Learning within a Prison Environment:
Will Emotional Intelligence Training Benefit Female Inmates Participating in a Work-based Education Program?

Brief of Bosteder/Hargrave Research Study
Oregon State University

Abstract:
Many of the women who enter prison have emotional self-management difficulty. Often they come from dysfunctional or abusive backgrounds, and have abused drugs and/or alcohol to manage their emotions. The highly charged emotional environment of a woman's prison is augmented by the already inherent struggles of prison life, the loss of most freedoms, and nearly all privacy. Learning and acquiring new skills in a workbased program is frequently inhibited as a result of this emotional chaos. Emotional education and heart coherence skills practiced from HeartMath have shown obvious benefits to student learning, emotional self-management, behavior, and relationships with only 10 weeks of training.

Research Question:
Will Emotional Intelligence training assist female inmates who participate in a work-based education program better manage the emotional difficulties of learning with in a prison environment?

Participants:
Study participants were 17 women in minimum security at Coffee Creek Correction Facility (CCCF) (final N=16 due to one illness on the post assessment day). These women were all current or graduated students of Hargrave's 18 month Computer Technology Program. They do not represent the average prison population as they all had to have the higher education and learning skills necessary for acceptance to the Computer Technology Program. They are also generally more motivated than the rest of the prison population. Due to this and the small population size we cannot generalize results to the rest of the prison population but we can determine the potential benefits and the merit of further study.

Study Training Time Frame:
Training was 10 weeks long from the end of April 2007 to the end of June 2007

Training and Protocols:
Bosteder went to Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) 5 times to do the following: Informed Consent, Workshops I, II, and III, and the Debrief and Post-testing. Hargrave worked daily with students on skill practice and helping them keep on track with the training homework while managing their regular program. Homework entailed HeartMath skill practice (with and without supportive technology), reading four books and many self reflective written exercises. Hargrave also provided crucial support to students as they experienced the disorientation of change created by the psychological changes the HeartMath practice facilitated. We discovered this was crucial. We believe to get such strong results the participants need to a supportive group and someone like Hargrave for encouragement to do this kind of work in a prison setting. A classroom setting worked well for this as they met daily during the week.

> **Workshop I**- Discovering EQ
> Participants learned the basic concepts of Emotional Intelligence: Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management. They saw the difference between someone handling each area poorly vs. well from examples in Hollywood movies. They read, The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book (Bradberry and Greaves), and spent 5 days recording self observations twice a day. This 8 hour workshop was written by TalentSmart for work place training. Bosteder worked with TalentSmart for permission, training, and adaptation.

Workshop II – Self Awareness and Self Management
It was determined by Bosteder after much research that the HeartMath skills, books, and 6 hour workshop would give the participants the best change at real change in the areas of Self Awareness and Self Management. This is not normally how HeartMath's workshop is used and it required Bosteder to work closely with the Institute of HeartMath for permission, training, and adaptation to the study participants.

In addition, Bosteder worked 4 hours with participants over two days giving individual training and coaching to each participant on one key skill and the use of HeartMath's biofeedback computer program (emwave pc) and handheld device (emwave psr).

After this workshop, students read, *Transforming Stress* (Childre and Rozeman, HeartMath) and did the self reflective work in the book. They were asked to practice the HeartMath skills by Hargrave as follows:
- 5 days a week at the start of Computer Tech class- 5 min. Neutral Tool
- 5 days a week at the end of Computer Tech class- 10 min. Heart Lock-in with music (increases the benefit)
- 1 day a week 15 min. on the emwave pc
- 2 days a week 15 min. on the emwave psr

The HeartMath skill practice took place from week 2 to 10 for a total of 9 weeks.

After *Transforming Stress*, participants read *Transforming Anxiety* (Childre and Rozeman, HeartMath) and completed most of its reflective exercises.

Workshop III- Social Awareness and Relationship Management
The last workshop was designed by Bosteder for this training. It focused on using the HeartMath skills in relationships, understanding emotional projections and other common issues people face, what it means to be an adult in relationships, role plays and practice.

Students then read, *Transforming Anger* (Childre and Rozeman, HeartMath) and completed some of the reflective exercises. By this last workshop many were integrating the concepts and skills into the rest of their lives. Skill practice continued for 3 weeks, until the study end.

Methodology:
Data was collected in four key ways: 1) Emotional Intelligence Appraisal-ME Edition, a self assessment test that was taken during first the training and taken again post training 2) The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) self assessment taken pre training and post training 3) Discipline Reports recorded in the DOC400 by Correctional Officers on study participants 4 months before the training and 4 months after. Neither Correctional Officers nor study participants were aware this data would be collected. Finally 4) Written evaluations were completed by participants at the close of the study. The survey's were extensive and both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

Results: (to be reviewed in greater detail during presentation)
    Quantitative –
- The *Brief Symptom Inventory* showed a significant reduction of symptoms of emotional distress, such as obsessive compulsive, depression, and anxiety.
- The *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal* showed a significant increase in ability in the key areas of Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management.
- The *DOC 400 Discipline Reports* showed a significant decrease in discipline problems outside the classroom.

Qualitative -

Most participants reported significant personal benefits to self and their relationships. A few reported an increase in depression and anxiety as a result of feeling for the first time in years. This caused some initial difficulty that needed extra support from Sara but they are now doing very well. Sara reported major improvement in her learning environment and major growth in her students. Two students, who have since paroled, contacted Hargrave and reported they are using the HeartMath skills to manage the struggles they are facing out of prison and they are creating better outcomes for themselves than they would have in the past.

Researchers:

Sara Hargrave is the instructor of the Computer Technology Program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Hargrave is a master's candidate in Adult Education and Higher Education Leadership at Oregon State University.

Lori Bosteder is certified trainer in Emotional Intelligence with TalentSmart. She is also a certified trainer in Heartmath's *Resilient Educator* training program and licensed as a 1:1 Provider. She volunteered as an instructor and counselor for eight years in her community and has training in domestic violence counseling and abuse issues. Bosteder is a master's candidate in Adult Education and Higher Education Leadership at Oregon State University.

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