even become friends, until I attended the Sycamore Tree Project. I became my old self and started making friends and participating with new experience; We felt close to people in the group. You see people, but you don't even know what their names are. You learnt to know people that you never knew before and we can stand together. We have started to trust one another...; People only think about themselves. This project allows you to get to know other people; Opportunities to share and care; Meeting different people, cultures, values and personalities; Self-acknowledgement – build new relations within the group; The sharing...you walk around here and some people are always smiling, but you don't know what is going on in her heart. The first time they saw me, they saw this angry non-smiling person. You put this face up for protection. Now you can stand up for that person, because you learnt to know that person; Somewhere along the line, we have all spoken. We shared good memories and bad memories; Most of us are here because of concentrating on others. You did not know what to expect – learned to trust each other during the programme; interaction bonded group.”*

Sub-theme: Positive emotions and understanding emotions. The participants identified several positive emotions that they experienced and also becoming aware of their own and others' emotions and being able to understand these emotions: “*Made you aware of other people's feelings; It made me aware of my feelings and then you can think about other people's feelings and it made me aware of my actions. We realise that the emotions we have, is the same emotions that people outside have. For us not being with our people outside is the same for them not having us there; It was a loving experience. We learnt to love people in the*

group; In this programme, I have learned to concentrate on myself and not on others. It is my time to focus. Can't pretend – focus on feelings and address it; The emotions that stood out with the course was love and joy. I saw people smile during this course that does not usually smile; I found peace and happiness in this group and joy and I don't feel lonely anymore. It helped me to break free. I felt included and worthy; It made me think so much that it made me tired and some of the feelings you don't want to face it, but you can't run. It's like slam back. You feel those feelings and you deal with it. This course taught me how to deal with that in a good way, so it made me tired in a good way."

Theme: New discoveries as a result of participation in the STP with strength-based activities. Besides the experiences discussed above, the women also made new discoveries in several areas of their lives, such as forgiveness, family, and personal growth.

Sub-theme: Forgiveness and conviction. According to the findings, forgiveness was experienced as one of the most useful teachings. Participants reported that forgiveness restored relationships with God and people and had a healing effect: "*This programme gave me a chance to forgive and to be healed; I am grateful to have God in life. Forgive other in order to have peace in your heart;* "... now I have the relationship with God. Since I have started to pray, my mom came to visit me and told me that she has forgiven me, even for what I have done; Experience that forgiveness is the most important thing in our lives. You feel free. Need to forgive, no matter what; Forgiveness – forgive others – God always forgive you. Tell people that you forgive them even if they are not sorry (Mark 11:25); You need to forgive yourself before you can forgive the next person. Always forgive, even if the next person is not sorry; You cannot forgive on your own! Ask God to assist you! Believe in God's Word; God loves you. He forgives us so we also learn to forgive. When you forgive, you feel free; Forgiveness is not a feeling, but a decision and it is not for the other person, but for yourself for peace and love and healing; God love you no matter what you have done and God does

not judge you; God will get you and His presence will make you repent, because He doesn't judge you and he will straighten your path; We have learnt to be humble, caring, not to judge people; I've realised that God doesn't count our sins and he doesn't judge and that we need to learn...; Forgiveness is freeing. ”

Sub-theme: Realised that families are precious. Participants indicated that their participation in the STP helped them realise the importance of their family: “*Realised the importance of family; Realise the hurt of us and our family; Family stick with you no matter what and they don't judge you; Gratitude – I realised I have to treasure every moment and second. I listen now very careful what my husband and boys say and treasure it; The importance of the family; You think about all your sins, about how you have hurt people, how people have hurt you. The programme equipped us to think and to become strong to go out of here to our children; The importance of the family was also stressed through the lost son. ”*

Sub-theme: Experienced personal growth. The participants underwent personal development, which is reflected in the following quotes: “*This programme has taught me a lot. I did not have patience; I did not have love in my heart. Now I am always smiling, I forgive. This course taught me how to be a better person; Found peace and happiness; Experienced a sense of purpose; Doing this course in prison gave a different meaning to me – back to basics – survived is a blessing; Through time I built a wall around me to survive. I thought that I am alone and will survive alone, but during this course, that wall's bricks were taken out one by one. Bricks like unforgiveness, loneliness, sadness, ungratefulness, etc.; I realised that all the obstacles are removed and that they were heavy, like the rock that you can't push away; Learn to take responsibility for your action; I learn a lot...now I know how to deal with the situation I'm facing; It was great, because it makes you think and face what's in front of you. I have learnt you cannot talk your way out of a situation, you behaved your way into; I thought it was going to be boring, but meant a lot! It prepares me to be a better*

person when I go out; You learnt how to believe, you learn how to behave, you learn to give, you learn how to care, you have learnt how to be humble.”

Theme: Experiences of strength-based activities. As with the narratives, participants' feedback regarding the strength-based activities was overwhelmingly positive and their experiences of the strength-based activities are discussed in detail in the sub-themes below.

Sub-theme: Narratives (life stories). The women indicated that they experienced the sharing of life stories as being unique and valuable and it gave them more confidence to share. *“The narratives, sharing life stories was valuable. Previously we would not tell people our stories, but this confidentiality we felt in the group was special and that gave us confidence to share; through story telling you can understand somebody so much better. I can understand better why she acts in a certain way, why she is shy, why she is aggressive; I went through a lot in my life, but I did not like to tell somebody my story. For me, it was life if I should tell somebody my story, not only will they tell others, but they will feel sorry for me. I don't want that, because I was always on my own and survived on my own... It actually makes you feel better if you share your life story... by telling your life story, you can get help, because God send people to you to help you. That is why the story telling helped me so much; We share our life stories and as you get to know these people, you realise you are not the only person with problems; I loved the story about Lorinda and the part where she said I can lose anything on earth, but as long as I have Jesus I have not lost anything. That for me was wow; Lorinda's story touched us and shows us that there are some people who care for you. She is always praying for us every day, but we don't know her. It is a relationship in the spirit. It gives me a sense of belonging; Lorinda's story was so inspiring, motivating, encouraging – something moved in me.”*

Sub-theme: Writing a gratitude letter. The participants reported that the activity of writing a gratitude letter was both valuable and enjoyable and testified to being lighter and

happier after they had written it. They also reported finding it easier to express their feelings through written than spoken words. “*When writing the gratitude letter, it lifts a weight from my shoulders. In the letter it expresses my feelings more than the way I would actually speak. You don't realise how much your friends and family really loves you until you write the gratitude letter; Gratitude = to say it in writing that shows seriousness; My experience was with the gratitude letter. Once I have put it in writing, it meant a lot to me; Once I started the programme, I realised that I must find myself – who I am and what I want. My gratitude letter was the BEST. I take too many things for granted, BUT now I realised that I have to treasure everything. NOW I have this place in my heart where I treasure every little moment or words; the gratitude letter was outstanding. I wrote it to my husband and actually realised how much he is really doing for me.*”

Sub-theme: Mindfulness (savouring). The participants found the activity of mindfulness through the form of savouring to be a memorable, joyful learning experience. The chocolate eating was a practical way in which they could experience the value of savouring a moment. “*Savouring activity leads to experience of past memories. A lot to be grateful for; Savour every special moment – not only special, but at least one thing a day be mindful of what God gives you; When I was outside, I was so busy with life that you are not really savouring the moment; The one I felt most useful is mindfulness. It made me reflect back into my past life and the recently life that I am living; The savouring strength-based activity was very valuable. We learnt when we ate the chocolate to savour the moment, only to think about that moment. Previously you did not really savour the moment, you did not take it in; The savouring moment was the most joyful moment in this group. Memories that I haven't been thinking about in years just came popping up.*”

Sub-theme: Drama: Parable of the prodigal (lost) son. The drama carried a message of hope, love and family, but was also reported to be a fun activity with lots of laughter that

contributed to group cohesion. “*During the role play of the lost son, you get to know other inmates. You see a side of other people you don’t know. It also helps you to love yourself. You also get to know new people and gain friends as well; The prodigal son made me feel emotional. Outside I was alone, without God, and now I feel recognised and I know God now; I enjoyed and understood forgiveness when it was done through a play about the lost son. He sinned to his father, but his father did not hesitate to forgive him; Encourage ladies to spend more time on the role play for the lost son.*”

Sub-theme: Writing a letter of forgiveness. Based on what participants shared, this activity helped to free them of personal issues and was easier to write than saying it in words. “*The forgiveness letter meant a lot, because not only writing it, but reading it to the other person was a whole different thing than just saying it. It made me feel much lighter and better; Like the forgiveness letter: I asked my daughter if she will forgive me because she is a victim, not my victim, but because she is my daughter, she is a victim. So, writing the forgiveness letter telling her to please forgive me meant a lot. I wrote the letter to her and then I read the letter to her. It was completely different.*”

Sub-theme: Acts of kindness. The women shared that they have learned that you do not need to give somebody material things to be kind. Even a smile for someone who looks distressed can do wonders and makes a difference. They also reported that they experienced what it feels like to be kind. “*Sometimes you do kind things to people, but you are not aware of it; The acts of kindness was very useful. We have learnt that to show somebody that you care don’t need to be financially – a simple hug or a smile can mean a lot.*”

Sub-theme: Counting your blessings. The findings are suggestive that, through this activity, the participants really learned to appreciate even the smallest blessings. “*Count your blessings, whether big or small. Appreciate every little thing you have; Counting your blessings and the ability to apply this to others as well; We forget to count our blessings, but*

what we do we count the bad ones and we don't thank God for what He did into our lives.

What we do we blame Him, instead of praising Him for what He did into our lives.”

Sub-theme: Best possible selves. This was the last strength-based activity in the programme and although they did not have much time to practise this, the women still experienced it as motivating. “*To become your best possible self; The last strength-based activity Best Possible Self is motivating us. We are able to go wherever we want to go, we are able to do whatever we want to do...”*

Sub-theme: General experiences of activities. Some participants did not reflect on different strength-based activities, but on their general experience regarding all of them. They reportedly found them very helpful in their daily lives. “*Have learnt a lot, e.g. strength-based activities that can be used after completion of the programme; Changed my mindset with the help of strength-based activities; Hard to forgive myself – strength-based activities helped a lot. Strength-based activities were a positive experience; Strength-based activities: It was good to see all the research that was done on it and it was nice to see that it actually works; Because to me the strength-based activities are exactly of what has just happened, our day to day lives. It reflects to how we have done wrong to God and to society. For me, generally, it meant a lot; The strength-based activities also teach us what is expected from us in the community to other people and about people's feelings due to our mistakes, due to our crime; I definitely found the strength-based activities the most useful and the sharing was very helpful and uplifting; Strength-based activities, e.g. counting your blessings, gratitude and acts of kindness are fruits of the spirit the Bible teaches us about.”*

Theme: Recommendations regarding the STP with strength-based activities. The participants made several recommendations regarding the STP with strength-based activities, which are discussed in the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme: Programme. The STP with the inclusion of the eight strength-based activities is the core of this whole research study and will be discussed under continuity and time, presented to others, and facilitator characteristics.

Continuity and time are important. The participants emphasised their need for the continuity of the programme in order to learn and to grow more. They also felt that two hours a week are too little. “*Big follow-up needed urgently please...please...please...; The course must be done continuously so that inmates must not forget what they have learnt; Can we be allowed to continue to be part of the Sycamore Tree Project even on the outside, because this project taught me the importance of sharing, helping, without expecting something in return; We need to do programmes every day so that we can grow and be able to forgive ourselves and others; The programme should be done continually and not take time before the other group starts; We must extend time; My recommendation is that this course must not take time to happen, maybe after two months; We must be cleared of all other responsibilities, because if you miss a few minutes of the sessions, you miss a lot; Sometimes not enough time to implement strength-based activities; Programme too short, because two hours per session is not enough time.”*

Should also be presented to others. There was a recommendation that the programme should be presented to other people besides offenders, for example the officials, in order for them to understand the concepts of respect and no judging. The women also felt that it should be a mandatory programme. “*The programme must be done by everybody, because it is very important and very good; It should be for everyone – all inmates must attend; The course must not just be for offenders, but for our family on the outside too; Course must be for officials too, e.g. not judging people; Let offenders and officials do the course together; The course should also consider the re-offender or for people that do crime again; The whole programme must be compulsory to all offenders, because it relates to our life skills; It must*

be part of the rehabilitation programme; The programme should encourage people to come and attend, let them know the importance of it.”

Sub-theme: Facilitator must have the right characteristics. The participants placed great importance on the needed skills and characteristics of presenters or facilitators of the STP. *“The presenter or facilitator plays a major role in this whole process. Rehabilitation cannot take place without respect, love and care; Presenter showed true care and love; She showed so much love and caring – humbleness and goodness; The support, love and care we got made us to feel that we are still human. We are still loved despite the crimes we committed; The character of the person who gives the course must be loving and caring; The facilitator show us so many things. She don’t judge us and love us for who we are. How to be women, accepted and we are not dust on the floor – this means so much for me; The facilitator teach me to be humble, strong and show how to be in life; She taught us responsibility as adults.”*

Discussion

This section provides a discussion of the results and integrates relevant literature in this regard.

Sycamore Tree Project Sessions

The results strongly suggest that the respective sessions of the STP were meaningful and informative for participants. All of the participants reported experiencing the STP positively as a life-changing and learning experience. The findings indicate that the STP contributed to the women’s understanding of the impact of their crimes. Resch (2014) describes advantages of offenders taking part in the STP as social advantages, inner healing and taking responsibility for their actions since the STP often encourages offenders to ponder on the sessions and to think seriously about them. A quantitative study done by Feasy and Williams (2009) on the STP through the implementation of an analysis of Crime Pics 11 with a pre-test

and post-test, showed statistically significant positive changes in attitudes across the entire sample of 5007 participants (13% being women).

The findings do, however, highlight an emphasis on the story of Zaccheus in the Sycamore tree and the session about forgiveness and suggest that the participants found these sessions especially meaningful. Van Tongeren, Green, Hook, Davis, Davis, and Ramos (2015) points out that forgiveness can be related to greater meaning in life. The healing of individuals and relationships are made possible through forgiveness and offender accountability (Zehr & Gohar, 2003).

Strength-Based Activities

In this study, the STP was adapted to include a variety of strength-based activities. The findings strongly suggest that the utilisation of strength-based activities in this context played a valuable role since participants clearly emphasised their positive experience of these activities. It is important to note, however, that their positive experience is based on the inclusion of strength-based activities in the STP and not on the strength-based activities alone. No research on the implementation of strength-based activities in correctional centres or prisons could be found. Research on strength-based approaches by Hunter et al. (2015) indicated that strength-based activities have the potential to contribute to offenders' ability to change. Resch (2014) refers to a quote from a serial robber in his research:

My victim was a child and when I went to rob, there was this boy, who looked at me, he did not cry, but those eyes looked scared. For four years I have seen those eyes in front of me, they have always tormented me all night. (p. 25)

The prisoner therefore decided to write forgiveness letter to the child, which was described as being freeing and healing. This is supportive of the meaningful and positive experiences that prisoners can have of strength-based activities, such as the forgiveness letter.

In this study, the findings indicate that all of the strength-based activities were experienced positively by the participants and have the potential to contribute to positive change. A study done by Gander et al. (2012) confirmed that well-being can be enhanced and depressive symptoms lessened through a variety of strength-based activities. This statement is also supported by research done by Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009). The strength-based activities are similar in some aspects in that they are brief, can be self-administered, are non-stigmatizing and they can promote positive feelings, thoughts and behaviour (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2012; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004). Offenders can benefit from it on a daily basis, while contributing to their well-being. The results supported the following studies. Longstanding patterns of thought and behaviour can be changed and maladaptive core beliefs can be identified (Huta & Hawley, 2010). Strengths encourage moral behaviour, the savouring of positive life experiences, boost self-worth and self-esteem, deter anger and bitterness, and contribute to eudaimonic adaptation (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013).

On the other hand, Resch (2014) found that offenders who sign up for the STP, can face a variety of fears (e.g. fear of storytelling) as a result of the contents of the STP. The results of this study showed the opposite. The narrative (sharing life stories) was clearly indicated by the participants as one of the activities they experienced as especially meaningful and positive. The goal is to create an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust. In this study, the findings also point to the value of the facilitator first sharing a part of her life story (Lorinda's story), as this helped to establish trust and was experienced positively by the participants. Sharing of life stories should also not be compulsory and only the participants that willingly want to share should share their stories.

