ICEBREAKERS III

By Joe Bouchard

For the

International Association of Correctional Training Personnel
2011, Icebreakers III IACTP

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With editing assistance from Terry Satterfield

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For Julie, Bridgette, and Robyn.

For Terry Satterfield and Michelle VanDusen – my corrections sparring partners.
Thanks for the inspiration.
Introduction to icebreakers III

Let’s start this book with a clichéd phrase: I have good news and bad news.

First, the bad news: Corrections agencies have less money than before. It is not a surprise that we have to accomplish more with fewer resources. This has been the status quo for a number of years. For those of us who prepare corrections professionals for the perils inside through our instruction, this has hit home in a particularly hard manner.

Now for the good news: The classroom exercises contained in *Icebreakers III* cost little or no money. Almost all of these twenty-five unique corrections-oriented exercises do not require expensive props or complicated ideas that consume extra time.

You can modify or replicate all that lies herein. In *Icebreakers III*, you have over two dozen out of the box, ready to roll activities. With the proper segue, any classroom exercise can be modeled to the content of the main module of the day. It happens that many in this installment of Icebreakers fit well with communications modules.

Before we look forward, let’s take a look back. Icebreakers 101 is a column for the International Association of Corrections Training Personnel or IACTP in the Journal of Correctional Training. If fact, today the column is alive and well in *The Correctional Trainer*. In 2007, the first Icebreaker book was published by IACTP. In 2009, a second volume was added.

*Icebreakers III* is the third in a series of books. Like its predecessors, these ideas come from the mind of a corrections trainer with ample presentation experience. I truly hope that you and all to whom you present enjoy the classroom exercises.

Joe Bouchard
September 2011
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About IACTP

IACTP is an international professional association of trainers, training administrators, and educators representing all aspects of the field of adult and juvenile justice. IACTP was established in 1974 and provides its members with:

- An Annual Trainers’ Conference
  - Yearly awards of excellence for outstanding agencies and programs in the field of criminal justice training
  - Exceptional workshops presented by leaders in criminal justice training
  - Networking opportunities with trainers from all fields of criminal justice
  - Vendors exhibiting the latest in criminal justice technology, services and equipment
- A quarterly journal, “The Correctional Trainer”
- A member’s only listserv providing global access to criminal justice professionals
- And a voluntary trainer’s certification program

Vision of IACTP

The International Association of Correctional Training Personnel's Vision is to lead correctional training into the next Century.

Mission of IACTP

The International Association of Correctional Training Personnel enhances public safety and the fair and humane treatment of offenders by promoting organizational and individual excellence in the profession of training.

For more information about IACTP, please go to www.iactp.org
Assertive or Aggressive Icebreaker 101

Most communications modules eventually come around to the question: “Where do you draw the line?” Specifically, when is someone standing up for themselves and when does that become bullying? The corrections profession requires that we act in a firm but fair manner. Though perception is in the eye of the beholder, we need to determine in general the difference between assertive and aggressive. What is firm? What is aggressive?

The following icebreaker needs no materials at all – just a facilitator who can tell short stories and a room full of participants.

First, ask the audience to define the words assertive and aggressive. Adopt and mix the varying answers then offer the following definitions if necessary.

**Assertive** - Inclined to bold or confident

**Aggressive** - Inclined to behave in an actively hostile fashion

Then ask participants the difference between these terms.

Next, inform the audience that you will tell a few quick tales and they must state whether the main character acted in an assertive or aggressive way. Here are a few examples:

1. **Bruce and Freddie**- Bruce had a younger sister with a boyfriend named Freddie. One day while Bruce was relaxing, Freddie came to the door and asked for his girlfriend, Bruce’s younger sister. Bruce said to Freddie, “I’ll let you wait here for her only if you walk to the store and buy me a bottle of pop and a pack of cigarettes.” Bruce posed this to Freddie while pointing rapidly in Freddie’s face. There was no hint of joking on Bruce’s face.

   Was Bruce assertive or aggressive?

