

The Sextant



Navigating Your World

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RECIDIVISM

HOW TO AVOID IT, AND

HOW TO CONQUER IT.

The term recidivism is frequently used within the judicial, rehabilitation and corrections communities. It is defined as an individual who served time in prison, was released, and then subsequently returns to prison on an administrative or parole violation, or as the result of a new case.

Although state and federal governments universally define recidivism as the statistical rates that only include individuals who return to prison for a variety of reasons, I personally define recidivism as it pertains to behavior.

If an individual serves time in prison, alleges to have become rehabilitated, is released and then engages in criminal behavior, then the individual has recidivated irrespective of whether they have been re-arrested, re-sentenced or reincarcerated. The same holds true for any other relapse into a poor habit pattern.

WHEN DOES RECIDIVISM OCCUR?

Whether a person was recently released from prison or recently graduated from high school or college, they have a

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mountain in front of them. It's up to the individual to decide whether they have the courage to make the climb.

The concept that a felony conviction, or three of them in my case, will prevent a person from achieving a healthy life of normalcy is utter propaganda that is perpetuated by those who have failed to embrace necessary change and endure the inconvenience and pain that is an integral component of change.

For offenders who would contact me for employment, or any other assistance, I should mention that I am not a prisoner advocate. Until a person decides to change their path, there is nothing that I, or anyone else, can do for them except stay on my path and observe.

I am a card-carrying member of mainstream society. I have no positions or sympathy for practicing criminals, or those who think they can be partially legitimate, but still play the game by taking an occasional opportunity where they can realize a quick gain via illegitimacy.

When a person decides that they genuinely want to become a member of my world, I have nothing but time for them. However, there is zero chance that I am going to become a member of theirs, and I can spot the ones who are giving lip service long before I make any significant investment of my time.

Be willing to accept the job that no one else wants! ...*I did.*

The list is long of people who have suffered extreme adversity and triumphed. Christopher Reeve certainly comes to mind.

Christopher Reeve was on top of the mountain with the promise of a great life. In seconds, it was shattered.

Nevertheless, even with every justification to fade into obscurity, Christopher Reeve took on new challenges and led



noble causes to victory. Many people throw in the towel under such adversity and quit. He sucked it up, evaluated what he still had and gave it his all. He may have played the part of Superman as an actor, but in my mind, he genuinely was Superman. You only lose when you quit. So, just don't give up and quit!

The best part of climbing a mountain isn't arriving at the top. The actual attainment of a goal is generally anticlimactic. The parts that I cherish are the challenges I conquered during the climb, gathering the small but accumulating treasures, and the innumerable memories. Albeit the destinations have been good, the real prize is the journey itself.

Many of the people who fail at reentry are unsuccessful because of their own impatience. They want instant gratification and are unwilling to do the work to get the prize. No matter what you want out of life, or who you want to become, there is work, and that holds true whether you are starting on even ground or from the bottom of the barrel.

As you embark upon climbing your mountain, each new step generally has prerequisites. Before I could become an Airline Transport Pilot, I first had the prerequisites of becoming a private pilot and a commercial pilot with an instrument rating. And frankly, before I was able to get through the basics of private pilot theory, I had to take a few fundamental arithmetic courses.

If you don't have your high school diploma or a GED certificate, you might want to invest the time to form the requisite foundation upon which you can build. No matter where you are in life, *you must always begin from where you left off*. That is just a fact of life.



Recidivism frequently occurs during periods of frustration, a set-back, when you're tired, disorganized, or feeling defeated.

All of those are conditions that everyone deals with. It isn't exclusive to persons who are formerly incarcerated. Everyone gets knocked down. It is an individual choice to get back up or lay down and quit.

When I started my aviation career, the definitiveness of purpose was two-fold. One, I had the burn to fly and advance to the highest certificates and ratings, and to fly jets. And two, it was a career direction that incorporated all the elements of legitimacy that were integral components of my decision after my release on parole.

There were some discouraging periods while I was learning to fly. Money was tight and most of the people who were in my age group were doing pretty well financially. For all practical purposes, I was twenty-five, but I was at the same academic and professional level as seventeen- and eighteen-year-old kids.

There was a lot of pride that I had to swallow for a few years. Nevertheless, the experience was good in that respect. Pride and ego are expensive and offer no positive return. Pride and ego generally only serve to repel people.