Experiences of Participants

Regarding the women's participation in the STP with strength-based activities, four experiences are emphasised in the findings, including spiritual experiences, group participation and sharing, learning experiences and emotional experiences.

Spiritual experiences. There is evidence of many experiences of spiritual transformation in prisons through the years. The findings of this study confirm that faith-based programmes - such as the STP - can lead prisoners to have spiritual experiences, although there were no dramatic conversion experiences reported in this group of participants. According to Johnson (2011), most religious conversions in prison are not dramatic, but rather tend to take place over time. He stresses the importance of these religious experiences and describes them as turning points which allow offenders to build a new foundation. He goes on to explain that one cannot assume that religious conversions in prison are meaningless, since they could build a bridge to other faith-motivated individuals and dramatically change a person's behaviour. Watts (2016) describes it as a state of permanent visibility and observation in which a prisoner's spiritual nature is tested.

Group dynamics and sharing. According to the results, group work in this context was extremely useful. Trust and confidentiality seem to be the most important factors that contributed to the success of group participation and sharing in this research group. The signing of a confidentiality agreement may also have contributed to this. Bible (2011) states that incarcerated women have many reasons why it may not be safe for them to disclose information and, as a result, it is common for women in prison not to know the details of other incarcerated women, despite sincere friendships. In light of this, it is important that the participants voluntarily share only what they are willing to share.

Positive emotions and understanding emotions. The results showed that participants became aware of their own emotions, which is powerful. According to Layous and Lyubomirsky (2012) the end goal of strength-based activities is not to eliminate negative

emotions, but to assist individuals in their emotional maintenance. When experiencing a negative emotion, an individual can recall a strength-based activity to cope with this emotion. Seligman and Steen (2005) reported on the empirical validation of strength-based activities and the fact that participants tended to be less depressed and happier after doing an activity for one week.

Emotional literacy can help prisoners to see incarceration not as a meaningless and frustrating time, but as an opportunity to transform their lives (Silva & Hartney, 2012). McLaughlin (n.d.), a Prison Fellowship volunteer, explains that female offenders do share emotions and thoughts more willingly than male offenders. Casarjian and Casarjian (2010) explain that if a prisoner can let go of his or her primary identification and find his or her true self, he or she can let go of fear and negative emotions and can choose to respond differently by still experiencing emotions, but not be overwhelmed by them.

New Discoveries of Participants

The results revealed new insights regarding the following, namely forgiveness and conviction and personal growth and change.

Forgiveness and conviction. The results indicate positive insights regarding these two concepts. It is important for offenders to feel that there is no judgment and to understand the full meaning of forgiveness. McMenamin (2012), who has ministered to women for nearly three decades, stresses the main reason why it is difficult to forgive - we don't completely understand the full meaning of forgiveness. In this study, the STP sessions and the writing of the forgiveness letter provided a platform for offenders to fully understand the concept of forgiveness. True forgiveness has the potential to release you from your self-made prison. It is essential to first forgive yourself and then forgive others before you can truly accept God's forgiveness. An interview with Casarjian and Casarjian (2010) revealed that self-forgiveness should never take a righteous attitude, but should be equated with feelings of remorse and

regret for pain caused. Before prisoners can get to this point, however, they need to do a lot of work on self-awareness - total confrontation and soul-searching can lead to inner healing and change. These principles are all supported by the STP.

Discovering personal growth and change. The findings indicate the personal growth that the participants experienced. Ruth and Vescovelli (as cited in Psychlopedia, n.d.) indicate that strengths such as forgiveness, gratitude and kindness can foster post- traumatic growth. They contribute to social change because individuals experience support and they are also found to strengthen relationships. According to McNeill, Batchelor, Burnett, and Knox (2005), there are different factors that contribute to offenders' personal growth and change in order not to re-offend, e.g. complex personal resources, therapeutic relationships, offender's belief, and a programme or intervention. A study done by Amuche and Mayange (2013) reveals the importance of offenders' self-esteem and personal development and stresses the fact that counsellors and prison officials should be aware of this fact. A prisoner cannot develop a good self-esteem if not handled with respect, love, care and dignity. Prisoners need to be handled with respect by counsellors, spiritual care workers, prison officials and prison staff in order to regain their dignity. Together with forgiveness, this can be a new beginning towards change and rehabilitation.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore and describe South African female prisoners' experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities. The findings show that the participants experienced the STP with strength-based activities as positive, without exception. The results provide evidence of experiences of new hope, meaning, change and growth. Many of the women reflected on barriers that had been lifted from their shoulders. New and healthy relationships were formed and, as a result, the potential exists that the women may continue to assist and support one another in a positive manner.

The results strongly suggest that the STP and strength-based activities complement each other. While the STP sessions include learning processes, the strength-based activities consist of life skills (tools) which can be used in everyday life. The strength-based activities were clearly emphasised in the results and the participants placed a great deal of importance on their positive experiences in partaking in the strength-based activities.

Another aspect that was emphasised in the results is that of forgiveness, a key factor in the process of rehabilitation. Forgiveness is like a golden thread that must be visible from the first to the last session. Without forgiveness, rehabilitation cannot take place, because if a person has anger or refuses to forgive, there is no possibility of inner healing or change. The STP sessions are a learning process in this regard, supported by the life skills of the strength-based activities which take place through sharing and discussions. Trust, self-esteem, respect and dignity should be present in the process in order for offenders to be able to forgive themselves and others. If offenders take responsibility for what had happened, it can potentially result in restoration, inner healing and change which may lead to their successful rehabilitation. Based on the findings and the discussion above, a schematic representation of forgiveness and rehabilitation regarding the STP was developed, illustrating the importance of forgiveness in the rehabilitation process (see Figure 3).

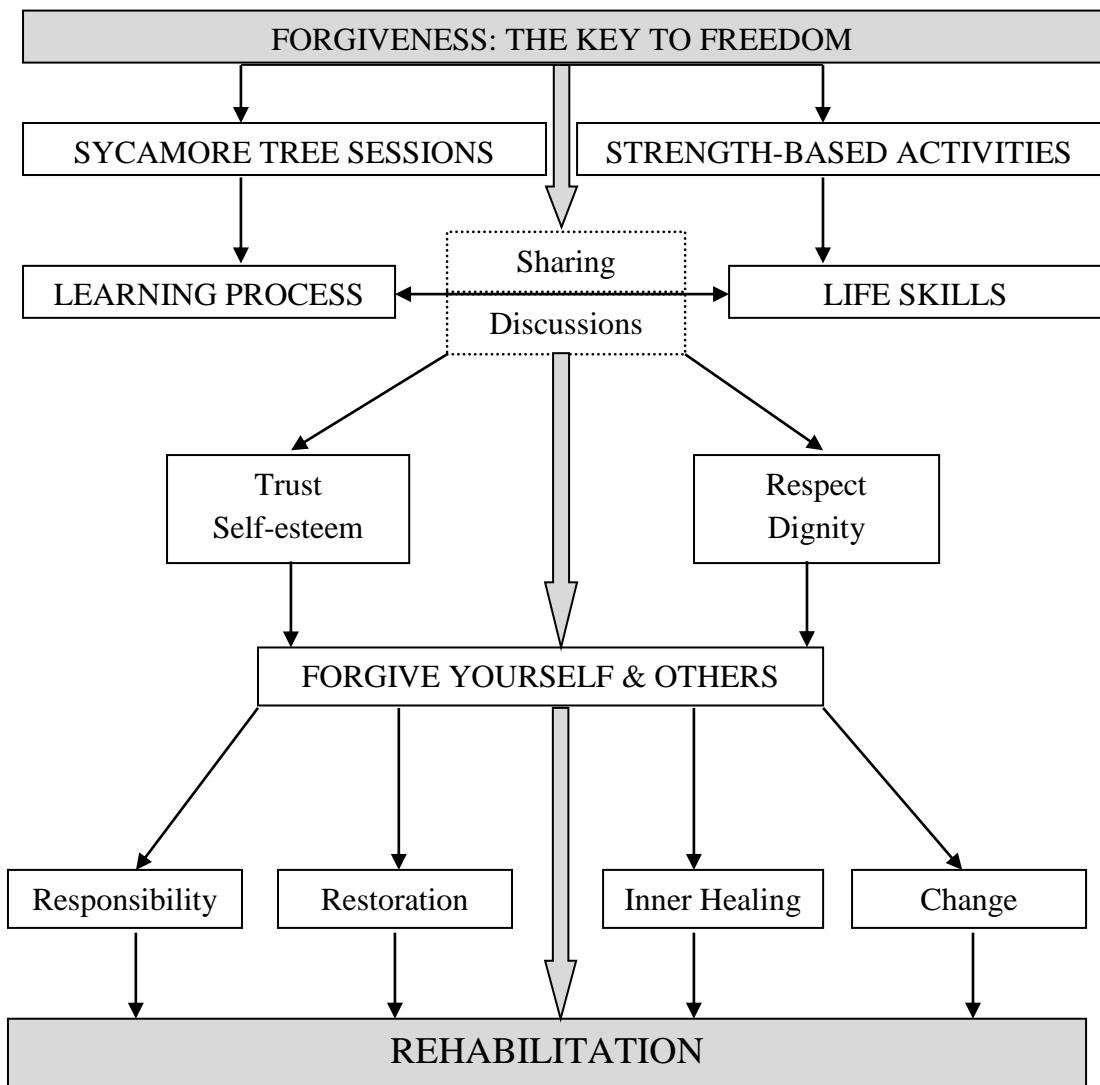


Figure 3. STP schematic representation of forgiveness and rehabilitation

Limitations and Recommendations

The strength-based activities included in this study could not be directly measured against every individual's person-activity fit diagnostic as it was conducted in a group setting. According to Lyubomirsky (2007), a person-activity fit diagnostic measures the activities against strengths, weaknesses, needs and lifestyle which will differ from individual to individual. It could be that not everybody found the different activities useful or effective to the same degree, because certain types of people will benefit from certain types of activities (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004).

For the purpose of this research, the group consisted of 20 women who participated in the STP of which 19 participated in the data collection. Ideally, there should not be more than a maximum of 12 participants at a time. The discussions and sharing form a very important part of the project and there is not enough time for everybody to participate sufficiently if the group is too large.

The facilitator of the STP should be well trained in presenting this project and should have a clear understanding of the strength-based activities. There are shortages of facilitators and only a small number of the inmates can participate within a certain period. If interested DCS members could be trained to also work as facilitators of the STP, more inmates can benefit from doing the programme. It is also advisable that the programme should run continuously with more than one group.

As a rule, offenders are not allowed to do the STP more than once. It is, however, advisable that prisoners with long sentences have the option to repeat the STP (ideally every second year) as a refresher. Another possibility is to develop an adapted version of the STP that acts as a refresher course only. A follow-up programme after the STP is recommended, such as the Prisoners' Journey, another programme written and supported by Prison Fellowship and which is already being evaluated for approval by the Correctional Centre where this research has been done. Based on participants' recommendations, it may be valuable to include offenders' family members in the programme in some manner (e.g. attending a particular session once a month or initially inviting them to one particular session), if they are willing to participate. It may also prove useful to present the programme to prison officials.

The findings of this study provide insight into the experiences of female prisoners with regard to the STP with strength-based activities in a specific context. It could be valuable to do research in other contexts, including other female and male prisons in South Africa, which

can provide a broader perspective. Longitudinal research on the experiences of the STP is recommended as it can contribute to an improved understanding of the long-term experiences of participants. Quasi-experimental studies with a control and experimental group and pre-and post-tests could also prove valuable in measuring the effects of participation in the STP and the STP with strength-based activities.

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Section 3

Conclusions



“As I walked out the door towards the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.”

- Nelson Mandela

SECTION 3

CONCLUSIONS

In this section a discussion follows with regard to literature conclusions, empirical conclusions and a personal reflection.

Literature Conclusions

Although there is a good deal of literature available on prisons worldwide, literature and research on female prisoners are limited and no sources (either international or national) could be found on spiritual care programmes such as the STP with the inclusion of strength-based activities. The available literature focuses mainly on the formulation of rules and policies for women offenders and the types of offences (e.g. violent or non-violent, etc.) of women offenders. In 2013, the Correctional Services Minister stressed the fact that the oppression of women hinders national prosperity and should not be allowed. Results of previous research indicated that poor quality of life in prisons can have a negative impact on inmates' well-being. Haney (2006) states that it is not imprisonment in itself that damages individuals, but a lack of effective programming with supportive and empowering treatment. This was confirmed by the Department of Correctional Services (2015), which revealed that offenders need restorative justice programmes that can support and empower them emotionally, mentally and spiritually to cope with all the challenges they face in prison and also after imprisonment in order to adapt successfully to the outside world.

Although previous studies respectively reported positively on either the implementation of the STP in prison contexts or the use of strength-based activities in prison contexts, the existing literature indicated a gap in effectively rehabilitating offenders regarding restorative justice programmes such as the STP with the inclusion of strength-based activities in this regard. The findings of this study reveal many essential themes such as forgiveness, personal growth, change and spirituality, which are all supported by available literature. In some

instances, however, the findings were in contrast to available literature. Group participation, for example, was beneficial for all the participants in this study and was classified as an important theme; a finding which available literature mostly does not support due to the fact that only partial confidentiality can be ensured in groups, especially in prison communities.

Empirical Conclusions

The explorative and descriptive qualitative research design that was applied in this study proved to be appropriate and useful, since limited previous research has been conducted on the topic under exploration. The use of a voluntary purposive sampling technique was also found to be fitting for the following reasons: Recruitment could be done using an inmate who is not in a power relationship; the sample comprised participants from different races and ages; participants willingly agreed to participate and only one of the twenty initially chosen participants withdrew before the end of the study due to choir activities and a choir competition. The combination of data collection techniques, namely narratives and the world café method was found to be highly valuable in that the techniques provided rich, in-depth data from both an individual and a group perspective. The method of analysis - thematic analysis - allowed the researcher to organise and make sense of the data. The use of an independent, experienced co-coder further contributed to the trustworthiness of the data analysis. The study's findings are meaningful in that they provide valuable insight into female prisoners' experiences of the STP with strength-based activities.

Personal Reflection

About 18 months ago I walked through a big, heavy steel door that would change my life. With the sound of keys unlocking gates, I entered the women's Correctional Centre as a visitor for the first time. While sitting in a circle between women that are known as prisoners/offenders/inmates, I experienced something so unique that words cannot describe it.

I knew then that I would not be able to exit through that door into the sunlight again, ignoring the existence of these women or forgetting what I have experienced.

While I was there, I saw unique and beautifully created women: daughters, mothers, wives, and care takers, removed from society and locked away because of some or other crime they had committed. Although they have been found guilty of their crimes, they still need love, inspiration, acceptance and spiritual care. In light of this realisation, I decided to do my training in the Sycamore Tree Project and became a facilitator. This was the beginning of a life-changing journey with groups of women in the above mentioned Correctional Centre during May 2015.

I am grateful for the privilege to have been able to conduct this research. While analysing the narratives and world café data, it felt as if I was standing on the outside, looking into the hearts and minds of women that long for love, sharing, care, respect and dignity. The words written by one of the offenders: “*She (presenter of STP) made me realize that I am a woman,*” touched me in a special way, because they are women with special needs, emotions and are differently created than men. Another participant wrote: “*Finding myself – who I am and where I’m going.*” These women need to go back to their societies and families when they are released. They need programmes and support systems that can bring about change, build their self-esteem and give them a new vision for the future. Then only can we say that this person has been rehabilitated and that there is a strong likelihood that she will not re-offend. Without respect and dignity, it is hard to achieve this or to build a new future.

I sensed the participation and enthusiasm in the group as being special, but as with the previous STP groups, I never realised how vast the impact of this programme and the strength-based activities really is. One of the participants shared: “*What I found the most interesting part of the Sycamore Tree Project, was the combination of the sessions, the strength-based activities and the relation to religion – it is all integrated*”. The STP and

strength-based activities seem to complement each other and, together, form a strong basis for change, psychological health and spiritual growth.