2. **Ellice in hospital** – A few years ago, my father was in and out of a small, regional hospital. As time wore on and our father’s health slowly worsened, my younger sister stayed at the hospital many long hours. She would ask many questions of staff about the recovery of the patient. When she was given conditional answers (could, might, may), Ellice politely and persistently asked for more definitive answers (will, shall, must). Though always polite, Ellice asked the same question of many staff and frequently. She did so with unwavering eye contact. On more than one occasion, she asked the staff that she questioned, “Who is your supervisor?”

   Was Ellice assertive or aggressive?
3. **Renee seats the mother of the bride** - Renee, the planner of a wedding shower, had to attend to many details. She was in charge of everything for a relative’s party that was starting within fifteen minutes. Last minute details were not coming together too well. As crunch time approached and things started to unravel, the mother of the bride politely poked Renee on the shoulder. Uncertain and not wishing to disrupt any plans, the mother of the bride asked Renee, “Where do I sit?” With a straight face, though through clenched teeth, Renee said, “Why don’t you sit there?” Renee pointed to a bathroom and directly to the toilet.

Was Renee assertive or aggressive?

The scenarios are endless. Facilitators may obtain background stories in many ways:

- Take stories from personal experiences;
- Conduct an internet search with ‘conflict’ and ‘stories’
- Look up moral dilemmas and modify as needed
- Poll students

Facilitators have a choice of using humor, uncomfortable situations, and inconclusive scenarios. I believe that it is best to start with a story that is blatantly aggressive and to work into less clear territory. In fact, the class may provide a good teaching opportunity if it is divided on whether a scenario is assertive or aggressive. This provides a live example of persuasion in action which could be discussed.

I created this icebreaker for a presentation for the Pennsylvania County Corrections Association on the topic of bullying in corrections. The stories were based on slightly modified experiences in my life. The exercise went well, as most of the 100 professionals in attendance responded in some way. Thanks to Deputy Warden Simmons for inviting me to the Keystone State. Special thanks for the professionals who helped me field test this icebreaker.
Car Wash Icebreaker

For corrections, times are tough and resources are scarce. Effective use of all tools available to us is crucial in attaining our mission of safety for the public, staff, and offenders. How can trainers impart the very important lesson of coordination to a classroom?

The answer is simple. All one need to do is apply a small, simple model. Enter the concept of washing cars.

How hard can a car wash be to coordinate? On the face of it, there is no problem. Of course, we have yet to introduce the human factor.

The facilitator instructs participant to suppose that they are going to be part of a volunteer car wash. In this scenario, cars will roll up in a line and each will be systematically processed like on an assembly line. The cars will be washed and dried by hand by four or more workers.

With the scene set, the instructor gets input. Without consulting neighbors, each person will write down a specific car part that they will volunteer to wash.

(In a modification of this, the instructor can provide a simple car chart like one would find on the damage section of a rental car agreement. Participants can simply mark an X on the specific car part that they will wash in the assembly line.)

Now the facilitator collects the answers and lists them on the board. There is bound to be overlapping responsibilities and areas that will not be attended. For example, one class may have three people volunteering to wash the grill. This is a one person job. In the same sampling, there may be no volunteers to wash the hood, something that could be considered a two person job.
The facilitator will then ask if anyone in a crowded area will volunteer to move to a part of the car that has no washer. It all depends on the crowd, of course. But, the facilitator can expect to find resistance and possibly a “this is not my job” mentality.

The instructor can then ask if there are better ways to wash a car. Answers may vary. Not all car washes are alike. Some are automated, touch-less wonders. Others are do it yourself, coin fed varieties with a nozzle, brush and multiple settings that you control. And when you think of charity car washes, a hand wash is what generally comes to mind.

The instructor can point out that the same is true of agencies. No two function in quite the same manner. Common to most state agencies are field office, prison, and administrative functions. With preparation ahead of time, the instructor can compile agency distribution of staff between these three parts of the whole and have participants guess.

In a car wash or in various corrections agencies, resources and division of labor are undoubtedly different, even if the mission is the same. Still, coordination is key in wise utilization of resources. And a simple icebreaker like this can illustrate the importance of preliminary planning.
Change o’ Heart

Teamwork is one of the most fundamental necessities in any job. In corrections, it is an imperative tool. Some wonder if teamwork is a matter skill or simple luck. Will pure skill always win over random choice? Or will luck triumph despite our set of abilities? What happens when both luck and skill are in the mix?