I was scheduled for my private pilot flight test, which is called a check ride. Check rides are given either directly by the FAA, or by a designated FAA examiner, either of whom ride in the airplane and observe as the pilot performs various maneuvers and procedures. Successful completion of the written, oral, and practical tests results in the issuance of the Private Pilot Certificate. It took a lot of time, sacrifice, dedication, and hard work to reach this day.

The itinerary for my check ride was to fly from Cleveland Hopkins airport to Marion, Ohio and back to Hopkins. The



“cross country” portion of the private pilot check ride is a test of dead reckoning navigation.

Dead reckoning navigation requires the calculation of the winds aloft and the course to reach the destination. Theoretically, if all conditions are perfect, a pilot should be able to fly the magnetic heading that is calculated and arrive at the destination. However, conditions are never exact. Dead reckoning navigation is generally combined with pilotage, which uses ground features to identify whether the aircraft is on or off course.

Electronic navigation is far easier than dead reckoning. There are numerous ground-based radio navigation facilities that communicate with the navigation radios in the aircraft. The combination of the ground based and on-board radio facilities allows an airplane to track to and from specific geographic locations. There are also more advanced navigation systems like Loran-C and the Global Position System (GPS). Dead reckoning is almost never used as a practical form of navigation anymore, but it is important for a pilot to understand the principles of dead reckoning navigation.

I spent several hours on my preflight planning for my private pilot check ride. I double and triple checked all of my calculations and they were perfect. I had my weight & balance calculations exact, and my fuel estimate calculated within drops.

The examiner reviewed all of my preflight planning and administered the oral portion of the examination. I passed with flying colors.

I had a total of 67 flight hours, and I had straight “A’s” in all of my aviation courses at Cuyahoga Community College. I felt comfortable with the material, and I was very comfortable flying the airplane.



After the oral portion of the examination, the examiner and I got in the airplane, completed the required checklists, taxied to the active runway, and departed Cleveland Hopkins airport. We flew to a practice area that is located about 25 miles west of the airport where the examiner had me execute a battery of maneuvers and emergency procedures, all of which were performed satisfactorily.

We then started out on the cross country to Marion, Ohio. Unfortunately, all of my planning was from Cleveland to Marion, and now we were starting somewhere in the area of Lorain, Ohio. This wasn't in the plan. I somehow got way off course, and once I realized that I had no clue where I was, I became even more nervous than I already was.

I actually managed to get lost on my check ride with the FAA on board. I couldn't believe it! I had practiced cross-country navigation, but this was unfamiliar territory. All of my previous cross-country flights had been to Findlay, Toledo and Columbus, Ohio. Once I confessed that I was unsure where I was, the examiner allowed me to use the electronic navigation systems to reorient myself.

Feeling rather somber, we made the return flight to Cleveland Hopkins. As far as handling the airplane, all of my procedures were fine with one exception. My landing wasn't much better than a controlled crash. I really slammed it down hard.

Goodness, I felt like a horse's ass. For months, I had been making landings that were smooth as glass. Now, with the FAA examiner on board, I get lost on my cross-country, and then make a landing like the meteorite that slammed into the Earth causing the extinction of the dinosaurs. No damage – except to my pride.

We taxied to the flight school and parked the airplane. The examiner and I talked for twenty or thirty minutes. He could



see that I was really upset. Gosh, I was almost in tears. He said that he knew that I could fly – my instructor had boasted frequently that I was his best student.

The examiner insisted that I had a case of check ride jitters. He decided that the check ride was simply incomplete, and he told me to go home, get some rest and come back the following day to complete the check ride.

That was the first time since I had been released from prison that I really felt like giving up. Looking back at that situation and having experienced many other setbacks over the past forty-plus years, I am convinced that recidivism occurs when a person is still a little fragile, and they experience their first, or first few setbacks.

I had worked so hard and for so many months only to bomb my first check ride. I wasn't sure if I would even go back to re-test. If there was a time I could have recidivated, this was it.

Feeling completely drained, disappointed, and deflated, I went home, had some dinner, and went to bed. The next morning, still feeling nervous, I was right on the thin line of giving up.

I pushed beyond my broken pride, went to the airport, and took my check ride – again. I received my private pilot certificate that day, April 26, 1981.