One of the strength-based activities, for example, focused on mindfulness in the form of savouring. During data collection, one of the participants shared the following:

“They came to visit me on my son’s birthday. My son, 9 years old, was sitting next to me and I was talking to my daughter of 14 years old. My son was moving closer and closer to me and was almost sitting on top of me. I took him and put him on my lap while still talking to my daughter. He was not saying a word, just keeping quiet, and I felt his hand going slowly down my back and I thought okay that is fine, but I did not realize what he was doing. Then he was putting his nose into my neck, taking in my scent and smelling me and then it hit me what he was busy doing... he was savouring that moment. I don’t know why, but it really hit me. Here he is sitting and just wanting to smell me, savouring the moment. God used my son to show me that a 9-year old can savour a moment like that so special.”

During data collection, so many women reported on the value of the strength-based activities and described it as life skills which they can use in everyday life. While reading the narratives and outputs of the world café, I could hear the need for more STPs with strength-based activities. During this process, I have seen women participating and sharing to such an extent that they did not want to end the two hour sessions. They were like sponges absorbing all they could; talking, discussing, questioning, and asking. I sensed their sincere contributions. I saw them change, session after session, little by little.

In doing this study, I have learned a great deal about the value of research. I realised the potential of qualitative research to give participants a voice and to allow others to have an in-depth understanding of participants’ experiences. I became aware of the important role that the researcher fulfils in qualitative research. I also learned much regarding the importance of

ethical research (especially in a prison context), the research process, and the challenges that one can face in doing research (e.g. time management, emotional exhaustion and fatigue), and how to deal effectively with these challenges.

To conclude, it is my sincere hope that this study highlights the fact that offenders should not be devalued as human beings; their well-being is important and should be viewed as such by society at large; and finally, programmes such as the STP with strength-based activities can play a valuable role in this regard.

Addendum A: Session Guide



Session Guide

(Research Version: Changed and adapted for this study by M E Fourie
with permission from Prison Fellowship)

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Third Edition

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Opening Session

Getting new group together and share general information and guidelines for participating in STP, before starting with the actual sessions 1 - 8

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Pens
4. Participant's Workbooks

START OPENING SESSION WITH:

- **Get names and prison numbers of participants.**
- **Have participants and facilitators introduce themselves (name, where they stayed before they were imprisoned, home country, children etc.).**
- **Explain duties of a class captain e.g. putting chairs in a circle, having G249 attendance register signed, name tags, etc.**
- **Select a class captain.**

1. Explain Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice	Non-Restorative Justice
Crime causes harm.	Crime is law-breaking.
Offender accountability means taking steps towards repairing that harm.	Offender accountability means accepting the infliction of harm.
The people most affected by the crime should be able to participate in its resolution.	The two important parties are the government and the defendant.
Crime violates people and relationships.	Crime violates the state, its laws and community.
Justice aims to encourage offenders to take responsibility so that things can be made right.	Justice aims to increase governmental order.
Focus on healing of individuals, victims and offenders.	Focus on one side wins and the other loses.

2. Victims and Offenders

Short Presentation: Who are victims and offenders?

Define the terms “victims” and “offenders” saying something like:

When we hear the words victim and offender we naturally think about people who have been caught up in crime. The offender is the one who has committed a crime; the victim is the person who suffered as a result. There is a broader definition, however, in which we can all find ourselves in both categories. We all have wronged other people and in that sense we are all offenders. We have also experienced the harm done to us by others and in that sense we are victims. During the course we will invite victims to consider certain questions, or offenders to address various matters. When this happens, feel free to use either the narrow or broad definition so that you can participate comfortably.

3. Explain Prison Fellowship initiated by Charles Colson

The founder, Charles W. Colson, was a former minister of the America President, Nixon. He was described as Nixon’s hit man, the evil genius of an evil administration and was involved in the Watergate Scandal. As Colson was facing arrest, a friend gave him a copy of Mere Christianity written by C S Lewis. Through reading this book, he became a born again Christian and joined a prayer group. He found himself torn between his desire to be truthful and his desire to avoid conviction. After praying about this with his fellowship group, he approached his lawyers and pleaded guilty. He entered the Maxwell Correctional Prison on 9 July 1974 and was released on 31 January 1975 by the sentencing judge, due to family problems.

During his time in prison he had become aware of injustices done to prisoners and rehabilitation shortcomings. He became convinced that he had to develop a ministry for reaching inmates in prison and felt a calling to make a difference in the prison community. He associated with some of the most influential people in the world, but while speaking at a prison event, he reflected:

“But all at once I realised that it was not my success God had used to enable me to help those in this prison, or in hundreds of others just like it. My life of success was not what made this morning so glorious--all my achievements meant nothing in God’s economy. No, the real legacy of my life was my biggest failure--that I was an ex-convict. My greatest humiliation--being sent to prison--was the beginning of God’s greatest use of my life; He chose the one thing which I could not glory for His glory”.

Sycamore Tree Project (STP) was developed by Prison Fellowship International (PFI) and an international design team made up of PF national ministries representatives. PF national ministries in every continent have used this programme with male, female and juvenile prisoners. STP was developed by Prison Fellowship in Washington DC, U.S.A. during 1976. Prison Fellowship is a global faith-based association that currently works in more than 127 countries and more than 140 national prison fellowship organizations.

4. Sycamore Tree Project (STP)

STP was designed as a restorative justice programme, but it is based on stories and ideas from the Bible. Participants do not have to be Christians to join or complete the programme.

Sycamore Tree Story: Explain that we will share the story of the Sycamore Tree in the first session: Ask a volunteer to read the Sycamore Tree story in the first session on p. 43 in Participant's Workbook:

5. Go through Sycamore Tree sessions on p. 41 in Participant Workbook

Ses-sion	Existing STP continues as previously	Strength-Based Act.to be included in STP
1	Introduction to STP: Prepares offenders to participate in the Sycamore Tree Project.	Narratives: Sharing life stories
2	What is crime?: Explores a restorative understanding of crime.	Writing a gratitude letter
3	Responsibility: Explores what it means to take responsibility after an offense.	Mindfulness: Savouring
4	Confession & repentance: Understanding the meaning, power, and importance of confession and repentance.	Drama: Parable of the prodigal son
5	Forgiveness: Understanding the meaning, power, and importance of forgiveness.	Writing a letter of forgiveness
6	Making amends: Understanding making amends as a response to crime.	Acts of kindness
7	Toward reconciliation: Understanding how to begin moving toward healing, restoration and reconciliation.	Counting your blessings
8	Celebration & testimonies: Reflecting on and celebrating what has been learned about crime and healing.	Best possible selves

As the participants look over the topics, say the following in your own words:

We will be exploring issues of crime and its impact on offenders, victims, and communities. This will involve both learning (seen in sessions 1 to 6) and action (seen in sessions 7 and 8). Issues discussed on the programme are sensitive and strong emotions can occur. It is important and okay to express emotions: anger, fear, laughter, sadness and crying. We will use different learning methods: discussion in the full group and in small groups, exercises, homework in your workbook between sessions and so forth. We will have the opportunity to put what we are learning into action as well. We will write letters and will have the opportunity to offer symbolic restitution. The last session we will join in celebration.

6. Heart Chair

This chair has a cover with the words engraved “heart chair”. When somebody wants to share something from the heart (something personal) they can sit on this special chair. This helps us to get up, out of our comfort zone and to share with others.

7. Standards of Conduct

Go through standards of conduct on p. 42 (Say that these are standards that have been used in previous STP's, and ask if they are willing to use them as well. You can invite them to make suggestions and/or propose additions or deletions.)

Introduce Standards of Conduct [*Have the participants turn to page 42 in Participant Workbook*]

Basic Standards of Conduct

1. Attend all sessions.
2. Be on time for all sessions.
3. Take part in discussions and activities.
4. Listen to each other.
5. Do not interrupt when someone is talking.
6. Show respect for each other.
7. Keep shared information private and confidential.
8. Tell the truth at all times.
9. Generally, stay on the subjects being discussed.
10. Allow the leader to lead.
11. Express concerns and suggestions to the leader.
12. Take part in the act of restitution.
13. Be part of the celebration event.
14. Ask questions when you do not understand something

8. Attendance Certificates

Explain Attendance Certificates: 100 % = gold, 80 – 99 % = Silver, under 80% = red. 100 % attendance will receive an extra small gift. Attending every session is crucially important. By missing one session, participants will be losing a lot of very important information and teachings.

9. Closing

Motivate everybody to be back for the 1st session the following week.

Session 1: Introduction to STP

Preparing offenders to participate in STP

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List

3. Rest of stationary for participants if any
4. Name Tags
5. Heart Chair Cover
6. Visual Representation of God's Will and God's Control
7. Life Story Photo Album if any
8. Typed information about strength-based activity: Story telling (Narratives)

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Narratives

START SESSION 1 WITH:

- **Hand out folders (not compulsory) with stationary and notebooks.**
- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Hand out name tags.**
- **Welcome participants if possible on their names.**
- **Tell participants to write their names on books and to check that they have everything inside their folders e.g. list of stationary.**
- **Ask if everything so far is clear to everybody.**

Detailed Curriculum

1. Opening Activity

You have to make arrangements for participants who are illiterate by asking them to team up with someone who is not so that they can work on the questions together. Everyone, however, should do the exercises themselves.

Make sure that everyone has a participant workbook and note book and make the following points:

- Bring these books with you to every session, because it has important material we will refer to during the sessions.
- During the time between sessions, there will be exercises to help you reflect on what we discussed in the previous session and to prepare you for the next session.
- Complete the exercises in the participant workbook or in your notebook.

Use the ice-breaker **The Name Game** to help people begin talking and help them learn each other's' names. Start with yourself and go around the clock.

Directions:

- Participants take turns telling their first names and a food they like.
- The group repeats all the names and foods given before the next person takes his turn.
- Continue until everyone has had a turn.

Example: Ashley: I am Ashley and I like apples. Everyone: Ashley likes apples.

Ruth: I am Ruth and I like rice. Everyone: Ashley likes apples. Ruth likes rice.
Or else after everybody had a turn: The person repeats her name e.g. I am Ashley and the group adds Ashley likes apples. (This will be a bit easier.)

Close by putting the following script in your own words:

Everyone has a name. Everyone has likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, joys and sorrows. Sometimes we can forget this, and instead define people by their status, like ‘victim’ or ‘offender’. In this session, we will look at a story in which Jesus was able to help people see beyond their stereotypes and respond to each other as human beings.

2. Narratives (Strength-based activity)

Research: Many studies confirm that people construct stories in order to gain insight into setbacks and suffering that they have experienced (McAdams, 2008). Angus and Greenberg (2011), Duvall and Béres (2011), Gottschall (2013), and Hicks, Turner, and Stratton (2013) confirm the importance of storytelling. Most people are motivated to interpret their own experiences in terms of a meaningful life story. Narrative storytelling has been found to contribute to logical thoughts by combining words and sentences into meaningful language (Masicampo & Baumeister, 2011). Research done by Duvall and Béres (2011) on narrative therapy in group settings, confirmed the success of these practices, even with offenders of family abuse. The questions and events that fill our lives have meaning within narratives and are the framework that gives meaning to our lives (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2006). By becoming authors of our own stories, reflecting on our past and dreaming about a future with possibilities, a selfhood may be reproduced (Angus & Greenberg, 2011). Medical journals stress that the writing of narratives and taking authorship of your story can no longer be seen as science but as a necessary ingredient of health and inner healing. Some researchers state that it can have more benefits than prescribed medication and refer to it as narrative-medicine (Harter, Japp, & Beck, 2005; Rawlins, 2005).

General: Explain that one of the main goals of the Project is to understand how others feel about the situations they have faced; and that it will therefore help to start by ‘getting into the shoes’ of the people in the Sycamore Tree story.

Everyone’s life is a story. In this story we can recall happy times and sad times, comforting times and lonely times. All human being are confronted with questions such as: What is the purpose of my life? How can I find meaning in life in spite of difficult and challenging circumstances? Why should I strive to survive when life is full of suffering? Most people are motivated to interpret their own experiences in terms of a meaningful life story. Storytelling (narratives) is indeed an important vehicle for self-understanding and finding meaning in life. Meaning is central to human activities and well-being. Life has no meaning unless one is able to construct an existentially meaningful life story. Storytelling will help with constructs such as forgiveness and gratitude and the more these constructs become part of your life story, the more it will become part of your life and strive to find meaning in your own life. Past and present relationships are an undeniable thread throughout human storytelling. Forgiveness and gratitude are two essential ingredients for good relationships. Without that we cannot have good relationships and without good relationships we cannot experience the blessing and fulfilment of meaning and well-being.

Activity: Before we share the story of the Sycamore Tree, we are going to share true life stories.

Say something like: Can I share a true life story with you. Share a part of your own story.

We are going to close our eyes for a few minutes and we must all think about something (a story in our lives) which made us very happy and where we felt companionship. After this activity, those who are willing are going to get a chance to sit in the heart chair and share their story.

Share stories

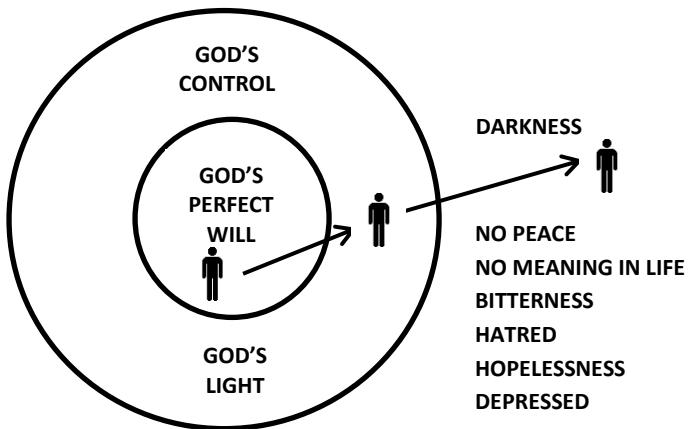
We are now going to close our eyes again for a few minutes and think about something (a story in our lives) which made us very sad and where we felt lonely. After this activity, those who are willing are going to get a chance to sit in the heart chair and share their story. Share stories!

3. God's will and God's control

Explain why bad things happen to us and explain God's will and God's control. Let them draw this image in their notebooks or give copies of this image.

Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him."



If we argue with God and blame Him for things that happened in our lives, and do not subordinate ourselves under His control, we may lose our faith and trust in Him. We can become twisted in a faith struggle. This is Satan's plan!

Life is happening and bad things are happening daily that is not God's will, because we are on an earth which is imperfect. Only heaven will be perfect with perfect love and peace. In every person's life things happen in which we have no control or choice and others in which we make the wrong choice that throws us out of God's perfect will for us. There are no or very few people whose lives will always be perfect according to God's will, due to many circumstances and things that is happening. WHAT NOW? If we submit to Him and ask Him to take control of our lives, He is willing and trustworthy and will listen to our cry. If we reject God we choose not to be under His control and will put ourselves outside His control - we will be in darkness, with the forces of darkness controlling our lives.

4. The Sycamore Tree Story

Explain the culture and times in which Jesus and Zacchaeus lived:

The **story of Jesus, Zacchaeus and the people of Jericho may be familiar** to some of the participants. Even if it is familiar, there is some background information that you might want to offer so they understand the significance of the story:

At the time of the story, Judea was under Roman rule. They were viewed by the Jewish people as invaders, foreign occupiers, and oppressors. The Roman custom in occupied territories was to enlist local people to collect taxes for them. Those people, being from the area, knew much more about who were wealthy and who were not. The Romans gave the tax collectors an assessment, and they were to collect that from the people. If they collected more they could keep the balance.

Tax collectors were hated by their fellow citizens for several reasons. First, they were traitors, helping the occupying power to raise money to support its presence. Second, they had the power of Rome to rely on when they collected taxes; if someone did not pay Roman soldiers could back up the tax collector. Third, they charged more than they needed and as a result became rich.

Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector, which means he had other people working for him. So he would have been especially despised. When Zacchaeus promised to pay four times what he had taken from people, he was thinking back to the Jewish law which said that if someone stole a sheep, for example, they needed to pay back four sheep. In other words, this was both a confession that he had stolen from people as well as a promise to make things right. (His promise to give half his goods to the poor was not part of the law, however.)

Ask a volunteer to read Luke 19:1-10 [*on page 43 in Participant Workbook*]

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner.’” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

Discussion 1

- What was Zacchaeus’ attitude towards the community and his victims before he met Jesus?