Change o’ Heart is a simple, two-part game of skill and chance. And it costs very little to conduct.

The requirements for people in this exercise are:

- Two teams of two people. One person in each team will be blindfolded. The other will be a silent helper.
- One person will act as a judge. This person will watch the two teams work one at a time on each task. The judge will time each of the teams in declare a winner at the end. The judge, a person of great professional integrity, has the duty to add a minute for each instance in which either team operates outside of the rules.
- In addition, the audience may play the role of being useful by the facilitator; the audience will be encouraged to thwart the team for which they do not support through verbal banter or misinformation.

As for materials, you will need a total of 20 coins and two decks of cards. It does not matter that the denomination of the coins, as long as there are 20 coins.

The first part of this exercise starts with the skill set.
1. Flip a coin to see which team goes first. After all, you have 20 coins at hand.
2. Blindfold one person on the first team.
3. Roles of the participants: A silent helper can only write down whatever the blindfolded person directs. This could be the end answer or parts of an answer to be added later. Note: The silent helper shall not talk. The blindfolded person is to remain blind and the silent helper is to remain mute.
4. 10 coins are placed in front of the blindfolded team member. Timing starts when the judge says “go”.
5. The blindfolded team member must, by feel, determine the value of all 10 coins. For more of a challenge, different size coins should be used. The silent helper may not talk, but can guide the hands of the blindfolded person to the coins. The silent helper will also write down any instructions or data given by the blindfolded team member.
6. You may allow people the audience to give advice to the blindfolded one. However, there’s nothing against giving the wrong advice, as any “helper” from the audience may have a valid reason to thwart the team in question.
7. The judge will call “time is up” when the answer is given.
8. The second part of this exercise has to do with luck. Place a well-shuffled deck of cards in front of the blindfolded team member.
9. The judge tells the blindfolded team member that he or she must draw a heart in order to stop the clock. This must be done one card at a time.
10. When the heart is drawn, the clock stops. The next team repeats the steps of both parts of the activity and tries to beat the score.
11. The facilitator will note the total time for both teams, the time it took to perform the coin part of the task, and the time it took to draw a heart – the luck part of this exercise.

Trainers may throw a wrench into the works. For example, people may vote on which team will win. This should be done on paper in the absence of the four competing team members. Also, audience members can thwart the efforts of each blindfolded team member with false information. This should increase the suspense. After a winner is declared, the judge reveals the vote tally.

Another way that the trainer can guide the outcome is to literally stack the cards. One could remove all hearts from one of the decks. This may seem like dirty pool, but also illustrates differences and advantages we face a work life. It is up to the facilitator to decide to detract from the team likely to win in order to level the playing field or to increase the chances of likely winner. It may be that the facilitator has no inkling of who is likely to win. And therein lies the element of luck.

The facilitator can ask many questions about teamwork after these tasks are completed. Some of them are:
   1. How well can a silent person and a blinded person work together?
   2. How did the audience impact the outcome?
   3. Did you see or feel frustration in the process?
   4. What strategies did the second team learn from watching the first team?
   5. Considering the no talk rule what would you have done differently if you were one of the participants in the activities?
   6. What is more important for success – luck or skill?

Perhaps luck or individual skills do not wholly dictate the outcome as much as teamwork will. This is a good example of how people work together under adverse conditions. After all, in corrections we know that optimal circumstances are rare.
Destruction or Misuse with Value Over $10

It should come as no surprise that some prisoners will risk major misconducts reports written on them in order to achieve their goal of comfort. That is to say, most contraband traders are aware they may suffer a “ticket” by misusing or destroying state property. Still, they take the risk in order to reap the rewards.

There are many contraband trading vessels. Consider the law book – a ubiquitous part of any prison library. Many of which are over 1000 pages and have ample hiding places when one thinks about it.

This icebreaker is a hands-on contraband control endeavor.