I slain the Dragon, conquered the challenge and emerged victorious. I reflected on how I had felt. The self-doubt and the frustration and disappointment, all of which disappeared when I achieved the goal.

However, I almost gave up because I was tired and got knocked down. From that point forward, I always monitored my reaction to disappointments, especially if I was sick or tired. I never again negotiated the price of achieving a goal.



When I find myself feeling a little down, I get some rest, and then just push on.

When I look back at any of my challenging periods, I have forgotten the pain and only remember the good that resulted, including my incarceration experience. Anyone can do the same and benefit from capitalizing upon experiences to move forward, as opposed to exploiting past catastrophes as the reason or excuse not to pursue a rewarding future.

I had earned type ratings in the Cessna Citation Fanjet, the Israeli Westwind Jet and the Learjet as I continued to climb the aviation mountain.

I lost a Learjet Captain position through no fault of my own. I spent a year or so unemployed. That clearly wasn't the first time I had bit the floor, so I squeaked out a living doing flight and ground instruction, writing computer software, and working as a channel liaison for TempReps.

TempReps was a division of Technology Advancement Corp., a company that represented many of the major computer software development and hardware manufacturers.

The TempReps job was at least interesting, and it was lucrative. Whenever one of the company's clients developed a new software program or an innovative piece of computer hardware, we would be hired to visit commercial and retail distributors (*the Channel*) and provide demonstrations and training. I covered a five-state territory; Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and New York.

A typical job was one we did for Adobe. I visited Adobes' facility in San Jose, California where I attended its weeklong training seminar on a newly released printing and fax peripheral.

After returning home from manufacturer's training, I would take a week to schedule appointments with the channel



distributors. Appointment setting was a breeze – the channel was always interested in the latest and greatest technology that was coming down the pipe, some calling it leading edge, and others calling it bleeding edge.

Once my schedule was set, I simply traveled from one computer distributor to another, providing demonstrations and training. I was paid for each completed demonstration, I received meals and hotel expenses, and I was paid for my mileage. At 28 cents a mile, the mileage reimbursement was a gravy train since a typical tour racked up a few thousand miles.

At the time, I was living in the Cleveland area, and despite having a decent job that required little effort, by 1995 I determined that I was going nowhere professionally.

I was still licking my wounds from losing my Learjet captain position, and I needed a new passion - a new definitiveness of purpose.

I felt like I was dying in Cleveland. I wasn't sure what I needed. However, I thought that a change in environment might form a new beginning. I just questioned if I was running toward something or running away from something. Either way, if I wanted different results, I needed to change what I was doing, and perhaps where I was doing it. I was feeling beat up and drained.

Be very, very conscious of those times that you experience a setback. It will happen. During the past forty-plus years, my career has been anything but a smooth ride. There have been peaks and valleys, obstacles, challenges, and Dragons. I have indeed been knocked down. I have bit the floor so many times that I've developed a taste for linoleum.

It is during these difficult periods that many people recidivate. They think that the system doesn't work, and it



isn't worth all of their hard work, blood, sweat and tears, only to find themselves flat on their face ...*again*.

In the short term, it may appear that all of your work is an effort in futility. That thought had passed through my mind more than once. You work hard, strive to achieve goals, and then get knocked down. Don't lose faith. Picking yourself back up does become easier with time and experience.

If I examine my progress over the long term, I am clearly ahead of where I was when I was released on parole, not to mention where I was before I was released. I still get knocked down today and when I do, I allow myself fifteen minutes to suck my thumb, and then I brush off the dust, pick myself up and move on down the road.

When you get knocked down, you have a clear choice to move in one of two directions – forward or backward, or a third option is to do nothing and just stay down. Trust me, forward is better.

If you aren't getting knocked down, hammered, scuffed, scratched, bitten, broken and bloody, then you aren't out in the forest of opportunity, and you aren't engaging the Dragons. If you're not getting peppered with tomatoes, you probably aren't doing anything. It is part of the journey. If you want the stashes of gold and jewels, you need to slay the Dragons.

My concern that I was professionally dying in Cleveland grew during early 1995. I had lived in Columbus, Ohio during the late 1980's, and remembered a stark contrast between Columbus and Cleveland. I decided to take a ride to Columbus. As I drove around Columbus, I was attracted to the disparity of the city compared to Cleveland. I felt energized.