Discussion 2

- Why did he want to see Jesus?
- What did he think when Jesus stopped, talked to him, and said He was going to his house?
- What did he think when he heard what the crowd said about him?
- Why did he offer to pay back more than he stole?

Discussion 3

- How had Zacchaeus hurt his victims?
- When you hear Zacchaeus admit his guilt, what do you think and feel?
- What do you think about Zacchaeus paying them back four times what he had stolen?
- What will you think if Zacchaeus continues to do the same after he pays restitution?
- Do you feel differently about him now that he has met Jesus? Why or why not?

Discussion 4

- What can we learn about offenders in this story?

- What can we learn about victims?
- What did this story say to you and your situation?

5. Closing

Tell participants that next week the discussion will be on the topic: What Is Crime?
 The strength-based activity: Gratitude Letter
 Remind them to complete the exercises in Assignment 1 of the Participant Workbook on p. 2 & 3

Session 2: What Is Crime?

Exploring a restorative understanding of crime

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Pictures cut in half for ice-breaker
4. Scripture for discussion 1 with lines to reflect: (1 scripture)
5. Scriptures for discussion 4 and 5 (6 scriptures)
6. Typed questions for ice-breaker: The Interview
7. Strength-based activity: Gratitude (typed to hand out)

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Gratitude Letter

START SESSION 2 WITH:

- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Welcome participants if possible on their names.**

Detailed Curriculum

1. Opening Activity

Use the ice-breaker **The Interview** to help people begin talking and learn something about each other.

Directions: Hand out pictures e.g. flowers that are cut in half. Each person must look for her partner with the other half of the picture she has. It is a good idea to hand out the questions they need to ask. Participants meet in pairs and take a few minutes to ask each other the following questions:

- What is your name?

- Where were you born?
- What is your favourite hobby or sport?
- If you had a million dollars, what is one thing you would do with the money?

When they have completed the interviews, ask the group to reassemble and invite them to take turns briefly introducing to the group the person they interviewed.

Close by putting the following script in your own words:

You found out information about the person you interviewed by asking questions and then listening. Questions are important. In this session, we will explore a question that touches each of us: What is Crime? Before we get to that we are first going to review our last session.

2. Review Session 1 about narratives and the story of the Sycamore Tree

Alternative 1: Ask group what stands out for them from what happened last session. OR

Alternative 2: Ask questions about specific parts of Session 1: They should write the answers in their books. The typed questions could also be given to them.

- What was Zacchaeus' job?
- Why didn't his fellow citizens like him?
- What happened when Jesus came through the town?
- How did this change Zacchaeus?

3. Reflect again about restorative justice

Discussion 1:John 10:10

John 10:10 typed and handed out: "A thief comes to steal and kill and destroy. But I came to give life — life in all its fullness."

Open a discussion with the following question:

What are the kinds of loss, death and destruction which crime brings? [loss of a sense of safety; loss of trust; fear of going out of the house; loss of memories if something sentimental was taken; loss of joy; depression; hurt; stress on relationships or broken relationships etc.]

Read: The story of Philemon and Onesimus

Background information: The book of Philemon is a letter that directly addresses the needs of victims and offenders. Written by St. Paul, the letter is his attempt to reconcile a victim (Philemon) and an offender (Onesimus).

Philemon was a wealthy businessman, the leader of the church in Colosse, a friend of Paul and the former owner of a slave named Onesimus. Onesimus, his slave, is thought to have stolen something, fled, and been captured. He met Paul in a prison in Rome. Eventually Onesimus is released, and while Paul would rather have him stay in Rome and help him, he doesn't want to do that without Philemon's permission.

Fiction: The story we are about to read is fiction (made-up), but is based on the second story which is in the Bible. What really happened might have been different, but Bible scholars believe that Onesimus had stolen something from Philemon and ran away. Under Roman law, if Philemon caught Onesimus, who was a slave, he could punish him any way he wanted, including executing him. Pretend that Philemon will meet with your group to explain how he was feeling about all this.

We imagine he might start out something like this:

Have participants turn to page 4 in the Participant Workbook. (This is fiction – what might have happened based on the story in the Bible.)

Ask a volunteer to read the story.

My name is Philemon [Fill-a-mon]. I am a businessman living in Colosse (Colahsee). I do all right, but you know how business is. One day things are going well. The next you wonder if you will make it. But overall I've been pretty successful.

A couple of years ago I met this man from Jerusalem. His name is Paul. He's a missionary who has done a lot of travelling to tell people about Jesus. For a while I wondered about him. He has such a strange story about his two completely different lives.

First he spent all his time and energy harassing, arresting and even killing followers of Jesus. Then he switched completely, and he now works just as hard getting other people to become Jesus' followers. I started attending the little church in Colosse he helped set up. The more I heard, the more I felt that what he said was true. So I decided to follow Jesus, too. To became a Christian. Then I found out why Paul had changed so much. Everything changes when Jesus is part of your life! It was pretty amazing. When Paul had to move on, I told him to be sure to stay with me any time he was in Colosse. Occasionally we would get letters from him. But now it was our job to tell our friends and neighbours about Jesus.

Things went pretty well. Being a Christian changed how I did business. I tried to be very fair with my customers. And I treated my workers better. In fact, I tried to do what Jesus said. To love them in the same way I loved myself. Some of them really seemed to respond well to that. They took a lot of interest in their jobs, and they developed new skills as I gave them more responsibility. One of them was named Onesimus [Oh-ness-ih-mus]. He showed a lot of business sense. He seemed to take any challenge I gave him and use it to grow. He wasn't a follower of Jesus, although he was respectful of my beliefs, of course. But he was eager to learn and seemed to be trustworthy. I put him in charge of more and more things.

Then one day my world turned upside down. In the middle of the night, Onesimus ran off. He took a large sum of money that I had gotten that day from a big customer. Most of it would go to the man who supplied me the goods that the customer had bought, but I'd have made a good profit, too. In one night Onesimus changed me from a comfortable businessman to a big debtor. I had to sell off some of my land in order to pay off my supplier. Not only that, but he took some silver serving dishes that my grandfather had hand-crafted. The silver was worth a lot, I know. But the dishes were special to me because they had been made by my grandfather, who died ten years ago. We put out an all-points bulletin and posted his picture around town, but he was gone. No one knew where he had gone. He had just disappeared. So I lost money, some land, damaged my reputation as a good businessman.

But I also lost something else: My confidence in my ability to judge other people; my trust in the people who worked for me. My feeling that God would make everything work out well. Imagine my surprise when a year later a sales clerk rushed into my office and said that Onesimus had just come into the store! My first impulse was to put him in chains and have him beaten for what he had done to me. My second was to call the police and have them handle it. But as I sat there, wondering what to do, I got curious about why he had come back. What must be going on in his mind? He must have known how angry I was. The clerk told me that Onesimus had given him a letter for me. It was a letter from Paul. Paul! How could Onesimus have come across Paul, and why would Paul use him as a messenger? I opened the letter to find out.

As a friend of both men, Paul wrote this letter to help them resolve their conflict and to repair the harm done by Onesimus.

Have participants turn to page 5 in the Participant Workbook. (This is the real story as it is written in the Bible in the book of Philemon from the first to the last verse 1 - 25.) Ask a volunteer to read the letter.

Real story written in the Bible: Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia [Af-ee-ah] our sister, to Archippus [Ar-kip-us] our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints. Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—I appeal to you for my son Onesimus [Oh-ness-ee-mus] who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.

I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favour you do will be spontaneous and not forced. Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me you're very self. I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. Epaphras [Ee-paff-rus], my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings and so do Mark, Aristarchus [Aris-star-kus], Demas [Dee-mus] and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (NIV)

Discussion 2:

Open discussion with the following questions:

- What are some ways that Onesimus' crime might have brought loss, death and destruction to Philemon? [Financial loss; trust betrayed; business reputation damaged; embarrassment and shame]
- How did Paul respond to these harms? [He acknowledged that Onesimus owed Philemon something offered to pay it himself; encouraged, but did not command, Philemon to be reconciled]
- What injustice forms a backdrop to this story? [Philemon had slaves and Onesimus was one of them]
- How did Paul respond to that? [He encouraged, but did not demand, him to grant Onesimus freedom]

Discussion 3:

Divide into three groups by making use of the 1, 2, 3 method. Number the participants 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3 ... etc. All the number 1's form a group; all the number 2's form a group and all the numbers 3's form a group.

Hand out the three typed scriptures to the participants. Each group takes each of the following scriptures for discussion and report back.

- Group 1: Crime is disobeying the law: Rom 13: 1-3 & 5 “1-3: Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rules hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.”
- Group 2: Crime causes harm to other: Philemon 18 & 19: “If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back – not to mention that you owe me your very self.”
- Group 3: Crime is a sin against God: Psalm 51: 1 - 4: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”

Say: In our criminal justice system crime is considered law-breaking. Offenders are punished for breaking the law – the rules established by the government. In chapel programmes, crime is considered a sin against God. There is a moral law that we must keep, and if we don't we have sinned and need to ask God for forgiveness. Sometimes that is all that we consider: offenders have broken the government's law and God's law. But there is an important third dimension of crime: it causes harm to victims, to family members and to communities. A worldwide reform movement called restorative justice emphasizes that crime cause's harm and justice should work to repair that harm.

Discussion 4:

Do you remember the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10? Hand out the following typed scriptures. The three scriptures can be divided between the three groups. Each group discuss a scripture and report back.

- Group 1: God hates crime: [Jesus stopped at the tree with Zacchaeus in it, knowing about the life he was living] Isaiah59:8 “The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace.”
- Group 2: God is displeased with injustice: [Jesus' response brought Zacchaeus to repentance. He did not turn Zacchaeus over to the Roman authorities.]Isaiah 59:15-16 “Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice”
- Group 3: God loves both victims and offenders: [Victims: Jesus was pleased when the victims were compensated; Offenders: He was willing to have dinner with Zacchaeus] Victims: Psalm 10:14 “But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you

consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.” Offenders: Psalm 69: 5 & 13 “You know my folly, O God; my guilt is not hidden from you(what I have done wrong) May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me, O Lord, the Lord Almighty; may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me, O God of Israel. (I pray that you will accept me.)”

4. Explore the need to see all the dimensions of crime: The ripple diagram

Small group discussion (groups 1 – 3 as selected previously)

- Have a container of water (preferably unbreakable) and a palm-sized item to throw (such as a rock). In dramatic language, describe the impact of a large rock being thrown into a still pool of water. As you describe the rock hitting the water throw the item into the bowl of water as a visual demonstration of the impact. Ask participants what happens after the rock hits the water? What happens after it disappears below the surface?
- Have the participants turn to page 7 of the Participant Workbook (the ripple diagram). Ask them to answer the question “who is affected by a crime?” by filling in the ripples with the different people that are affected by a crime. Start with the individuals most closely affected in the centre and work outward. (Start with “me” in the middle)
- Discuss the results in the entire group.

5. Strength Based Activity: Gratitude letter

Research: *Gratitude is described as an awareness of the good things in life. It is characterized by expression of thanks for everything that has been given in life. It can also be described as a mind-set of appreciation and goodwill for benefits derived from other people (Rashid, 2005). Evidence suggests that gratitude can enhance happiness, emotional well-being, energy levels, and hope. Research validates this strength as beneficial and useful for well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Watkins, Sparrow, & Webber, 2013; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). There are ways in which gratitude can be increased therapeutically, for example by writing a “gratitude letter”, which have been found to be effective in increasing well-being and there is evidence that this is one of the most successful strength-based activities (Proyer, Ruch, & Buschor, 2012; Seligman & Steen, 2005; Wood et al., 2010). There is evidence that grateful people handle difficult circumstances more efficiently and are good in reframing negative events to decrease the unpleasant emotional impact, which can finally lead to closure (Watkins et al., 2013). Research also suggests a strong relationship between gratitude, positive moods, and mindfulness in enabling people to find meaning in life (Bryant & Veroff, 2007).*

Activity: Explain the gratitude letter. Participants will be requested to write a letter to a specific individual to whom they want to express feelings of gratitude. This is to give participants an opportunity to express their gratitude in a thoughtful and purposeful manner that will have meaning. Participants can also send the letter to this person if they choose, but it is not compulsory.

6. Closing

Tell participants that next week the discussion will be on the topic of Responsibility. The strength based activity is mindfulness (using chocolates).

Remind them to complete the exercises in Assignment 2 of the Participant Workbook.

Session 3: Responsibility

Exploring what it means to take responsibility after an offense

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Heart Chair Cover
4. Aha Ball (can use anything for this)
5. Copies of the play: The parable of the prodigal son
6. Chocolates (two bite-size for every participant)

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Mindfulness

START SESSION 3 WITH:

- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Welcome everybody on their names if possible.**
- **Check to see whether they brought their Participant Workbooks.**
- **If necessary explain the Attendance Certificates again.**
- **Do not restate the Standards of Conduct unless one or two points require emphasis to the group.**

Detailed Curriculum

1. Opening Activity

Use the ice-breaker **Aha Ball** to help people review about previous sessions.

Directions: Throw a foam ball or wadded piece of paper to one of the participants. The person who catches it says their name, and if they have an ‘Aha’ something significant that they remember from the last two sessions that they would like to share with the group. Then they throw the ball on. (If they do not want to share an ‘Aha’, they just say ‘Nothing right now’ and throw the ball to someone else.) Continue around the room until everyone has had at one chance to catch the ball.

Close by putting the following script in your own words:

Part of the reason we did this exercise was to help us reflect on the last two sessions namely the story of the Sycamore Tree and what crime is. The purpose of this session is to help us reflect on our own experiences.

2.Strength-based Activity Mindfulness (Savouring)

Research: *Mindfulness is closely related to savoring, especially absorption, where one gets completely immersed in the present moment. Positive experiences can be savored through mindfulness. It is important to note that in order to enhance savoring's quality, mindfulness awareness during positive experiences, should be increased (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Baer and Lykins (2011), Brown and Ryan (2003), and Lyubomirsky (2007) report that mindfulness plays a significant role in many different aspects of mental health and contributes to increased well-being and improved psychological functioning. According to Fredrickson (2009) mindfulness is scientifically tested to successfully suppress negative thoughts. It can also be practiced in meditation, but it does not require meditation. It is a skill that opens your mind and this openness is closely related with resilience and results in an upward spiral. It can also be described as purposeful attention in a particular way in the present moment. Mindfulness can be considered as a very important ingredient of well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007).*

Activity: *(Give each participant a chocolate) To be able to do this we need to be mindful - we need to think about our life and our experiences. We are going to do a mindfulness activity. Tell them to look at the chocolates in their hands and they need to go slowly through the whole process. Look at the paper and the colours. Close your eyes. Feel it.... smell it.... open it put it in your mouth. Feel it on your tongue, slowly eat it, savouring the moment. Explain that we need to be mindful in our daily lives. Live in the moment and savour special moments. Think about the past en dream about the future but live for today. Savour the blessings in your life e.g. being healthy, not hungry, roof over your head etc.*

3. Failing to Take Responsibility

Explain what a responsible person is. This is somebody who can act on their own without needing someone to tell them or to force them to do what they need to do.

- Responsibility guarantees the fulfilment of the appropriate commitments and generates confidence (or trust) and tranquillity between people.
- Responsibility is a value because it allows us to live together peacefully in society. This is true in all areas such as family, friendship, professional, and personal.
- Two conditions are necessary for responsibility: the freedom to choose between actions and a law or standard by which actions can be judged.

Read the story of Zaccheus (Zac) as if he is telling the story himself (FICTION)

Get a volunteer to read Not Taking Responsibility [pages 11-12 of the Participant Workbook].

My name is Zac. You have read part of my story in the Bible. But this is the rest of the story. I was born into a poor family. As the youngest and smallest, I got pushed away from the table until my eight brothers had eaten. I cannot ever remember leaving the table full. I vowed that when I grew up, I would never go hungry again. But good jobs were hard to find. I tried.

Then I heard about the position of tax collector. It was a job working for the Romans, our enemies, our captors. At first it was unthinkable. But then I heard what the job paid. And that you could --uh--get tips on the side for your services. And keep all those "tips". Of course, I hate the Romans-foreigners coming into our land. Making us serve them and pay to have them rule over us. But, I cannot change that, can I? I had nothing to do with the war. I was

only a small boy at the time. Whether or not I took the job, somebody would have. All my people have to pay taxes whether I am the collector or someone else is. Rome makes them pay, not me. It might as well be me making the money. That is how I reasoned. So, I took the job.