1. The object is to learn as much as possible about the different ways that prisoners modify books in order to move contraband.
2. Divide the class into groups of four. All participants in each team will play the role of a prisoner trying to alter a book in order to move tobacco.
3. Each team will be given an old, used book. Optimally, this will be a law book that is no longer usable. Facilitators can find law books from the institutional librarian’s discards. Old books can also be obtained from garage sales, used bookstores, and from local library discards. My preference is for law books, as these are common in jails and prisons. Also, law books are generally over 1000 pages. There would be more places to hide contraband in such a large vessel.
4. For added authenticity, the facilitator can provide each team with a pile of pencil shavings and one business sized envelope or a blank sheet of paper. The objective can be specific to concealing “tobacco” and moving it with the law book/vessel.
5. Teams shall be instructed that they may only use items that a prisoner in that facility would legitimately possess. For example if the team elects to hollow out a portion of the book, they may only use a pen if prisoners are permitted to use pens in that facility. They may not use a pair of scissors that may be in the training room, as is likely that prisoners are not permitted to possess scissors.
6. For even more authenticity, the facilitator can appoint a person to “make rounds” and observe the progress. In similar exercises such as shank making from a metal candy container, I invoke the “3 feet rule”. I tell the participants up front that if I
am not within 3 feet of anyone on the team, then I or the appointed rover are not able to observe what the team is doing.

7. I would further instruct that the team is to be discreet. When a rover is within range, the team may utilize ruses, diversions or deception. This is done to keep the observer from witnessing their progress.

8. Teams are given a reasonable amount of time to conceal the faux tobacco in the books. A period of 15 min. may work well for this purpose.

9. Observe the team and make notes. Ask these questions: Do some teams plan or talk it out? Or does the team dive right in? Are there members who are dominant on the team who will take all initiative? Or is team rather equally utilized?

10. At the end of the appointed time, each team will elect a spokesperson. Each spokesperson in turn will report how they could conceal the faux tobacco in the law book.

11. The rover or the facilitator can note on a whiteboard where each team concealed the tobacco.

Of course, as this exercise is used over the years, the facilitator will find common answers as to where tobacco can be hidden. Most will opt immediately for the pocket part or the binding. Others will try to make a hollow in an unobtrusive part of the book. Others still will try to construct a hidden pocket with the back pages in the back cover. The facilitator can tell the participants after the exercise places that they may have missed that are commonly occurring hiding spots. Of course, if one of the teams comes up with something that is not usually used as a hiding place, that should be noted as new and unique to the exercise.

As we know some prisoners are very clever in how they move contraband. And the law book is just one of many vessels. It pays for us to role-play and to try to think like a smuggler. With some pencil shavings, and envelope, discarded law books, and some ingenuity there is no telling what hiding places can be conceived. The end result is an awareness among staff that increases safety within the facility.
Destination Intimidation: Is Al a Bully?

This is a four-part icebreaker/classroom exercise. It consists of:

Definition,

Story by facilitator,

Bully story from audience,

Finding solutions.

This icebreaker works well with communications training and harassment awareness modules. I have field-tested this particular icebreaker with impressive results from the audience when delivering my anti-bullying module called Destination Intimidation.

Part one: Definition
To start, you share a definition of bullying. One is provided below. You may use that or, you may construct your own or produce a hybrid.

*Bullying - the act of intimidating others through posture, force, threat of force, blackmail, or other physical or psychological means. This is done in order for the intimidator to get his or her own way. It is any level of aggression used on others, subtle, blatant, or otherwise.*

Part two: Story by facilitator
Once a definition of choice is laid out, you prepare the audience by telling the story. You may create a story, find one from your experience, or tap into the rich resources online. If you are good storyteller, this is a great icebreaker for you was a facilitator

This is a story that I tell.

Al loved to play baseball. His was a lifelong obsession with the Great American Pastime. As an adult, Al played in a Sunday morning softball league with people from the factory at which he worked. One Sunday, his team which was called the 12 pack, was locked in a close contest with their cross-town rival.
The event was heated. The score was tied. Both teams jeered and hollered at one another. That was no exception when Al stepped to the plate. Al was a very short statured man, though athletically built. The first base man on the opposing team sought to use Al’s short stature against him. He yelled, “C’mon little guy. Hit it to me if you can. Aww, ain’t he cute? C’mon, little guy.”