I returned home and put my condominium on the market – for sale by owner. It was sold the first weekend. Now, I was



moving for sure, and I thought it might be a good idea to get a job in Columbus.

While working as a channel liaison for TempReps, I had met numerous people in the PC computer and networking business.

During another trip to Columbus, I met with several of those contacts and accepted an offer from Mitch, a dynamic man who was the vice president of sales for a company that built PC computers and provided network services. Two brothers of Chinese descent who both had remarkable technical expertise owned the company.

The company started all new salespeople in the computer assembly department actually building new PC computers. The pay was lousy, but it was important that I gained a meticulous understanding of the hardware technology that I would eventually be selling.

I built computers for roughly a month, after which, I felt more than prepared to begin in the sales side. The only problem was, I had done such a good job building computers that the production manager was resisting my move to sales. I spoke with Mitch and within a few days, I was assembling my prefabricated desk in the sales department.

The desk came in a carton that had a full color 6 x 4-foot picture of what the desk looks like fully assembled with large red letters, *Easy to Assemble* Oak Laminated Executive Desk.

I fully admit I swallowed the hook all the way. I had the pieces and parts scattered all over the floor, and I was trying to interpret the instructions that were written in a language from a different universe.

I looked over at the box that was leaning against the wall – touting the advertisement, *Easy to Assemble* Oak Laminated



Executive Desk. I thought, oh, like maybe they would advertise it as, *Difficult to Impossible to Assemble* without a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from MIT.

At least during the two days it took me to assemble that easy to assemble desk, I had a good belly laugh at how the wool was clearly pulled over my eyes. I've learned to laugh at myself – especially when I become a victim of my own naïveté and stupidity.

When I started selling, I found over fifty boxes of beautiful, full color post cards sitting in a storage room that the company had printed. There were twenty different postcards, with a total in the tens of thousands. The company was not even using them.

I developed a computerized program that automatically generated introductory letters to prospective customers. I then made follow up telephone calls to each of those introductory letters a week later.

My system then automatically generated mailing labels so each of these prospective customers would receive each of the twenty postcards a week apart. The exposure was phenomenal and resulted in accelerating the whole sales process. I became passionate about the success of my program and the passion paid off handsomely.

My boss, Mitch was impressed with my progress, and he took the time to mention that my progress had clearly captured the attention of the owners of the company.

Frankly, all I was doing was my job. I was soliciting new business, making a ton of telephone calls, and using the resources available in the company, i.e., the postcards.

The fact is, I was being compared to the rest of the salespeople who were not doing much more than coming in, breathing the air, drinking the coffee, and waiting for the



phone to ring. It made for a recognizable contrast – not necessarily because I was doing such an exemplary job, but rather, because the average person does such a lousy job.

If you are concerned as to how your performance will measure up to the average individual in the workplace, don't worry. A majority of people in the workplace have little more than a pulse.

I've been an employee and an employer. Average is worthless and it is pretty simple to draw a stark contrast between your work ethic and that of the average work ethic. Just work and do your job.

I found a small list of Internet Service Providers and Worldwide Website development companies in a local newspaper.

Given that it was 1995 and very few people had even heard of the Internet, the list was probably only 8 or 10 companies. In fact, there were very few web sites other than government and education at that time.

I began sending letters and post cards to the list of Internet related companies since I thought for sure they would have a need for lots of computer equipment.

I received a telephone call from one of the companies, *Your Connection World Wide Web Services, Inc.* I had been spamming them with post cards for a couple of months. The caller, Kyle, said that he had a dozen of my post cards and that he would never buy any of my PC equipment because he used Silicon Graphics computers. I told him that I was fascinated with his business and asked if we could meet so he could tell me how he got started.

I made several appointments with Kyle, the owner of Your Connection. At least a couple of times, he was not there at the scheduled time. Nevertheless, I persisted. Within a few



weeks, Kyle called me in need of a CD ROM drive. I scheduled an appointment to meet for lunch and deliver the CD drive.

During lunch, Kyle explained that he had just graduated from college a few months prior. Literally a few days after graduation, he moved to Columbus and opened his business. I asked to see his operation, and after lunch we went to his office.

I was immediately captivated with Kyle's involvement in the Internet. Over the next several weeks, we forged a friendship.