It felt good to always have a full stomach. Then I began to see a way I could gain respect at last. All my life I felt that people had looked down on me, laughing at how short I was. I hated those jokes about being short. Oh, I always laughed, but not inside. My tall brothers would say, "Zac, you're no taller than mom. You should have been a girl." But when people found out I had money, they stopped laughing at me. Now they wanted to be my friends. It felt good. I bought an expensive house, jewellery, and custom-made robes. Now at last, people looked up to me. I had respect. At first I did not insist on tips. But I got so far in debt that I needed more money. What is a little more? And all the other collectors were doing it. Besides, I only take tips from the hypocrites and those who can afford it. Those hypocrites deserve it. I see them in church. I hear their long, pious sounding prayers and see those holy looks. Then they see me on the street and cross over to the other side. Some even spit on me. Can you believe that? They spit on me! And they claim to follow God's laws. Some even claim to follow Jesus' words. He said a lot about love, and they sure don't practice any of it.

If those people don't like being taxed, why don't they do something about it? Why don't they fight against Rome? They are a bunch of cowards. They deserve to be taxed if they are not willing to stand up for their rights. Only the Zealots have courage. I don't make them pay tips. Hey, maybe I am doing a good thing. Maybe if people have to keep paying higher taxes they will get fed up with Rome. Then they will rebel and overthrow our enemy. And we can all have decent jobs again. If my people have it too well, they will continue to let Rome rule us. Yes, I am doing a good thing. What I am doing may actually help save the Jews.

Discussion 1: Open a discussion with the following questions:

- What excuses did you hear Zac making? At this point was Zac taking responsibility for his wrongdoing?
- Why do you think offenders make excuses?

Short Presentation.

Say: We've just noted several kinds of defences that offenders use to avoid taking responsibility for what they have done:

- Denial. I didn't do it. [Sometimes that is true – the person was unjustly imprisoned. But often offenders are just not being honest with themselves.]
- Blaming others. It was his fault. [Sometimes this is directed at the victim – they were just asking for it the way they left their property lying around]
- Minimising the wrong. They were hardly hurt at all. [This can be done by emphasizing the victim's resources (they will never miss it) or the minimal harm (it was just a scratch; I bet it was healed within a week)]
- Making excuses or justifying. I had to do it. [I only steal from rich people; I wouldn't have done it but I had to buy drugs]

4. Taking False Responsibility

Read the story of Zaccheus (Zac) as if it is told by one of his victims (FICTION)

Ask a volunteer to read Taking False Responsibility [pages 12-13 of the Participant Workbook]. Taking False Responsibility (blame themselves for what happened)

Hello, I am one of the many victims of Zac, that miserable low life. I can't stand him. He has ruined our lives. Oh yeah, he calls himself a tax collector, but that's just a cover for the fact he cheats people all the time by taking more money than the authorities ask for. He pockets the profit for himself. My family and I are poor. We do not have a decent house. We cannot afford medical care and there's no welfare system here you know. One of our children became very ill and died. A doctor said she would have been OK if we had the money to buy the medicine. But because of Zac, we didn't.

Things were bad before Zac started collecting taxes. But now he's taking extra for himself and we can't make ends meet. Every three months he comes around in his flashy clothes and expensive jewellery. You should see the size of the ring he has. The extra money he takes from us he calls his 'tip'. Rubbish – he's robbing us and there's nothing we can do about it. If we tried to report it, who would listen to us? There's nothing we can do.

See, if it weren't Zac taking money from us, somebody else would be doing it. That is how it is with these Romans who rule over us. I suppose it's our fault really...that we let them do it to us. We ought to join the freedom fighters and overthrow them. But we don't even fight back. Cowards we are! And cowards get what they deserve and another thing. Maybe this is God's will for us. Ever thought of that? After all, He is in control. So, I must learn to accept what He allows. When I have to pay the taxes and 'tips', I should just say this is how it is, and heaven will be a better place.

This suffering will make us strong. Look at me. I grew up hard, and I am a strong person. What if our children have it too easy? Then they will not learn to work hard. They will not learn to appreciate what they do have. They won't be so strong. Besides, it is getting a little better. The last time Zac came round, he did not take all the taxes we owed. Maybe it was because of the coughing fit little Sarah had while he was here. O well. Such is life.

Discussion 2: Open a discussion with the following questions:

- What excuses for Zac's behaviour did you hear his victim make? [It is the Roman's fault; it is our fault because we don't fight back against them; it is God's fault (His will) designed to make us stronger; Zac isn't all bad]
- Why do you think victims assume false responsibility? [Need to explain in a way that gives them a feeling of control; friends and family tell them they could have prevented it by being more careful, etc.]
- In what way is taking false responsibility really failing to take responsibility? [Your attention is focused on things that aren't your fault so you aren't considering what your actual responsibilities are.]

Short Presentation

Say in your own words: There are two ways that victims take false responsibility for what happened:

- Deny or minimize the harm done [It's only money; I've forgotten about it already]
- Blame themselves [I could have prevented it; I could have avoided that part of town; I should have known there might be problems]

Say in your own words: Here is what victims need to hear and affirm for themselves:

- Victims are not responsible for what another person did to them. It was not the victim's fault; the victim did not deserve what happened; even if the choices of the victims increased their vulnerability, it is not their fault if someone victimizes them.
- It was not God's will for you to be hurt, but God can bring good from it for those who love him. But it was not God's desire for you to be victimized. God did not send you to prison, he met you in prison. (Refer to the diagram with the two circles of God's will and God's control in Session 1)

Say in your own words:

We've talked about not taking responsibility through denial, minimizing, blaming or making excuses. This can be a problem for both offenders and victims. The friends and families of victims, frightened that what happened to their loved, one might happen to them too, often look for something the victim did that they can avoid doing. This makes them feel safe because they would not do that themselves, but it adds to the victim's pain.

Discussion 3: Reflecting on own feelings

Say in your own words:

Please sit quietly (remember our mindfulness activity) and think about some questions I am going to ask you. Don't answer the questions out loud; there will be a chance later to share some of your thoughts. Think about an experience you have had where you were victimized by someone else. Wait ten seconds or so and repeat the statement. Then ask the following questions slowly, with 15-20 seconds of silence between questions:

- Think about your thoughts and feelings as a result of an offense committed against you. What were they?
- Do you believe those feelings are right or wrong? Why or why not?
- Do you feel guilty for any of your feelings? Why do you feel guilty?
- Regarding the offense, what do you believe you are responsible for? That is, what was in your control in this situation?
- Regarding the offense, what are you not responsible for? That is, what was not in your control in this situation?
- How might you start to take control of your situation as a victim?
- How should you respond to the offense against you?

Ask whether anyone wants to share something they realised or thought of while reflecting on those questions.

Discussion 4:

Say in your own words:

Think about a time (remember the mindfulness activity) when you were an offender and you caused someone to be victimized because of something wrong that you did. Wait ten seconds or so and repeat the statement. Then ask the following questions slowly, with 15-20 seconds of silence between questions:

- How do you think your crime or wrongdoing has hurt others?
- Have you ever really thought of your victim as a real person – a person with feelings?
- Were you thinking about them when and immediately after you committed your crime?
- If you had been more aware of how this would harm the victim – in particular with how it would make them feel – would it have made a difference in how you acted?
- Why do you think you did what you did?

- Does an offender ALWAYS have a choice when they commit an offence?
- How might it help your victims if you took responsibility for your offence against them?

Ask whether anyone wants to share something they realised or thought of while reflecting on those questions.

Short Presentation

Begin the presentation by making the following two points in your own words:

This session may have uncovered a few things in your lives. You may now be wondering “What next?” (i.e. “What practical steps can be taken towards resolving the issues I face. Here is how the next four sessions will address those questions.

We will see how offenders can find forgiveness, healing, restoration and freedom from the past..

- a. by confession and repentance
- b. by forgiving others who have wronged them
- c. by taking steps to make amends for what they have done
- d. by taking steps toward reconciliation with those they have wronged.

5. Strength-based activity next week: Drama(Parable of the prodigal son)

Select participants for play in Session 4 and give copies of the play

First Reader: Story Teller _____

Second Readers: Actors' Voices - Younger son: _____ Father: _____

Pig farm owner: _____ Older son: _____ Servant: _____

Third Reader: What to do _____

Actors:

Younger son: _____ Father: _____

Pig farm owner: _____ Older son: _____

Servant: _____ Friends: _____

Pigs: _____

Read the play through with participants. Participants must highlight their parts.

6.Closing

Tell participants that next week the discussion will be on the topics of Confession and Repentance

Remind them to complete the exercises in Assignment 3 of the Participant Workbook.

Tell them to read the story of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11 – 24) p. 16 in the Participant Workbook.

They can practice the play before the following week if it is possible.

Session 4: Confession & Repentance

Understanding the meaning, power, and importance of confession and repentance

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Name Tags
4. Pictures cut in half for ice-breaker
5. Heart Chair Cover
6. Extra copies of the play: The parable of the prodigal son
7. Typed information about strength-based activity: Drama

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Drama: Parable of the prodigal son

START SESSION 4 WITH:

- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Welcome everybody on their names if possible.**
- **Check to see whether they brought their Participant Workbooks.**
- **Do not restate the Standards of Conduct unless one or two points require emphasis to the group.**
- **Confirm the participants for the play and the readers.**

Detailed Curriculum

1. Opening Activity

ICE-BREAKER: Happiest part of life (Use picture cards): See that there are enough half pictures to match for every participant. They should be an equal number. If not, you should participate to bring the total on an equal number. Each one gets a half card and must look for their partner, who will have the other part of their picture. Tell them they are each going to answer two questions to their partners and you will tell them when to change. The person with the left half of the picture must start.

- If you could become an animal, what kind of an animal would it be?
- Why do you want to be that animal?

Put the following in your own words:

We have just told or “confessed” to each other something about ourselves that no one would have known otherwise. In this session we will look at what it means to confess sins, facts, feelings and beliefs to God and to others. And we’ll go one step further, and talk about what a confession implies about how we will act in the future.

2. Review last session

Remind the group that the last session was about not taking responsibility and/or taking false responsibility.

- Ask the group what stands out for them from what they learnt in the last session.
- Add any of the session goals and important points they do no mention.
- In your own words, point out that:
 - a) An important part of accepting responsibility is admitting responsibility and
 - b) That brings us to this session's first topic: confession

3. Consider Confession

In your own words ask the group: What do you think of when you hear the word “confession?” Confession is (Let the group give their answers). Explain in your own words the definition of confession.

Definition of Confession:

Admitting something and/or telling the truth about something and facing the consequences. For offenders it is what they did wrong; for victims it is what they experienced.

Form three small groups and assign one of the verses below to each: Use the 1... 2... 3... method to divide the groups equally.

Discussion 1: Scriptures about confession

Each group read confession of sin on page 44 in the Participant Workbook. Ask them to briefly discuss the verse and be ready to answer the question: What does the verse say about confession? Each group should choose a leader who will report back.

- Group 1: James 5:16: Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.
- Group 2: 1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- Group 3: Proverbs 28:13: You will never succeed (prosper) in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you.

After a few minutes, have the groups' leaders report back.

Explain in your own words: Confession is not always about something we have done wrong. Sometimes it means telling the truth about facts or beliefs.

Discussion 2: More scriptures about confession

Each group read confession of facts, feelings or beliefs on page 44 in the Participant Workbook. Ask them to briefly discuss the verse and be ready to answer the question: What does the verse say about confession.

- Group 1: Romans 10:9: If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord.” And believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
- Group 2: John 1:19-20: Now this was John’s testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Christ”.
- Group 3: John 12:42-43: Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Jesus. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

After a few minutes, have the groups’ leaders report back.

4. Consider Repentance

In your own words say: Repentance involves confession, but they are not the same. Confession is only about the past and the present, whereas repentance looks to the future. We can confess with great sorrow or regret over what happened, but if we don’t change our behaviour or try to make things right, we haven’t yet repented.

Definition of Repentance:

Regretting what you have done and changing your behaviour so you won’t do it again. Repentance is not just feeling sorrow or regret for something you have done. These feelings are important and may be part of repentance, but they are not the same as repentance.

Repentance involves four steps:

- Admitting to what happened
- Turning away from that behaviour
- Accepting responsibility for future behaviour
- Seeking to put relationships right

5. The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Ask a volunteer to read the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-31) on print out and on page 16 in participant workbook is only half the story.

Jesus continued: There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the estate”. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him:

‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’” So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. Your brother has come, he replied, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound. The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

In the same way, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

6.Strength-based Activity: Drama

Research: Drama can be explained as a group activity with different roles and an exercise in interacting with one another in a social way. Dramacan be defined as a composition of words to tell a story through dialogue, involving conflicts and emotions in dramatic form (Drama, 2016). Research done by Snow, D’Amico, and Tanguay (2003) confirms the benefits of drama regarding increased self-esteem, happiness, renewed energy, optimism and enthusiasm. Drama plays an essential role in acting out and relieving stress, also known as drama therapy. According to the Counseling Directory (2016) it allows an individual to deal with emotional difficulties through the medium of drama and, more specifically, role play when you act the part of a certain character in a certain situation. Schrader (2015) stresses the necessity of drama for releasing emotions and for enhancing well-being while O’Hanlon and Wootten (2007) explain that drama helps to feel and express emotion and to understand other people’s feelings. Bartholomey and Goheen (2006) describe the Bible as a creative world with stories that reflects God’s glory that can be reinforced and made more understandable through drama.

First Reader: Story Teller _____

Second Readers: Actors’ Voices - Younger son: _____ Father: _____ Pig farm owner: _____ Older son: _____ Servant: _____

Third Reader: What to do _____

Actors:

Younger son: _____ Father: _____

Pig farm owner: _____ Older son: _____

Servant: _____ Friends: _____

Pigs: _____

PLAY: The Parable of the Prodigal (Lost) Son

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

“There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father:

Younger son (Second Readers: actor's voice)

‘Father, give me my share of the estate.

Father (Second Readers: actor's voice)

If that is what you really want my son, I will divide my property between you and your brother.

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

So he divided his property between them.

“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living

Younger son (Third Reader: what to do)

The younger son walks over to the other corner where friends are sitting. Have party with friends, while dancing and drinking.

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

Younger son (Third Reader: what to do)

(The younger son walks to the other corner where the pig farmer is.)

Younger son (Second Readers: actor's voice)

Sir please, I have no money. Do you have any work for me?

Pig Farm Owner (Second Readers: actor's voice)

I haven't got work for you. Or wait, maybe you can to my fields and look after the pigs. That is all I have for you to do.

Younger son (Third Reader: what to do)

The younger son sits down between the pigs. Sad en very hungry

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said:

Younger son (Second Readers: actor's voice)

'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

So he got up and went to his father.

Father (Third Reader: what to do)

(His father sit on a chair and look if he can't see his younger son coming down the road)

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Younger son (Second Readers: actor's voice)

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

"But the father said to his servants,

Father (Second Readers: actor's voice)

‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants.

Older son (*Second Readers: actor’s voice*)

What is going on?

Servant (*Second Readers: actor’s voice*)

‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

FIRST READER: STORY TELLER

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father:

Older son (*Second Readers: actor’s voice*)

‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

Father (*Second Readers: actor’s voice*)

‘My son, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’

EVERYBODY JOYFULL AND HAPPY

Discussion 3: Considering the Story

Ask group how the story illustrates what it means to:

- Confess [he says that he has sinned against heaven and earth]
- Repent [this is not as obvious; in going back to his father he is changing the direction of his life]

7. Closing

Tell participants that next week the discussion will be on the topics of Forgiveness. The strength-based activity for next week is the letter of forgiveness. This activity is nearly the same as the gratitude letter, but also very different.

Remind them to complete the exercises in Assignment 4 of the Participant Workbook.

Session 5: Forgiveness

Understanding the meaning, power, and importance of forgiveness

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Name Tags
4. Heart Chair Cover
5. Strength-based activity
6. Typed notes about forgiveness

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Letter of forgiveness

START SESSION 5 WITH:

- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Welcome everybody on their names if possible.**
- **Check to see whether they brought their Participant Workbooks.**
- **Do not restate the Standards of Conduct unless one or two points.**

Detailed Curriculum

1. Opening Activity

Use the ice-breaker **Arm-Folding** to help people think about the difficulty of change
Directions: Ask everyone fold their arms in front of them, keeping their eyes on you.