Al seemed impervious to the screaming. The first pitch was hurled. Al did not move his bat. The pitch was right down the middle. The umpire called out “Steeerike!” The shouting from the first baseman intensified and drewled in baby talk, “Whaza matter, little guy? Was that too fast for your little self? Slow it down for our little buddy.”

Next, the pitcher lobbed a slow and easy pitch toward Al. Al, still as a statue, did not move. Like seconds before, the umpire cried, “strike!” This just made the first base man crazy. He could not shout enough short jokes, as he was in the spirit of the game and competition. The first base man, incidentally, was very tall and very slim. In fact, he was nearly a foot taller than Al.

As the pitcher threw the next ball, Al, a right-handed batter, pointed his left foot directly at the first baseman. The pitch was perfect for Al to make a line drive directly at the knees of the first baseman. Al’s current nemesis was in the middle of shouting something about Al being sawed off when the ball soared at him. This caused the first base man to flop around like the scarecrow from the Wizard of Oz. Al was fast and could have made it a triple. However he trotted slowly to the first base and tagged the bag. He looked up and down that the first baseman, shrugged, smirked, and then led off dangerously toward second.

Al eventually scored from first base. Throughout the rest of the game, the first baseman did not chatter so loudly. And the first base man was eerily silent whenever Al stepped up to the plate. The question is who was a bully? Was it Al or was it the first basement?
In one telling of the story, some participants have screamed out that Al is the bully. Of course, the answer is that both people in the story use force and intimidation in order to try to get their means. Both were bullies. On one instance, I feigned an indignant mood when the participant labeled Al as the counter-antagonist. I pointed out that he was my father. That is true and that's a little gem I share with the audience. Al also played semi-pro ball and never seemed to lose his taste for baseball.

**Part three: Bully story from audience**

After you finish the story, ask if anyone has another bully story to relate. The only rule is that no real name should be used. This is because the story could be embarrassing and that someone else might know the perpetrator. A non-correction story is requested because otherwise the story may involve someone who knows someone in the classroom. You should be prepared for emotions to shift in a hurry. I usually tell the bully story in the lighthearted, amusing way. But a willing participant may render a heart wrenching story of humiliation and intimidation.

**Part four: Finding solutions**

Poll the audience on ways to stop bullying. If the audience is shy, you can give one or two of the following to inspire participation. Here's are some ways that corrections professionals can stem the tide of bullying.

- Zero tolerance backed by administration,
- Positive peer leadership,
- Training and awareness,
- Do not sweep the problem under the rug,
- Communication,
- Be aware of staff dynamics,
- Provide positive examples,
- Expect accountability for all staff.

When the answers are compiled from the class, you could ask if all of these will work in all situations. Certainly, this is a loaded question. This is a way to remind participants that not all circumstances can be effectively addressed in the same way.

In the end, bullying and harassment is a very serious topic. Effective storytelling is a good way to inspire participation from audience members. Doing this will go a long way in delivering valuable information to corrections professionals.
L P & C Argument Quiz

Listen up! And don't argue with me! I have a classroom exercise here that will stimulate discussion and set the stage for any communications module – the L P and C argument quiz.

You start by explaining the concept of the LP and C argument methods. In corrections, you will find that there are many argument tactics that others will use on you when they are not permitted to do as they will. I believe that the three chief ways that people argue with you are loud, persistent, and in the contrary manner this is LP and C for short.

**Loud** – Volume overrules reason. This is just like a sonic bulldozer. This is the shouter's favorite method.

**Persistent** – Wearing down the opposing party by asking the same question until the answer that the persistent seeks is delivered.

**Contrary** – A method of simple negation. This is taking the opposite position to frustrate the logic of the person trying to calmly explain why things are as they are.

With the LP & C argument concept explained, you then administer a quiz. The answer for each scenario is one of three things: loud argument style, persistent argument style, or the contrary argument style. You have plenty of choices when you administer the quiz.