Based upon the friendship with Kyle, and my interest in helping him with his business, we talked about how his company was structured and how he was handling the administrative and business functions. He wasn't. In fact, the deeper I dug into the organizational aspects of his business, the more I realized that his expertise was technology, not business and administration. There was clearly no business planning. There was no business plan. For the most part, the company was on the fast track to bankruptcy.

As a friend, I volunteered my time to get Kyle's accounting set up and get his business organized. Over a fairly short period of time, we both realized that the combination of our skills would probably make a good partnership.

Rather quickly, my passion was clearly moving in the direction of the Internet and Kyle's business. Although I was performing in my job with my employer, it became apparent that the Internet had captured my focus.

No one knew for certain what the potential was for the Internet back in 1995, but I envisioned that it would be astronomical.



I talked with my employer and explained that I did not believe that it was appropriate to remain on the company's payroll when my focus and passion was not dedicated to its business. We amicably severed the employment relationship but maintained a good customer – vendor relationship.

I wanted to become involved in Kyle's business and he recognized the benefit of having a partner who has good administrative skills and organizational disciplines.

The partnership started when Kyle offered me the position as President of Your Connection for the total compensation of \$10.00 per year. Given that the package came with a 50% equity position in the company, I accepted, and we were on our way to building the business together. Money was tight – both for the business and for me personally.

I made the 40-minute drive to our little office in Hilliard, Ohio every morning and back home every evening. ...evening, generally in the area of 1:00 AM.

It's an interesting phenomenon when something totally captures your focus and develops into a passion. Every night I went to bed and couldn't wait to get up and go to work again. Once I was at work, I never wanted to leave. The only thing that forced me to go home every night was exhaustion.

That 1987 Chrysler LeBaron was bumping the 100,000-mile mark and began to develop a few problems. The month was August and the air conditioning system stopped working. I had it recharged, but within a day, all of the refrigerant leaked back out. It simply was not worth the cost of repair.

Then all of the power windows stopped working. Since money was tight, I just figured that I would grit my teeth and bear it. It would start cooling down in September and after that, rolling down the windows would not be important. It was pretty uncomfortable, but when you're pursuing a passion, the little things just don't matter.



As November approached and the weather began to cool down, I had turned on the heater for the first time since the previous winter. There was no heat. It may have been due to a clogged heater core, or clogs throughout the entire radiator and cooling system.

Going into December and January, the car began overheating and leaking all the coolant on every trip to and from the office.

I simply began carrying two, 2-liter bottles of water. On each trip to work, I had to stop twice to replenish the radiator water and the same on the return trip home.

Another problem developed. I had a leak in the gas tank. Now the car would only hold about four gallons of gas. So now, the routine for the trip to the office was add water to the radiator at home, fill my two 2-liter bottles for the trip, drive to the gas station, pump in four gallons of gas, add more water to the radiator, drive toward the office, stop and add more water to the radiator and finish the drive to the office. When you're chasing your passion, the little things just don't matter.

This system worked fine until one night during February 1996 when I was leaving the office at roughly 1:30 AM. It was the record setting coldest night of the year, and it felt like the temperature was well below zero.

Because it was so dangerously cold, everything was closed, including gas stations. After filling the radiator and my two, 2-liter bottles, I began my journey home.

It was amazingly cold. I passed the gas station that I customarily purchased my four gallons of gas because it was closed. The gas gauge indicated that I had two needle-widths of gas in the tank. I thought – I hoped it would get me home.



Within five miles or so after entering the highway, which was deserted, as expected the hot light came on indicating that the engine was not cooling properly.

I made the usual stop along the side of the highway and opened the hood. As I opened the radiator, the cap flew off and hot water gushed out, completely drenching me. It is astonishing how cold it gets when the temperature is below zero and you're soaking wet! I dumped the remaining water I had with me into the radiator.

As I got back in the car thoroughly soaked with the water that had just come out of my radiator, the steam coming off of me immediately frosted all of the windows in the car. Since I had no heater, I also had no windshield defroster. The electric rear window defroster still worked (*yippee!*) That was about the only thing on that car that did work.

I commenced my drive toward home, frequently scraping the frost from the inside of the windshield, and within another five miles, the hot light came back on. I had no more water, nothing was open, the highway was literally deserted, and I was freezing. I didn't have much choice but to press on.