Explain that you are about to tell them something they should NOT do. Then say:

“Do not look down at your arms and keep your eyes on me. Don’t look to see which arm is on top. Now in just a minute I’d like you to quickly unfold your arms and refold them the opposite way. If your left arm was initially on top, it should end up on the bottom when you are done. Ready...switch arms.

When they have done this, ask questions like the following:

- Did you find this awkward? If so, why do you think it was?
- How does it feel to have your arms in this new position?

- The next time you fold your arms; do you expect to do it the old way or the new way? Why?
- If even this slight change feels strange and difficult, bigger changes will be even more so. How can that help us as we think about the topic of forgiveness?

2. Review last session

In your own words, say: Last session we have learnt about confession and repentance. Do you remember the parable of the prodigal son? I'm interested in hearing what you have to say about: Some of your thoughts and feelings as you heard and played the story?

3. Examine the concept of forgiveness

Discussion 1: Jesus on Forgiving

Ask somebody to read the following scripture on page 44 of the Participant Workbook. Luke 17:3&4: Jesus says, “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, “I repent,” you must forgive him.

In your own words, ask the following questions:

- What does Jesus ask his followers to forgive? [sin; wrongdoing]
 - What does this tell us about forgiveness? [forgiving acknowledges that we have been wronged]
- How does Jesus describe the offender? [a brother or sister]
 - What does this tell us about forgiveness? [it acknowledges that the offender is not a monster or animal, but a fellow human being, a brother or sister]
- What is the first thing Jesus asks his followers to do to the offender? [rebuke him; tell him he is wrong]
 - What does this tell us about forgiveness? [it does not just ignore the problem; it confronts the offender while giving him the opportunity to repent]
- Does Jesus say that his followers should withhold forgiveness until the offender repents? [No, he doesn't say what should happen if the offender is unrepentant; he does say that when there is repentance we should forgive, which means that we need to ready to forgive before there is repentance.]
 - What does this tell us about forgiveness? [forgiveness does not need to wait for repentance, but at a minimum Jesus wants his followers to forgive those who do repent]
- What does Jesus say about how his followers should respond to people who continue to wrong them? [if they repent, they should be forgiven.]
 - What does this tell us about forgiveness? [It has no limits; it is an attitude of the heart; it is grace “on top”]
- Suppose you forgave your brother seven times in one day: (You can play this scenario out in a dialogue with somebody to show how difficult this is. Use your own initiative.)
 - How would you feel about him and how he was treating you? [angry, frustrated, distrustful, bitter]

- So do you think Jesus is talking about our feelings here? Is he asking us to feel forgiving? [No, he is clearly suggesting that forgiveness is more like a decision or an action than a feeling]
- After each time you forgive him, do you think you could just automatically forget that he had wronged you? [No, that would be psychologically impossible. We don't forget the past, but forgiveness is a different framework for thinking about the past.]
- Why do you think Jesus insists that we continue to confront and rebuke the brother? Why not just ignore it or forgive him silently in our hearts? [this would mean being silent in the face of wrong doing; by preaching forgiveness Jesus did not mean that his followers should be "doormats" who passively accept whatever is inflicted on them.]
- What should we do if our brother refuses to repent, or if we simply don't know whether or not he has repented? [we still need to be ready to forgive]
 - What benefits does this have for victims of crime? [our response is not dependent on the offender's response – we are not at his power before we can act; we can forgive even when there is no reconciliation; reconciliation requires both repentance from the offender and forgiveness from the victim.]
- Based on this passage, should an offender ask the victim to forgive? [No. While this question is often used by offenders, what they really need and want to do is confess and repent. Whether victims follow Jesus' teaching and respond with forgiveness is their decision. All the offender should do is repent and allow the victims to decide what response to give.]

Discussion 2: What forgiveness is and is not

Have participants turn to Assignment 4.3 on page 20 in the Participant Workbook:
Do you believe this is true or false? Why or why not?

Forgiveness means:

- Ignoring the offense. (false)
- Ignoring the inhumanity of the offender's behaviour. (false)
- Ignoring the deep pain that resulted. (false)
- Forgoing the offender's responsibility to make things right.(false)
- Feeling forgiving. (free of memories and pain) (false)
- Something that depends on the offender's repentance. (false)

4.The story of Mary White

Jerry and Mary White's son, Steve, 30 years old was senselessly murdered late one night in 1990 as he drove the taxi cab that provided additional income for the outgoing personality and his wife. With a motive still undetermined, the assailant shot Steve three times in the back of his head. Mary White wrote a book 'Harsh, Grief, Gentle, Hope. She said that God is the ultimate judge and that regardless of what happens to the man who murdered their son, only forgiveness frees them from the hold the crime has over them.

Ask a volunteer to read the following paragraphs written by Mary White, a Christian whose son was murdered [see page 20 in the Participant Workbook]:

"Waiting to feel like forgiving the offender will result in permanent unforgiveness and anger. Feelings of forgiveness will ultimately follow obedience to God's simple command to

forgive. Initial forgiveness comes by an act of the will with God's help. The feelings will eventually follow.

Is this a hard requirement? Yes, without question. Forgiveness is more difficult than suffering, sometimes more painful than the crime itself. According to Biblical injunction, there are no choices. No matter what the offense, God requires forgiveness. It is vitally important to Him because forgiving cost Him his son. Forgiveness in the deep hurts of life demonstrates the very nature of God."

"Forgiveness initiates release from the offender, and restores a vital relationship with God. It brings a renewed sense of dignity and internal tranquillity. And forgiveness conveys a power to the person who grants it to an offender."

Discussion 3: Feelings and Forgiveness

Mary White, "Every Knee Shall Bow", in God and the Victim (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

- Do you agree with Mary White that acts of forgiveness may precede feelings of forgiveness? Why or why not?
- What does Mary White mean when she says that "forgiveness conveys a power to the person who grants it to an offender"?

5.The Story of Corrie Ten Bloem

Ask a volunteer to read the following story written by Corrie Ten Bloem, who was sent to the Ravensbuck concentration camp with her sister, experiencing extremely difficult and harsh circumstances. [see page 20 – 21 in the Participant Workbook]:

In the Second World War, Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsie were sent to the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbruck. After the war, Corrie ten Boom spent much of her time preaching about the need for forgiveness and reconciliation. But it was at one of her services that she discovered for herself the real source of forgiveness:

"It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing centre at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there—the room full of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanchéd face. He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. "How grateful I am for your message Fraulein," he said. "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!" His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, revengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him. I tried to smile; I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness. As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me. And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. He gives along with the command to love our enemies, the love itself."

(Corrie ten Boom, The Hiding Place.)

Nelson Mandela: The words of a famous man who, unjustly, spent 27 years in prison, namely the late Nelson Mandela: "As I walked out the door towards the gate that would lead

to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison."

6. Strength Based Activity: Forgiveness

Research: Wissing (2014) describes forgiveness and gratitude as important repair- and building strategies to repair damage done in relationships and in re-building positivity. Admitting where one has wronged people and forgiving oneself can help in the process to forgive people who have wronged you (Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011). It is to extend mercy toward an offender, accepting the shortcomings of others and giving people a second chance (Rashid, 2005). Lyubomirsky (2008) and McCullough and Witvliet (2005) stress the fact that forgiveness is something that you will benefit from - not the person who has wronged you. Forgiving others is essential, but forgiving yourself is a step in the right direction (Lyubomirsky, 2007). If you cannot forgive yourself for things that happened in the past or wrong choices that you have made, it will be difficult to have meaning and without meaning you cannot experience well-being (Van Tongeren, Green, Hook, Davis, & Ramos, 2015). It can become a repetitive cycle where the one factor, forgiveness, has an impact on other important factors that directly influence well-being.

Activity: Participants will be instructed to write either a letter of apology asking for forgiveness or a letter of forgiveness to someone they have wronged. This letter is important to get rid of anger, bitterness and blame, but for ethical reasons, the letter will not be sent to the person to whom it is addressed.

7. Closing

Remind them to complete the exercises in Assignment 5 of the Participant Workbook. Tell participants that next week the discussion will be on the topics of Making Amends

Session 6: Making Amends

*Understanding making amends as a response to crime.
Making amends mean restitution, to restore and to rebuild.*

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Name Tags
4. Heart Chair Cover
5. Ball of yarn for ice-breaker
6. Notes on Acts of Kindness / Generosity

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Acts of kindness

START SESSION 6 WITH:

- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Welcome everybody on their names if possible.**
- **Check to see whether they brought their Participant Workbooks.**
- **Letters of forgiveness.**

Detailed Curriculum

1. Opening Activity

Use the ice-breaker **Connections**

Directions: Bring a ball of yarn with you. Have everyone stand in a circle, with yourself in the circle with them. Say your name and something you have learned during the previous 5 sessions. Then, holding the end of the yarn, toss the ball to someone else in the circle. Have them say their name and something they learned. Then, holding onto part of the yarn, they should toss the ball to someone else. Once everyone has spoken, there will be a large web of yarn. As the group stands there looking at the web, put the following script into your own words.

The web makes visible at least two kinds of connections that the group now has:

- The personal connections that have developed, symbolized by everyone telling their name.
- The connection we all have because we have participated in something – this project – that other people may have difficulty understanding. That was symbolized by everyone sharing something from the previous sessions.
- There is a third, invisible, connection that each of us brings with us, and that is the other people who were involved in “our” crimes (they were victims, offenders, bystanders, etc.). In this session we discuss one important consequence of this third kind of connection, and that is the need for offenders to make amends for what they have done to the people they have wronged.

2. Review Last Session

Ask group what stands out for them from what happened in the last session on forgiveness.

Add any of the session goals and important points they do not mention

3.What it Means to Make Amends

Discussion 1: The story of Zacchaeus (review)

Ask the participants to think about the story of Zacchaeus that we read in the first session [they can look at page 43 of the Participant Workbook if they wish to review it]. Where do they see?

- confession [he confesses what he has done by promising restitution]
- change behaviour [we can assume this from his decision to pay restitution and make a contribution]

- restitution [he pays fourfold restitution] Remember: Small things make a huge difference. Money is not important, but deeds are.
- generosity (Act of Kindness) [he contributes half of his goods for the poor in the community]

Say something like: In previous sessions we have discussed confession and repentance (which are like apology and changed behaviour). So in this session we will consider the other two forms of making amends: restitution and generosity.

4. Consider Restitution

Discussion 2: Defining Restitution

Say something like: Here are some dictionary definitions of restitution:

- restoring to the rightful owner something taken away
- making good or paying back a victim for loss, damage or injury
- returning the victim to a previous state or position

Ask why the following would NOT count as restitution:

- a prison sentence [it is a form of punishment and doesn't repay the victim]
- a fine paid to the government [same answer to 1 – the only difference is that the punishment is in the form of money]
- a treatment or rehabilitation programme for the offender [this does not repay the victim or help repair the victim's harm]

Discussion 3: Making Restitution Practical

Ask the questions below. Use flip chart or whiteboard to record the responses:

- What are some conditions or situations that might make restitution hard to pay.
- The answers usually fall into three basic areas:
 - a. the victim is unknown (e.g., no one is caught for the crime or, the crime is a victimless crime);
 - b. the offender doesn't have enough money (either because he is poor or because the debt is very high); or
 - c. it isn't easy to set an amount that is meaningful (e.g. What price should be placed on a person's life?).
- Suppose the criminal justice system placed a high priority on restitution being paid. What are some ways these problems might be addressed? Note that the Participant Workbook [page 24-25] has a short article suggesting why different amounts of restitution are provided for in the Bible.

5. Consider Generosity

Discussion 4: Generosity

- In your own words, ask: How do you define "generosity"? [doing something you are not required to do, simply because you want to]
- Why might an offender want to add generosity as a way of making amends? [sometimes restitution or an apology doesn't feel like enough; it is a way of showing the victim that he has changed; realize that in addition to the *direct* victim other

people were indirectly harmed (e.g., people living in the same community became afraid) and this is a way of repaying that debt]

- What are some examples of generosity? [certain kinds of community service; giving a painting or poem to the victim; doing extra work or giving extra money to an organization the victim supports]
- Tell them about the strength based activity: Acts of Kindness. Participants will be asked to do at least five deeds of kindness per day for the duration of one week (e.g. comforting somebody that looks distressed, let somebody stand in front of you in a queue, pick up something that someone dropped, etc.).

6. Strength-based Activity: Acts of Kindness

Research: Kindness consists of doing good deeds and favors for others without the expectation of personal gain. This requires respect for others and includes emotional affection (Rashid, 2005). Kindness is classified as one of the character strengths of the VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), under the virtue humanity. It is a psychological assessment that was created by two well-known Positive Psychology Researchers, namely Peterson and Seligman (2004). Kindness is found to be closely linked to mindfulness and the two are said to promote one another (Baer & Lykins, 2011). Kind people are happy if they can help other people, regardless of similarity or relatedness (Rashid, 2005). To give yourself and your time to mean something to somebody else can be very rewarding and add to your meaning and purpose in life. A Hindu proverb as stated by Lyubomirsky (2007) supports this: "True happiness consists in making others happy" (p.126).

Activity: They must do at least three acts of kindness (generosity) every day for the following week, e.g. comforting somebody; share something, kind words to somebody etc. We will share the acts of kindness in the next session.

7. Moving toward Reconciliation

Offenders' Project: Preparing a Letter or Covenant: Ask offenders to go to Writing Offender Letters or Covenants on page 33 of the Participant Workbook.

Review the key points: The purpose of this assignment is to help you apply what we have learned about responsibility, confession, repentance, forgiveness and making amends to your own situation. You will be asked to think about how to take responsibility for what you did, acknowledge the ways it was wrong, state that you have made a commitment to change and identify how you would like to make things right. You will also be asked to describe the first steps you intend to take to make this happen.

You are asked to choose between two alternative projects:

- One is to write a letter as if you were going to send it to your victim or victims. This will not be sent to them.
- The other alternative is to write an agreement before God that details your commitment to change and to repair the damage you have done to others by your actions. This should also include the steps you intend to take to make things right with your victims.

They will have the opportunity to share this letter with the group in the next session, if they wish to do so.

8. Closing

Tell participants that next week the discussion will be on the topics of Reconciliation. Remind them to complete the exercises in Assignment 6 of the Participant Workbook.

Session 7: Toward Reconciliation

Understanding how to begin moving towards healing, restoration and reconciliation.

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Typed notes about counting your blessings

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Counting your blessings

START SESSION 7 WITH:

- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Welcome everybody on their names if possible.**
- **Check to see whether they brought their Participant Workbooks.**

Detailed Curriculum

1. Opening Activity

Use the ice-breaker **True/False**

Directions: Ask each person to write down four things about themselves. Three must be true. One must be false, but believable. Then, each person takes a turn reading the four things. (If there are non-readers, suggest people can either write them or just tell them.) The rest of the group guesses which one is false and why they think it is false. After everyone has guessed, the person tells which one is false.

Put the following into your own words: There are several things we can learn through this activity. For example, people are not always what they seem. We should be careful not to prejudge people. We often make wrong judgments. Sometimes by careful listening, we get to know people and they are different from what we expected. We have all had that experience during this project.

2. Review last session on making amends

Ask about key impressions, thoughts and feelings from the previous session. Ask if there is anybody who wants to share their letter of covenant with the group.

3. What is reconciliation?

Discussion 1: Defining Reconciliation

Ask how the participants define reconciliation [bringing people back together; restoring relationships, trust, harmony and peace].

Dictionary definition “to reconcile”:

- First definition: To re-establish a close relationship between two people; to become friendly again with someone after estrangement. This conveys the idea that there was once a close relationship that it was broken, and that something was done to re-establish the friendly relations.
- Second definition: To settle a quarrel of difference, to resolve a conflict. This does not deal as much with the relationship between the parties as it does with the reasons for their conflict. This definition applies whether or not there was a personal, friendly relationship prior to the conflict.