- You may hand out as paper and each person takes a test like the one below.
- Or you can split the class and ask questions in the competition mode.
- One could even read aloud and let the participants answer in a freestyle method.
- Another option is an excellent opportunity for the visual learners. You can even film shorts vignettes of the questions.

Some of the questions were designed to feature more than one answer. It is up to you to tell the class upfront that there may be more than one answer. I, however, prefer for the class to discover this for themselves. In fact, if you put questions that will have just one answer upfront, as the class warms up they may discover in the middle of the questions that there could be two answers.

Yes, there are many ways argue. But the LP and C methods cover a lot of ground. I'm sure that there is no argument that when you employ this icebreaker, you'll see plenty of energy coming from the class.
1. Someone argues a point with you. You deny the request. The person then just jumps up your chain of command with the same question. What argument style is this?

**Persistent**

2. No matter which part of policy directive you read, your antagonist simply states that it is not true. What argument style is this?

**Contrary**

3. Every time you try to talk, your opponent talks over you. What argument style is this?

**Loud**

4. When you state the identity of the person who authorized change, the arguer states that the person has no authority. What argument style is this?

**Contrary**

5. The arguer repeatedly and loudly yells the word “no”. What argument style is this?

**Loud, Persistent, Constant**

6. Your opponent rephrases each of your points in negative terms. What argument style is this?

**Contrary**

7. In answer to your rationally stated justifications, your opponent starts shouting in rapid succession, even though the points he or she raises are not relevant. What argument style is this?

**Loud, Persistent**

8. Opponent uses an elevated tone of voice to spell out what sounds like a series of legal cases meant to harass and intimidate you. What argument style is this?

**Loud**

9. Your opponent asks the same question 5 minutes later, even though you've already answered it. What argument style is this?

**Persistent**

10. Your opponent e-mails the same query to you six months later, even though you already answered the question. What argument style is this?

**Persistent**
The LPC quiz without the answers follows. You may reproduce this page.

**L P and C Quiz**

Please provide the best answer for the following questions. The arguments style will be Loud, Persistent, or Contrary

1. Someone argues a point with you. You deny the request. The person then just jumps up your chain of command with the same question. What argument style is this?

2. No matter which part of policy directive you read, your antagonist simply states that it is not true. What argument style is this?

3. Every time you try to talk, your opponent talks over you. What argument style is this?

4. When you state the identity of the person who authorized change, the arguer states that the person has no authority. What argument style is this?

5. The arguer repeatedly and loudly yells the word “no”. What argument style is this?

6. Your opponent rephrases each of your points in negative terms. What argument style is this?

7. In answer to your rationally stated justifications, your opponent, starts shouting in rapid succession even though the points he or she raises are not relevant. What argument style is this?

8. Opponent uses an elevated tone of voice to spell out what sounds like a series of legal cases meant to harass and intimidate you. What argument style is this?

9. Your opponent asks the same question 5 minutes later, even though you’ve already answered it. What argument style is this?

10. Your opponent e-mails the same query to you six months later, even though you already answered the question. What argument style is this?
Listing Rookie Mistakes

This icebreaker is an excellent classroom exercise to precede a staff conduct module. It also works well as a refresher to veterans on how it was to be a neophyte.

For this icebreaker, you might start with a story. I usually use one where my daughter committed the rookie mistake of hitting a deer during driver’s training. It goes like this.

Talk about hard lessons learned early! I know of a young driver who was almost done with the first portion of her drivers’ education course. She passed a written test and was just a few miles shy of completing her supervised time behind the wheel.

Little did she know that a deer, oblivious to the laws of physics and the weight of a mid-sized sedan, would try to dodge the vehicle she was driving. Try is the operative word. Put else wise, in the closing moments of her education, she got into a car/deer accident.

She was shaken, but not hurt. All others in the car were also well. The deer, of course, was killed. It is difficult to react to the unpredictable elements of wildlife, other drivers, and driving conditions while learning how to operate a motor vehicle. Corrections
neophytes learning to operate in a jail or prison have a similar difficulty. Just like those of the young driver, rookie mistakes in our profession can cast a long shadow and can be dangerous.

