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Cc:
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Inspiring the people with the problem to become their own Solution

Prisoner Recidivism

It Doesn't Hurt Enough!

The Motivation of Pain

vs.

The Motivation of Pleasure.

This article is for people who work in the corrections and reentry profession, and know individuals who are, were, or are on the path to incarceration, and for individuals who are, were, or are on the path to incarceration personally.

My intent in publishing these Sextant Articles is not to try to convince anyone that they should take a particular path in their life. Rather, it is simply to show them that a different and legitimate path is available.

These articles are also not a platform from where I boast or brag, but rather, I use my own personal experiences to provide the indisputable evidence that life after serving both federal and state time is available to anyone who is willing to

put forth the effort.

Brian went to visit his friend, Courtney. As they were talking and enjoying the fresh lemonade that Courtney made, Brian noticed her dog Penelope, lying in a corner, quietly whimpering, making slight adjustments to her position and letting out an occasional painful sounding *yelp!*

"What's wrong with Penelope?" Brian asked Courtney. "Oh," Courtney replied, "There's a rusty nail sticking up out of the floor over there and she's laying right on it."

With a puzzled look on his face, Brian asked, "Then why doesn't she just move and lay someplace else?" Looking over at Penelope, then turning back and looking at Brian, Courtney shrugged her shoulders and said, "*I guess it doesn't hurt enough.*"

When the nail hurts enough, people will move. Until then, they will continue lying on the same old rusty nail, complaining and whimpering with occasional painful yelps, but never putting forth the necessary effort to just getting up and moving to a place that is more comfortable.

If you're incarcerated and your nail doesn't hurt enough yet, it will. Hopefully, you will make the decision to get off the nail before you catch a *fifteen-year-to-life* sentence. It is guaranteed that the nail will hurt enough before that sentence is finished, but you'll be stuck sitting on that nail until someone else decides it's time for you to get off of it.

If you haven't reached a point where the consequences of your actions have caused enough pain, then the decision to move forward and embrace legitimacy as your future path may require a more conscious and deliberate contemplation.

When your hand touches a hot stove, you don't need to think about moving your hand. It is an auto-response - a reflex to pain. Eventually, we develop emotional auto-responses to pain as well, which cause us to avoid those things that create the pain.

The pain of your nail needs to hurt more than the pain that is associated with change, community reentry, pursuing a path of legitimacy and dealing with the challenges that are a part of achievement. If your pain hasn't reached a high enough intensity, then it is probably a little more difficult to make the decision to embrace and conquer the challenges that are inherent with legitimate achievement. *Conquering challenges isn't painless.*

Perhaps you can at least forecast into the future that eventually the pain will progressively get worse if the direction of your life remains substantially the same. If you continue on the same path, the logical consequence is that you will continue to experience the same painful results.

You're certainly able to forecast the painful results of touching a hot stove. Having already experienced the reflex, you make a conscious decision not to touch it. You don't need to touch it every time just to realize the same painful result over and over again. You can make the same conscious decisions about the direction of your life without diving back

into the same fire that caused your most recent episode of incarceration pain.

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There are compelling arguments to both theories as to whether pain or pleasure is a greater motivator. I will introduce a third possibility.

First, I want you to think of the one person in your life that you care about the most. If you have children, it might be your child. It might be your spouse or life partner, a parent or sibling. Take a second and picture that person in your mind. We'll come back to that in a few minutes.

The twin Petronas Towers located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia are among the world's tallest buildings, towering some 1,483 feet (*about a quarter of a mile*) to the top of the buildings' spires.

Picture in your mind, stretching a one-inch diameter steel cable from the top of one tower to the top of the other tower. Now, we'll spread a *generous* coating of grease on that cable so it's nice and slippery. We'll wait until we have a nice *windy and gusty* day. Try to get the visual in your mind.

Once all of the conditions are perfect, lots of grease on the cable and strong gusty winds, we'll set a *one hundred dollar bill* out in the middle of the cable. Are you willing to go out and retrieve it? If not, how about if we put *two* (2) of those *one hundred dollar bills* out there?

We could continue to increase the amount and some would say they're willing to climb out on that one inch steel cable that is coated with grease, 1,483 feet up in the air with the wind howling. But really, if they were actually standing up there, *would anyone really attempt this? Doubtful!*

Most people state that they would not go out for any amount of money. If you are one of those people who would not go out for any amount of money, ask yourself why you wouldn't. Is it because of a natural protective instinct we have called "*fear?*"

A few paragraphs ago, I asked you to think of the one person in your life who you care about most. If you have children, it might be your child. It might be your spouse or significant other, a parent or sibling.

Now, were at the top of the towers looking out over the grease coated cable that stretches to the other tower. That one person most important to you is out in the middle, dangling and holding on with only one hand, pleading for you to save them from falling almost 1,500 feet to a certain death. Will you go out there now? Almost 100% of people I ask have no hesitation - they absolutely would go out there.

Let's examine why. Most people would not go out there for money, irrespective the amount. Most of those people indicated that the reason was *fear*. Yet, if that one person who they care about most in life were hanging out there, most of those same people would go to the rescue without hesitation. *So, what happened to fear?*

There is another dimension that comes into play when we are talking about motivation by pain or pleasure, or the emotion we call "fear" that prevents us from doing certain things that we know will cause a reaction that is undesirable to us - either real or perceived. It is called *Definitiveness of Purpose*. Most people will not go out on the cable to retrieve money, and they suggest the reason is fear. Yet, when the person who is most important to them is dangling out on the cable, they are out there like lightning. What happened to fear?

The reason that a person would not go out on the greasy cable for the money, but they would climb out to save the life of the person they care about most is the *definitiveness of purpose*. The money did not create the *definitiveness of purpose*, but saving the person closest to your heart does.

We are motivated by a combination of pain and pleasure. We will adjust our behavior to avoid pain and to gain pleasure. Understanding *definitiveness of purpose* gives you the catalyst to control your motivation. In fact, without *definitiveness of purpose*, a person is a ship without a rudder.

Without a defined direction, a person is just walking through life aimlessly, stumbling over moments of pain and pleasure, constantly in *reactive* mode as opposed to proactively pursuing defined objectives. Conversely, when you have a *definitiveness of purpose*, you