If we separate the cause of the conflict from its impact on the relationship, we might come up with a continuum for reconciliation. On one end is “minimal reconciliation” and on the other is “maximal reconciliation”. Settling the cause of the conflict (2nd definition) is closer to the minimal end than is re-establishing a close relationship between enemies (1st definition). The closer one gets to maximal reconciliation, the more important relational values such as forgiveness become.

Discussion 2: Ask whether they think the following phrases are true or false:

- Forgetting that it ever happened [False, because it did happen. Reconciliation must be related to reality for it to be authentic.]
- Pretending that it never happened [False, for the same reason]
- Having a wonderful, trusting, loving relationship with the other person [True and false, because sometimes this happens, but it is not necessary for that to be reconciliation]
- Settling matters sufficiently to have a cooperative relationship with the other person. [True and false, because a victim and offender may never become close friends, but there is no longer active hostility between them.]

4. Acts of Kindness

Share acts of kindness and what they experienced the previous week by doing these acts.

5. Strength-based Activity: Counting your Blessings

Research: Research done by Watkins, Grimm, and Kolts (2004) reported that it is easier to recall positive memories when grateful and counting your blessings regardless of how small they are. If we have the ability to think about blessings, it will counterpart stressful or challenging events. The gratitude exercise of counting your blessings has a sustained effect of

higher positive emotions and less depression, even long after the end of the treatment (Seligman, 2010). This is a positive exercise that is self-sustaining and enjoyable (Wood et al., 2010). According to Seligman's authentic happiness theory, we think too much about negative things and things that go wrong. Happiness is not a construct but a measurable thing defined by a set of measures like positive emotions. Fredrickson (2009) explains how this activity can cause a mental shift from experiencing ordinary daily life events to veritable gifts that can be enjoyed and cherished. A study done by Layous and Lyubomirsky (2012) supports the idea that counting your blessings can be used as a tool and deployed when needed and indicates that if this way of thinking can become a habit, it will become mostly effortless and one will automatically use this tool practically in difficult times.

Activity: Participants will be motivated to “count their blessings” and write down three good things, in general, that went well that day and why it went well. They will be instructed to do this every evening before they go to sleep for a period of seven days.

6.Closing

Prepare for Celebration next session. Explain its purpose, basic content and schedule. Hand out the testimony forms and ask participants to write their testimonies on what has happened to them and what have they learnt over the past weeks. At the celebration morning they will be asked (not compulsory) to either read it or tell us what they have learnt.

Guide them to make an outline of what they will write. Show them how to plan a talk within a time frame. Offer tips about public speaking. Try to help them feel comfortable and do a good job. Some suggestions for the testimony:

- Tell how they have changed as a result of the project.
- Compare thoughts and feelings at the beginning of the project with those at the end.
- Tell some specific things they learned and experienced.
- Describe a personal highlight of the project.

Remind them to complete the exercises in Assignment 7 (p. 39 & 40) of the Participant Workbook.

Session 8: Celebration

Reflecting on and celebrating what we have learned about crime & healing.

What to take with into prison for session:

1. Session Guide
2. Attendance List
3. Heart Chair Cover
4. Strength-based activity

STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITY: Best possible selves

START SESSION 7 WITH:

- **Mark off the Attendance List and let participants sign.**
- **Welcome everybody on their names if possible.**
- **Check to see whether they brought their testimonies and remind them that must hand it in for their rapsorts.**

No Detailed Curriculum

Ideas: What can be taken with for Celebration?

1. Table cloths and overlays
2. Flowers
3. Serviettes
4. Plastic/paper plates
5. Plastic/paper glasses
6. Snacks
7. Cold drink
8. Certificates signed
9. Bibles
10. Gift packs
11. Extra gifts for 100% attendance
12. Gifts for officials

Ideas for the programme:

- 1. Open with prayer**
- 2. Welcome everybody and officials**
- 3. Word of thanks to:**
 - Sponsors
 - Officials
 - Participants
 - Helpers
- 4. Short message**
- 5. Hand over the certificates, Bibles and gifts and ask participants to testify.**

6. Hand over gifts to attending officials and helpers.

7. Ask officials to say something.

8. Sing together.

9. Explain strength based activity “Best Possible Selves”.

Research: Lyubomirsky (2007) describes this activity as a mental exercise where a person thinks about different domains of life, visualizing the future as he/she would want it to be. A longitudinal quantitative study conducted by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) on visualizing best possible selves showed a significant increase in positive affect. Participants, who could identify with this exercise, enjoyed it and showed interest in continuing doing this exercise in the long term. This is closely linked to the person-activity fit model where the participant's personality, interests and goals plays a major role. Lyubomirsky (2007) reports findings that showed a positive relationship between people that did this exercise for twenty minutes per day over several days and a lift in mood that led to greater happiness. Further research studies conducted by Lyubomirsky (2007) in this regard further proved the benefits of this activity.

Activity: Longitudinal quantitative studies conducted by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky on visualizing best possible selves showed a significant increase in positive affect and a lift in mood that led to greater happiness.

This is an activity that follows on the last session and which prisoners can practice after they have completed the STP. Participants will be asked to write about favourable feelings that they have experienced regarding different domains (e.g. school, family, work, etc.). They have to sit down and think about their best possible life in one year's time, five years' time and even longer and what goals are needed to accomplish this. This activity must be done over a period seven days for twenty minutes per day.

10. Close in prayer.

11. Enjoy snacks and cold drink together.

Addendum B: Confidentiality Agreement



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

entered into between: M. E. Fourie and to be determined

I, the undersigned

Prof / Dr / Mr / Ms _____

Identity Number:_____

Address:_____

hereby undertake in favor of the **NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY**, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997

Address: Office of the Institutional Registrar, Building C1, 53 Borcherd Street, Potchefstroom,
2520

(hereinafter the "NWU")

1 Interpretation and definitions

1.1 In this undertaking, unless inconsistent with, or otherwise indicated by the context:

1.1.1 "Confidential Information" shall include all information that is confidential in its nature or marked as confidential and shall include any existing and new information obtained by me after the Commencement Date, including but not be limited in its interpretation to, research data, information concerning research participants, all secret knowledge, technical information and specifications, manufacturing techniques, designs, diagrams, instruction manuals, blueprints, electronic artwork, samples, devices, demonstrations, formulae, know-how, intellectual property, information concerning materials, marketing and business information generally, financial information that may include remuneration detail, pay slips, information relating to human capital and employment contract, employment conditions, ledgers, income and expenditures and other materials of whatever description in which the NWU has an interest in being kept confidential; and

1.1.2 "Commencement Date" means the date of signature of this undertaking by myself.

1.2 The headings of clauses are intended for convenience only and shall not affect the interpretation of this undertaking.

2 Preamble

2.1 In performing certain duties requested by the NWU, I will have access to certain Confidential Information provided by the NWU in order to perform the said duties and I agree that it must be kept confidential.

2.2 The NWU has agreed to disclose certain of this Confidential Information and other information to me subject to me agreeing to the terms of confidentiality set out herein.

3 Title to the Confidential Information

I hereby acknowledge that all right, title and interest in and to the Confidential Information vests in the NWU and that I will have no claim of any nature in and to the Confidential Information.

4 Period of confidentiality

The provisions of this undertaking shall begin on the Commencement Date and remain in force indefinitely.

5 Non-disclosure and undertakings

I undertake:

5.1 to maintain the confidentiality of any Confidential Information to which I shall be allowed access by the NWU, whether before or after the Commencement Date of this undertaking. I will not divulge or permit to be divulged to any person any aspect of such Confidential Information otherwise than may be allowed in terms of this undertaking;

5.2 to take all such steps as may be necessary to prevent the Confidential Information falling into the hands of an unauthorised third party;

5.3 not to make use of any of the Confidential Information in the development, manufacture, marketing and/or sale of any goods;

5.4 not to use any research data for publication purposes;

5.5 not to use or disclose or attempt to use or disclose the Confidential Information for any purpose other than performing research purposes only and includes questionnaires, interviews with participants, data gathering, data analysis and personal information of participants/research subjects;

5.6 not to use or attempt to use the Confidential Information in any manner which will cause or be likely to cause injury or loss to a research participant or the NWU; and

5.7 that all documentation furnished to me by the NWU pursuant to this undertaking will remain the property of the NWU and upon the request of the NWU will be returned to the NWU. I shall not make copies of any such documentation without the prior written consent of the NWU.

6 Exception

The above undertakings by myself shall not apply to Confidential Information which I am compelled to disclose in terms of a court order.

7 Jurisdiction

This undertaking shall be governed by South African law be subject to the jurisdiction of South African courts in respect of any dispute flowing from this undertaking.

8 Whole agreement

8.1 This document constitutes the whole of this undertaking to the exclusion of all else.

8.2 No amendment, alteration, addition, variation or consensual cancellation of this undertaking will be valid unless in writing and signed by me and the NWU.

Dated at Potchefstroom this _____ 20____

Witnesses:

1

2
(Signatures of witnesses)
(Signature)

Addendum C: Work Protocol and Confidentiality Agreement for Co-coder

Dear Prof du Plessis,

You are hereby invited to act as a co-coder for the study entitled “South African female prisoners' experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities”.

The **research question** posed is: What are the experiences of female prisoners' with regard to the Sycamore Tree Project with the inclusion of strength-based activities?

The **aim of the study** is to explore and describe the experiences of female prisoners with regard to the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities.

Data Collection

The World Cafè and narratives were used to collect the data. Interview questions that were asked of participants during the **World Café** are as follows:

1. How did you experience the Sycamore Tree Project/programme?
2. What did you find most useful in die programme and why?
3. What did you expect from the programme and how did the programme meet those expectations?
4. What recommendations do you have with regard to the presentation of the programme with female prisoners in the future?

The question that was posed to participants regarding **individual narratives** is as follows: Please write a short narrative of one to two pages in length based on the following question: When reflecting back on your participation in the STP, can you describe, as completely as possible, what your experiences were during and after the programme? You can include examples in your discussion.

Analysis Method

For the purpose of this study, **thematic analysis** is used to manually analyse the data collected through narratives and the world café. The six steps suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013) and Braun and Clarke (2006) should be followed when analyzing the data, namely: Familiarization with the data, coding, theme exploration, theme review, defining and naming the themes and writing up.

- 1. Familiarization with the data:** Know your data well by reading and/or listening to it.
- 2. Coding:** Analyse the data in order to assign a code to the text. This is a process of reading through data so that segments that are featuring consistently will receive labels indicating the importance of data and that are relevant to answer the research questions as indicated above.
- 3. Theme exploration:** Similarities in the data are identified and grouped through the development of themes.
- 4. Theme review:** It is important that the themes accommodate the data. Characteristics of themes and disconnectedness should be defined to either put them together or to split them.
- 5. Defining and naming the themes:** Themes have to be explained in detail, mentioning the critical aspects of each theme, in order to identify a name for the theme.
- 6. Writing:** Use the data to make a comparison with the literature and to tell a narrative.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

M. E. Fourie

E-mail: mefourie9@gmail.com

Cell: 082 570 0845

NOTE: Please complete the confidentiality agreement on the next page if you are willing to act as co-coder and send it back to me.

Confidentiality Agreement



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

entered into between: M. E. Fourie and Emmerentia du Plessis

I, the undersigned

Prof Emmerentia du Plessis

Identity Number: 7207110176082

Address: 265 Beyers Naudé Ave, Potchefstroom

hereby undertake in favour of the **NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY**, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997

Address: Office of the Institutional Registrar, Building C1, 53 Borcherd Street, Potchefstroom, 2520

(herein after the "NWU")

1 Interpretation and definitions

1.1 In this undertaking, unless inconsistent with, or otherwise indicated by the context:

1.1.1 "Confidential Information" shall include all information that is confidential in its nature or marked as confidential and shall include any existing and new information obtained by me after the Commencement Date, including but not be limited in its interpretation to, research data, information concerning research participants, all secret knowledge, technical information and specifications, manufacturing techniques, designs, diagrams, instruction manuals, blueprints, electronic artwork, samples, devices, demonstrations, formulae, know-how, intellectual property, information concerning materials, marketing and business information generally, financial information that may include remuneration detail, pay slips, information relating to human capital and employment contract, employment conditions, ledgers, income and expenditures and other materials of whatever description in which the NWU has an interest in being kept confidential; and

1.1.2 "Commencement Date" means the date of signature of this undertaking by myself.

1.2 The headings of clauses are intended for convenience only and shall not affect the interpretation of this undertaking.

2 Preamble

2.1 In performing certain duties requested by the NWU, I will have access to certain Confidential Information provided by the NWU in order to perform the said duties and I agree that it must be kept confidential.

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I hereby acknowledge that all right, title and interest in and to the Confidential Information vests in the NWU and that I will have no claim of any nature in and to the Confidential Information.

4 Period of confidentiality

The provisions of this undertaking shall begin on the Commencement Date and remain in force indefinitely.

5 Non-disclosure and undertakings

I undertake:

5.1 to maintain the confidentiality of any Confidential Information to which I shall be allowed access by the NWU, whether before or after the Commencement Date of this undertaking. I will not divulge or permit to be divulged to any person any aspect of such Confidential Information otherwise than may be allowed in terms of this undertaking;

5.2 to take all such steps as may be necessary to prevent the Confidential Information falling into the hands of an unauthorised third party;

5.3 not to make use of any of the Confidential Information in the development, manufacture, marketing and/or sale of any goods;

5.4 not to use any research data for publication purposes;

5.5 not to use or disclose or attempt to use or disclose the Confidential Information for any purpose other than performing research purposes only and includes questionnaires, interviews with participants, data gathering, data analysis and personal information of participants/research subjects;

5.6 not to use or attempt to use the Confidential Information in any manner which will cause or be likely to cause injury or loss to a research participant or the NWU; and

5.7 that all documentation furnished to me by the NWU pursuant to this undertaking will remain the property of the NWU and upon the request of the NWU will be returned to the NWU. I shall not make copies of any such documentation without the prior written consent of the NWU.

6 Exception

The above undertakings by myself shall not apply to Confidential Information which I am compelled to disclose in terms of a court order.

7 Jurisdiction

This undertaking shall be governed by South African law be subject to the jurisdiction of South African courts in respect of any dispute flowing from this undertaking.

8 Whole agreement

8.1 This document constitutes the whole of this undertaking to the exclusion of all else.

8.2 No amendment, alteration, addition, variation or consensual cancellation of this undertaking will be valid unless in writing and signed by me and the NWU.

Signed at Potchefstroom this 07/09/2016

Witnesses:

1 ... Mahale

2 ... C. EMVUILLER

(Signatures of witnesses)


.....
(Signature)

Addendum D: Approval letter DCS



correctional services

Department:
Correctional Services
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X136, PRETORIA, 0001 Poyntons Building, C/O WF Nkomo and Sophie De Bruyn Street, PRETORIA
Tel (012) 307 2770, Fax 086 539 2693

Ms ME Fourie
267 Juniper Avenue
Annlin X2
Pretoria
0187

Dear Ms ME Fourie

RE: SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE PRISONER'S EXPERIENCE OF THE Sycamore Tree Project With Strength-Based Activities.

It is with pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services on the above topic has been approved.

Your attention is drawn to the following:

- The relevant Regional and Area Commissioners where the research will be conducted will be informed of your proposed research project.
- Your internal guide will be **Director Psychological Services: Dr K Kometsi, Head Office.**
- You are requested to contact him at telephone number (012) 307 2146 before the commencement of your research.
- It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your interviewing times.
- Your identity document and this approval letter should be in your possession when visiting.
- You are required to use the terminology used in the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (February 2005) e.g. "Offenders" not "Prisoners" and "Correctional Centres" not "Prisons".
- You are not allowed to use photographic or video equipment during your visits, however the audio recorder is allowed.
- You are required to submit your final report to the Department for approval by the Commissioner of Correctional Services before publication (including presentation at workshops, conferences, seminars, etc) of the report.
- Should you have any enquiries regarding this process, please contact the Directorate Research for assistance at telephone number (012) 307 2770 / (012) 305 8554.

Thank you for your application and interest to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services.