The car began making variety of noises that no machinery should be making. I noticed in my rear-view mirror that I was leaving an ever-increasing smoke trail mixed with a sprinkling of red glowing particles. It was pretty clear that the engine was burning up. I didn't relish the thought of destroying my engine, but I knew I couldn't stop because I would freeze to death.

Even with the accelerator to the floor, the car continued to slow down, and by now there was maximum smoke and sparks pouring out from under the hood until finally, the engine completely seized. The heat did help to defrost the windshield though.



I was roughly three miles from home as I coasted to a stop on the side of the road. It is remarkable how cold it gets when the temperature is below zero, you're soaking wet, and you have to make a three-mile walk. By the time I made it home, I had most of the early-stage symptoms of hypothermia and spent a couple of hours in the bathtub. *When you're chasing your passion, the little things just don't matter.* I couldn't wait to get up and go to work the next day.

The dog in the hunt has no fleas. Even though he may be totally infested, the fleas are completely unnoticed for as long as he is focused on the hunt. It is only when you're sitting idle that you are bothered by little things and start scratching.

The following day, I had the car towed to a dealership that was offering \$1,000 trade-in on anything that even resembled a car. I told the dealer that the car wasn't worth anything more than its weight in scrap. They still gave me the trade-in allowance on a lease, and I drove away in a new Mercury Marquis. Of course, all of the younger employees commented on what a nice middle-aged man's car that was. I liked that car. It was huge. It felt like sitting on my sofa in my living room and driving a condominium.

Whenever I see a broken down and disheveled looking car on the side of the road, I always think, there goes a CEO pursuing his passion and trying to start a new business.

Don't be bothered by the little things. Focus on the dream.

The greatest and most important goal I have, or ever will achieve was that I made my mom proud of her son. I experienced the honor to have given her the gift of the fulfillment of her greatest dream – to see her son become everything she dreamt he could become.

A man named John was walking down the street and fell into a deep hole. He tried for hours to climb out but couldn't.



He could see people walking by and even though he yelled and screamed for help, no one would stop.

Then, John saw his doctor passing by.

“Doc!!!” John yelled. His doctor stopped and peered down the hole as John yelled, “Doc, it’s me, John. Can you help me?”

His doctor looked down the hole and yelled back, “Of course I can help John, after all, I’m a doctor.”

The doctor promptly wrote out a prescription for anti-anxiety medication, threw it down the hole and continued walking on his way.

After a little while longer, and still no one stopping to help, John noticed his attorney walking past.

“Counselor!!!” John yelled.

The attorney stopped and looked down the hole as John yelled, “Counselor, it’s me, John. Can you help me?”

The attorney looked down the hole and yelled back, “Of course John, I can help. After all, I’m an attorney.”

The attorney promptly wrote out a lawsuit against the city for the danger created by the hole in the sidewalk, filed it in the courthouse across the street, came back, threw a time-stamped copy of the complaint down the hole, and continued walking along.

After a little while longer, and still no one stopping to help, John noticed his minister walking past.

“Reverend!!!” John yelled.

The minister stopped and looked down the hole as John yelled, “Reverend, it’s me, John. Can you help me?”



The minister yelled back, “Of course son, I can help. After all, I’m a minister.”

The minister promptly wrote out a prayer on a piece of paper, threw it down the hole and continued walking along.

John continued to try climbing out of the hole, but to no avail. Finally, he noticed a friend walking by.

“*Bob!!!*” John yelled. His friend stopped and looked down the hole as John yelled, “Bob, it’s me, John. Can you help me?”

John’s friend yelled back, “How the heck did you get down there?”

John replied, “What difference does it make! I just need your help getting out.”

To John’s surprise, his friend then jumped down into the hole.

Now, with both men at the bottom of the hole, John looked at his friend and said, “You idiot, why did you jump down here? Now we’re both stuck down here in this hole!”

John’s friend looked back at him and calmly said, “Yeah, I know. But I’ve been down in this hole before, and I know the way out.”

...Original story author unknown

I was released from prison after serving both federal and state time, and successfully reentered mainstream society. My reentry was not without many challenges that I have conquered.

I have had several successful careers in diverse professions, and I have achieved financial independence. I was released when they opened the gates. However, I got “*out*” when I



closed the chapter of crime & prison and opened a new chapter that had nothing to do with crime, prison, the corrections, or reentry system.