With the many hazards in the strange world of corrections, it pays to be cautious. Seasoned corrections veterans are not exempted from making errors. Still, it behooves us to watch the progress of junior staff and to help them as we can. Part of that is recognizing their missteps. Informing rookies of their mistakes may help our new colleagues avoid future occurrences.

Now with the story told, get the class to list classic neophyte blunders.

Appoint a recorder or write the answers yourself. Ask the class to list as classic newbie blunder.

Here are five classic examples:

Over friendly – people can overdo it on being jovial in the corrections setting. Whether this behavior is because of upbringing or is a coping mechanism for stress, it is dangerous. Friendliness can be mistaken for a counter–corrections persona, forcing staff away when the rookie is most in need of support. In addition, this can be misconstrued by offenders. Over friendly is under cautious.

Overbearing – wielding the new authority like the lock in a sock is threatening. Quite simply, it puts veteran staff and offenders on edge. There is a difference between being assertive and being an aggressively loose cannon. Overbearing is under cautious.

Having favorites – uniformity of action is like oil in corrections’ engine. When taken away, the engine seizes up. Favoritism builds resentment and revenge. It fosters distrust. In addition, favoritism gives the offender/recipient leverage for future manipulation schemes.

Failure to ask questions – those too timid to inquire about proper procedure may put a foot in the legal or ethical quagmire. There many operating procedures and practices in place that may seem counterintuitive to new corrections staff. Still, they are developed for a reason. Still, new staff fail to ask crucial questions because they do not wish to appear naïve or inept. During training, questions are expected. Performing the wrong action, or even in action, may land the neophyte into deep trouble.

Overt fear – it can be granted that corrections is not a perfect fit for many. And being afraid on the first day inside is natural. In moderation, a little nervous tension is safer than the mindless chest thumping bravado. However, uncontrollable and noticeable fear sends the wrong signals. Other staff may label the newbies as cowardly and create distance. Prisoners will notice of fear and some will try to capitalize on it.
These and other road bumps make corrections one of the most challenging vocations there is. How do we ease transition for new staff? You can quiz the class on that, as well. Some answers may include the following:

- Training programs are of great assistance.
- Communicating that questions will be answered is also beneficial.
- A well-trained and mentored staff person adds to our overall safety.

Veteran staff have a duty to help newbies through the hazards. Perhaps patience is the best philosophy for veterans to adopt when training new staff. It is also useful for the veteran to look back on their first days inside the walls.
Mixed Morality

Nobody's perfect, or so it is said. And it seems in corrections that the negative can receive more attention than the positive. Still, our professional integrity dictates that we do the right thing for the public. Unfortunately, every now and again, someone in our ranks will break the rules and attract public scrutiny.

Morality training and professionalism can come in at least two forms. You may see it as a primary module as you enter the department. Another manner in which morality/professional training is administered is in the wake of a scandal. Whether the training is proactive like the former or reactive like the latter is of less consequence than the main point: We must all do the right thing.

Then comes the exercise called “mixed morality”. This is a competition and question/answer exercise. It is very simple to perform this icebreaker. In addition, there are no props, no overt physical activities, and really no wrong answers, if you think about it.

1. The class is divided into two teams. The facilitator may wish to create the teams by grouping every other person on opposite sides of the room, by random selection, or letting teams assemble themselves. This is not important as long as there are two separate teams.
2. The teams will elect one person to answer morality questions. They will be told that they are to select an answer for the entire team on moral problems and dilemmas.
3. Armed with 10 questions (like the set that follows) the facilitator will ask the questions of both team captains.
4. Here is the wrench in the works: There are two possible answers, but each team will not know what the answers are. The facilitator will read only the question, leaving both answers unknown to each captain. The team that goes first may choose option one or option two. Both options will be blind, random answers.
Therefore, the other remaining answer will go to the team that has not selected. The team captain will select only one or two and cannot justify or modify an answer after it is read.

5. Each team will start at zero. The answer that they select will be accompanied with a positive or negative number value. As questions go on, a scorekeeper will mark on the board the numeric value and add or subtract that from zero.

6. Another option is to ask these questions in a large room. Both team leaders will stand in the middle of the room. If their random selection for a moral question is positive, that team leader will step forward as many steps as directed. On the other hand, if the random selection for the moral question has a negative value, the person who selected (or was defaulted) that answer will step back as directed in the answer.