Yours faithfully

ND SIHLEZANA
DC: POLICY COORDINATION & RESEARCH
DATE: 24/08/2016

Addendum E: Informed Consent



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

Health Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Health Sciences
NORTH-WEST University
(Potchefstroom Campus)

2016 -05- 16

HREC Stamp

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR WOMEN INMATES AT KGOŠI MAMPURU 11

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Experiences of female prisoners regarding the Sycamore Tree Project with the inclusion of strength-based activities in a South African context

REFERENCE NUMBER: NWU-00018-16-A1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Vicki Koen

STUDENT: Mariëtte Emmerentia Fourie

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of Ms Fourie's Master's research. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. You will be provided with an appointment with the researcher so that you have an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00018-16-A1)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted at Kgoši Mampuru II Female Prison, executing the Sycamore Tree Project (STP) with inclusion of strength-based activities. It will involve narratives (writing a story in your own words) and the world café method (a form of group discussion) with experienced researchers trained in the method.*
- *The objectives of this research are to explore and describe the experiences of female prisoners regarding the Sycamore Tree Project with the inclusion of strength-based activities in a South African context.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate, because you meet the following inclusion criteria: You are an adult female prisoner at Kgoši Mampuru II who is not trial-awaiting and has already been sentenced and who will remain imprisoned for at least six months in order to be able to complete the programme and participate in data collection; you have not previously completed the STP; you will participate in and complete the coming STP (with the inclusion of strength-based activities); you are efficiently fluent in and can read and write English; you are willing to participate; and you are willing to participate in group activities.*
- *Apart from the inclusion criteria indicated above, there are no other exclusion criteria.*
- *Please note that although the STP is strongly Christian-based, it does not make up the entirety of the programme. If you are a non-Christian, you still have the option to participate and if you have decided to participate and wish to withdraw at any stage, you will be allowed to do so without any form punishment. All participants in the STP will receive a Bible at the celebration morning as part of the programme, but you are not required to accept the Bible.*

- To ensure that the sample size is not too large for the data collection techniques to be implemented, a maximum of twenty participants will be selected for data collection. If more than twenty individuals indicate a willingness to participate, names will be thrown into a hat and twenty individual's names will be randomly drawn for participation. If you are not chosen to participate, you will still have the opportunity to participate in the STP when it is presented in the future.

What will your responsibilities be?

- You will be expected to attend the Sycamore Tree Project (STP) sessions which will last for 8 weeks. Sessions will take place every Tuesday morning from 9:00 to 11:00 for 8 weeks. The sessions will consist of information regarding: 1) An introduction to STP; 2) What is crime?; 3) Responsibility; 4) Confession & Repentance; 5) Forgiveness; 6) Making Amends; 7) Toward Reconciliation, and the last session will serve as a celebration where you will be allowed to share your testimonies if you so choose. You will be required to do the exercises of the respective sessions in your participant workbook after every session.
- You will also be expected to take part in the strength-based activities. Every session (as described above) will include or will be followed with an activity and the activities will include: 1) Narratives: sharing life stories; 2) Writing a gratitude letter; 3) Mindfulness; 4) Drama: Parable of the prodigal son; 5) Writing a letter of forgiveness; 6) Acts of kindness; 7) Counting your blessings; 8) Best possible selves
- After the completion of the programme you will be asked to write a short narrative of one to two pages in length based on the following question: When reflecting back on your participation in the STP, can you describe, as completely as possible, what your experiences were during and after the programme? You can include examples in your discussion. The researcher will collect the narrative from you. After the narratives have been collected from the participants, they will be numbered and any information that can identify the participants will be removed and stored separately in an attempt to protect the participants' identities.
- You will also be required to participate in a world café session that will be approximately two hours. During the world café session you will be expected to reflect and take part in discussions on the completed eight weeks STP with the inclusion of the strength-based activities. There will be four tables with ± 5 participants and a table host at every table. Each table will be provided with a paper

tablecloth and crayons for the participants' contributions. Every table will have a question for discussion and twenty-five minutes will be given to discuss one question at every table. During each session you will be asked to make contributions and answer the question through group discussion and by making drawings, drawing symbols or writing phrases, ideas or words on the paper tablecloth. After the time has expired, you will be requested to move to a different table where a different question will be discussed. After each session, the table hosts at the respective tables will be responsible for indicating what the question is and what the previous group's contribution consisted of and they will guide the discussion with the new group. This process will be followed until all the participants have had an opportunity to answer all the questions. Thereafter, the respective table hosts will report their collective finding to the participants to make sure that they agree with the findings. During the world café session you will be asked the following questions: 1) How did you experience the Sycamore Tree Project/programme? 2) What did you find most useful in the programme and why? 3) What did you expect from the programme and how did the programme meet those expectations? 4) What recommendations do you have with regard to the presentation of the programme with female prisoners in the future?

-
- *You will have to give permission to have the reports at the end of the world café session (done by the respective by the table hosts) taped on a digital voice recorder and your contributions made during the world café being photographed and used for research purposes. The researcher will photograph the world café outputs (paper tablecloths) at her home after data collection for research purposes and no photographs will be taken at or in the prison. Please note that you will not be identified and you will not be photographed. Digital voice recordings and photographs will be downloaded onto the researcher's personal password-protect computer immediately after data collection and will then be deleted from recording devices and cameras by a member of the research team to protect your identity.*
 - *You will be requested to complete a biographical questionnaire once off, which will ask questions regarding your age, education, marital status, children, how often you practice religion, your work status before imprisonment, for how long you have been in prison, and for how long you have been sentenced. No information that can identify you will be asked in the questionnaire.*

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- *The research may have direct benefits for you as you will complete the STP programme that includes strength-based activities as part of the research and which may contribute to your well-being.*
- *Another benefit will be your experience and knowledge gained about the values of the STP and strength-based activities, e.g. forgiveness, gratitude, etc. This knowledge can lead to finding real meaning in life. Should you be released, you will leave with new empowering skills to face the strains of everyday living. These values can be taught to your children, family, friends and fellow inmates. This can change a whole generation which started with your participation and willingness to learn.*
- *A possible indirect benefit is that the knowledge gained through this research may benefit prisoners by providing insight on the STP and the inclusion of strength-based activities in such a programme.*
- *The results of the study will be made available to you once the study is complete in the form of a presentation by the researcher. If you are released before this time, you will have the option to provide your contact details to the researcher so that she can supply you with a typed summary of the findings.*

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- *This is a medium risk study. You may experience forms of physical- and psychological harm.*
- *Regarding possible physical harm, you may experience fatigue during the eight week two hour sessions and collection of data. If this occurs, you will be provided with an opportunity to rest or take a break during the data collection.*
- *HREC will be notified immediately by the researcher if an adverse event occurs.*
- *Psychological harm may be experienced as some of the STP sessions may be very emotional. In light of this, support services, in which the researcher will not be personally involved, will therefore be provided (by a qualified professional located at Kgoši Mampuru 11 Female Prison) to participants who suffer adverse effects and on the participants' request.*
- *There will be no financial costs involved in participating in this study.*
- *Due to the fact that the STP and data collection will include the use of group/s, anonymity cannot be entirely ensured and only partial confidentiality can be ensured. You are therefore informed of the following: There is a possibility of violation of*

privacy by other members who participate in the group/s; in light of this, group rules will be set and the group will be made aware of their responsibility regarding confidentiality; you are requested to not talk about the group and/or groups and to not disclose any names or information with regard to the group/s; you can withdraw at any stage of the process if you wish; although statements that are made in the group can be deleted from the transcription of the group discussion, statements that are made during the group/s cannot be, therefore what you say in the group/s is your own responsibility and all group/s should be treated as a public meeting; each person in the group acts individually; if the need arises, you will be referred to a qualified helping professional; if you identify risks in the group/s, you are requested to notify the researcher immediately; other members of the group will include fellow inmates at the prison; you will be requested to sign a basic standards of conduct form which includes the concept of confidentiality.

What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of discomfort occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

- *Support services, in which the researcher will not be personally involved, will be provided (by a qualified professional located at Kgoši Mampuru 11 Female Prison) to you if you suffer adverse effects as a direct result of your participation in this research and on your request.*

Who will have access to the data?

- *Only the research team, namely, the student researcher, study leader, and co-coder will have access to the data. The co-coder will be requested to sign a confidentiality agreement.*
- *Anonymity will be protected: 1) Only the informed consent form you sign will have your name on it and informed consent forms will be stored separately from other data to protect your identity (please see section on “What will happen to the data” for more information on how all data will be handled), 2) Digital voice recordings and photographs will be downloaded onto the researcher’s personal password-protect computer by the researcher immediately after data collection and will then be deleted from recording devices and cameras by the researcher to protect your identity, 3) No names will be mentioned in the dissertation or reporting or publishing of the research.*

- *With your permission, a summary of the results will be made available to the management of Kgoši Mampuru II Spiritual Care and the developers of the STP and may be presented to them on request. This will be anonymous, except for the reports that are requested by Spiritual Care Management as a general procedure on offenders after completing the STP.*

What will happen with the data?

- *This is a once off data collection (after completion of the narratives and world café you will not be required to participate in data collection again for this study) and data will be analysed in South Africa.*
- *Data will be stored for a period of seven years after the publication of the results as required by the NWU.*
- *Digital voice recordings and photographs will be downloaded onto the researcher's personal password-protect computer by the researcher immediately after data collection and will then be deleted from recording devices and cameras by the researcher to protect your identity.*
- *For the duration of data analysis, the hard copies of collected data (narratives and world café outputs) will be kept in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home and electronic data (digital voice recordings, scans of narratives and photographs of world café outputs) will be stored on the researcher's personal computer, which is password protected. The researcher will send electronic copies of the data (scans of narratives and world café outputs) to the co-coder for analyses. The co-coder will be requested to delete this information as soon as the data analyses is complete and will sign a confidentiality agreement.*
- *After the completion of data analyses, hard copies of informed consent forms, narratives, and world café information will be kept in a locked cupboard in a locked office of the project supervisor at the NWU and electronic data (digital voice recordings, scans of narratives and photographs of world café outputs) will be saved on a computer in this locked NWU office that has password protection.*
- *After the data has been stored for a period of seven years, it will be destroyed by a member of the research team. Hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies deleted from the computer it was stored on.*

Will you be paid to take part in this study?

- *No, you will not be paid to take part in the study.*
 - *Refreshments, an attendance certificate and a Bible will be given at the celebration morning if approved by management of Spiritual Care and the officials, which is normal procedure.*
 - *The world café will also include cold drinks and refreshment if approved by management of Spiritual Care and the officials, which is normal procedure.*
 - *You will also receive a token of appreciation which includes toiletries (e.g. soap, roll-on, toothpaste, toothbrush, facecloth, shampoo, body cream, etc.) if approved by management of Spiritual Care and the officials, which is normal procedure.*
-

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- *An appointment will be made with you where the researcher will be present to answer any questions you may have.*
- *You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206; carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.*
- *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.*

How will you know about the findings?

- *The findings of the research will be shared with you through a presentation by the researcher after the completion of the study. If you are released before this time, you will have the option to provide your contact details to the researcher so that she can supply you with a typed summary of the findings.*
 - *With your permission, the findings will also be made available to the management of spiritual care and the developers of the STP.*
-

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study titled: South African female prisoners' experiences of the Sycamore Tree Project with strength-based activities.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- I hereby give permission that the findings can be made available to the management of spiritual care and the developers of the STP.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness

Addendum F: Basic Standard of Conduct

1. Keep shared information private and confidential. (See Note 1)
2. No gossiping about confidential information shared.
3. Acceptance and respect for uniqueness of individuals.
4. Attend all sessions and be on time.
5. Take part in discussions and activities.
6. Listen to each other and do not interrupt when someone is talking.
7. Tell the truth at all times and be honest.
8. Generally, stay on the subjects being discussed.
9. Allow the leader to lead.
10. Express concerns and suggestions to the leader.
11. Take part in the act of restitution.
12. Be part of the celebration event.
13. Ask questions when you do not understand something
14. Remember the importance of values such as love and trust.



1. Note that if participants share information about planned crimes, or disclose information about a past crime for which they have not already been convicted, law enforcement personnel or judges may be able to legally require those who heard this information to reveal it.

Declaration by participant

I, _____, declare that I have read this information and understand it. I will be subordinate to these standards of conduct.

Signed at _____ on the _____ day of _____ 2016.

Addendum G: Examples of Narratives

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NARRATIVE: SYCAMORE TREE PROJECT AND STRENGTH-BASED ACTIVITIES

Please write a short narrative of one to two pages in length based on the following question:

When reflecting back on your participation in the Sycamore Tree Project, can you describe, as completely as possible, what your experiences were during and after the programme? You can include examples in your discussions. Remember to reflect on the programme itself (Sycamore Tree Project) and the strength-based activities e.g. sharing life stories, mindfulness (savoring), drama, gratitude letter, forgiveness letter, acts of kindness, counting your blessings, best possible selves.

The researcher will collect the narrative from you.

NAME: _____ DATE: 30.9.2016

Sycamore Tree definitely change my life thinking about a lot of things.

1. I was Zocchaeus in the tree, but God saw me He knows I am there' and He saved me from my sinfull life and my selfish life and even Forgive me for all. He loves me as I am and He doesn't judge me He just loves me for me. (Thank you Lord)

2. I learn to forgive in words is good but to also wright it down and know the person has ~~is~~ my forgiuness for them on paper... it realy filaly Freed me. Forgiveness is bilesome even if the victim doesn't Forgive you back, you feel free by Forgiving them.

3. Sharing I loved our sharing time in the group, I will miss this, But I am thankfull for what I learned by just sharing. Mariette to you I will always be

greatful for your sharing of love and kindness in this place you where my angle. Thank you Mariette for everything. Lorinda thank you for sharing love buy prayer for us, air prayer warrior, Thank you Lorinda I will never forget the example you are to me.

4. Fun o we had fun whe had fun, laughter, sharing, tears and so much more. I know now that I am not the only one with sadness, problems, heartace and so on, there are more of us But God is with us, God is saving us, God is helping us, best of all God bles us.

Thank you Mariette, Lorinda, Mariette's suster, and all my friends in the grup for one awesome course, for an awesome time, for all your sharing and the hugs & understanding. Most of all Thank you God our Father for this time of love, learning, forgiveness and prayers.

Remember:

- * If you give forget about it and when you receive always be greatful & never forget!
- * Forgive, even If someone doesn't deserve it, You deserve to be free!
- * Count your blessings day by day, instead of counting your losses. Count your blessings and say thank you, Thank You God our Father!

NARRATIVE: Sycamore Tree Project and Strength-Based Activities

Please write a short narrative of one to two pages in length based on the following question:

When reflecting back on your participation in the Sycamore Tree Project, can you describe, as completely as possible, what your experiences were during and after the programme? You can include examples in your discussions. Remember to reflect on the programme itself (Sycamore Tree Project) and the strength-based activities e.g. sharing life stories, mindfulness (savoring), drama, gratitude letter, forgiveness letter, acts of kindness, counting your blessings, best possible selves.

The researcher will collect the narrative from you.

NAME: Not Applicable DATE: N/A

Truth be told, I never thought I could find so much joy, peace & love in this project because I just entered the project just to pass time, but not knowing that I'm gonna learn a lot from this project.

At first I thought it was just a waste of time to take part in Christian programmes because I knew how to pray & had a relationship with Jesus and I knew or I read the Bible.

When we started on the strength-based activities it was then that I realised that I actually was not wasting my time but I was actually there for a reason.

When mommy Marriet told us the story of her daughter, the challenges she's faced with, yet she still manage to smile broadly so because of the peace in her heart and most importantly the fact that she always smiles because she has Jesus Christ. The story made me realise

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that it's Jesus Christ that I actually need more in my life; to dedicate all of me to Him in order to have that inner peace 'cos that inner peace is the one that's going to put a smile on my face.

The other part was the part where we were talking about how to count our blessings instead of counting our losses; deficits & wants. This part hit me hard because it made me realise that I've actually been complaining a lot in my prayers rather than thanking God for all the things He's been doing for me since my a/c.

Things like having food & shelter yet I get visit from my family once or twice a year. The project helped me to realise the importance of sincere forgiveness 'cos out of this I actually learned that by forgiving someone I first had to forgive myself so as to be able to forgive the next person. It also made me realise that by actually forgive someone was actually offloading a heavy weight on my shoulders and freeing my soul & spirit.

I can actually write a book about my experience in the Spasmic Tree Project but all in all I'm thankful & grateful for taking part and don't have any regrets about taking part. I actually want to be more involved in this project even outside as I'll be going home next year February 'cos I actually find joy & happiness in knowing that I've helped & put a smile on someone's face! b

(2)