I got out of the system when I got the system out of me. I closed the chapter, I moved on, and I never looked back. You can do the same.

When I was first released on parole, I had a conversation with my mother as to what I wanted to do with my future.

I told her that I wanted to help other ex-offenders who are getting out successfully reenter the community.

I could see my mom's face become painfully serious. Her answer was pretty pointed and agonizingly honest.

Mom fervently said, "How can you teach them to successfully reenter society when you haven't done that yourself? You have done nothing that you can teach them."

She continued, with empathy in her voice, "At this juncture, you are hardly qualified to be the teacher – you are the student. You first need to achieve some success and credentialing in the mainstream of society, and then you will have something to offer."

That stung! But she was right. When I first got out, working with other ex-offenders was just a continuation of staying in the same system. It was a cop-out and an attempt to rationalize my fear to get back out into the real world of work. My Mother explained that I could not effectively teach someone how to do something that I have not actually done.

I needed to break away from the system totally, reenter mainstream society and make a successful career in a profession that had nothing to do with the prison and corrections system. Then, if successful, I would have



something worthwhile to share with other's facing similar challenges.

I have no delusions that my message will reach everyone. I'm not going to coddle you, offer you prayers, medical advice, or legal counsel. Rather, I'm jumping down in your hole with you. We're at the bottom of the hole – together.

I've been down in the hole you're in before and I know the way out.

I have something to teach you. It only requires that you open up, *be honest with yourself* and be willing to consider an alternative life and direction.

I have lost count of how many times during my career I have heard someone say to me, “*Dave, you should write a book.*” From the time I first got my private pilot certificate until I founded a corporation that built and operated a national Internet backbone network that formed the infrastructure of the Internet in North America, countless people have suggested that I write a book – a rags to riches story, because I had risen from the ashes of adversity.

I never had a reason to write a book. Most memoirs are written for ego, and a few are written for some kind of historical record. Writing a book for ego provided zero motivation, and I wouldn't flatter myself by thinking that I altered history in any significant manner.

After reading an article in a local newspaper regarding the challenges that some people face after being released from prison, I began examining the programs and the support that is available to assist people with making a successful transition from prison into mainstream society.

Indeed, there are a plethora of community reentry organizations that provide food, clothing and shelter, or assistance with locating housing. Few have real-word



experience in the mainstream workforce, or as an entrepreneur founding and operating a for-profit business. I nevertheless am grateful to those who provide any type of assistance to formerly incarcerated individuals. Reentry is not easy, it is hard. But it is possible, and it is worth it.

Many people are released from prison who attempt to embark upon a crusade to purportedly work with people who are released from prison to help them make a successful reentry into mainstream society – even though the teachers have not reentered mainstream society themselves. My interactions with such individuals suggest to me that we humans have a tendency to cling to that which is familiar.

Despite having talked with numerous individuals who seek government and foundation grants, and other funding and charity for the purpose of providing assistance to formerly incarcerated people, no one has been able to provide a coherent answer to the question regarding the elephant in the room. The person(s) pursuing the endeavor and expect to provide the assistance to help others reenter into mainstream society have not done so themselves.

A person can effectively only teach that which they have actually done. I question the veracity of those who purport to know the path, having never actually integrated into, and become a working member of, mainstream society post incarceration.

If an individual's stated motivation to help is because of a passion to support the ex-offender demographic, then there is really no need for grants or other funding. There are already plenty of organizations with an objective of helping ex-offenders. If the motivation is genuinely based upon passion, go volunteer.

I suspect that there are many people like myself, who after having served time in prison, experienced 40-plus years of



success in mainstream society. Ironically, I believe that the primary reason that many of the most qualified individuals have not written books is because they continue to remain very busy with their career.

I spent almost three decades forming the material to publish a book by focusing on my career. My career focus and my goals never included writing this, or any book.

It was not until almost two years after selling a company, which provided for my retirement that I even considered the laborious task of writing a book. The only motivation to write a book was to produce a work with a main theme and focus on helping others achieve substantially similar results as I have during my career.

In summary, the climb to the top of your mountain isn't linear. There will be up's and down's. There will be challenges. You will experience times that are discouraging. Get some rest, recharge, and get right back out there.

<https://www.SelfReinvention.org>