7. Move on to the second question. The team captain that selected the positive answer will get to select option one or option two for the next question.

8. Continue this through number 10.

9. The team with the highest score or the team that has stepped forward the furthest will be declared the winner.

Here is a sample test with blind/random options:

The instructor can start by saying,

“Sometimes, circumstances will dictate how we choose to act. Not all decisions are clear and not all answers are easy. The team leader that wins coin toss will be given a question and asked to select option one or two. This is a blind answer – not an opinion or a reflection of how you would act. This is truly a matter of luck, as you may or may not necessarily agree with the content of the option. With each option comes a positive or negative score. Your choice might not be how you would react in real life. However, this is designed with a few wildcards to represent real-life circumstances that may alter your decision. Your opponent will, by default, be assigned the option that you did not choose. Whatever gets the highest point in each question will be permitted to have first selection of the options in the following question. There are 10 questions. The team that scores the highest is the winning team.”

1. You are in a beautiful national park. There is no one for miles around. The gum that you started to chew as you left your car has lost all flavor resembles nothing more than rubber. No one will see you and you assume that there are no trail cameras. Do you spit out your gum?

Option one:
You spit out your gum. No one will see you anyway. Your score is -1.

Option two:
Patience! You dispose of your gum in a receptacle designed for trash which is located at the trailhead. Your score is +1.
2. You witness a senior citizen place a candy bar in her purse. You are behind the would-be shoplifter in line at the cash register. You see by the form of payment for the other groceries that the senior has plenty of money. Do you report the crime?

Option one:
You whisper to the senior citizen that she forgot to pay for the candy bar in her purse.
Your score is +1

Option two:
You mind your own business and don't worry about the cost to consumers. Your score is -1.

3. You see a semi-dead rabbit on a rural road. It appears that it had been run over by a vehicle and is living its last moments in agony. You have a shovel in your trunk. Do you put the creature out of its misery?

Option one:
Keep on driving and forget about it. It is just a casualty of nature. Your score is -1.

Option two:
You stop by the side of the road, retrieve the shovel from the trunk, and quickly and humanely sever the head from the body. Your score is +1.

4. In your corrections academy, you are taking the final exam for the criminal justice module. You are confident and are nearly done with the test. The person next to you is a devoted corrections professional as far as you can see. However, he is looking at your answer sheet and copying your answers. What do you do?

Option one:
You cover your answers. After all, it was up to him to study and you do not wish to jeopardize your chances of working in corrections through someone else’s mistake. Your score is +1

Option two:
You play dumb. You allow the person to cheat and you pretend not to notice. Your score is -1.

5. You leave the restaurant and just before you reach your car you see on the pavement by your car an expensive but functioning handheld videogame. This is a videogame that you’ve always wanted to play. You see no one around. Do you walk into the restaurant and present it to the staff person behind the counter?

Option one:
You keep it. If the person was foolish enough to let it drop from their hand, it is their tough luck. Your score is -1

Option two:
Turn it into the staff person. It doesn't matter that you have to walk back inside the restaurant even though you have just left. You would want someone to do the same for you. Your score is +1.

6. You have just enough time to get to work. On the side of the road, you see a colleague with a flat tire. It looks like he is not doing too well in changing the flat. This colleague just happens to be a less than pleasant type. He's expressed that he really doesn't like you and doesn't care if you live or die. Though you may be late, do you help your colleague change the tire?

Option one:
You reap what you sow. Why should you do this guy a favor? Keep driving! The score is -1

Option two:
As painful as it is, stop and help. At least pull over and ask if he needs assistance. Your score is +1.

7. You are on vacation with your spouse. At the breakfast buffet in the hotel you realize that you have spare minutes to eat before going on your planned excursion. Your spouse gets the coffee across the room. You get a couple of muffins. They are the last two muffins – just enough for you two to eat breakfast. One of the muffins drops on the floor. A quick inspection, you see no dust. Still, you blow on the top of the muffin, hoping that your germs pose less of a threat than whatever was tracked in on the floor. Your spouse, diligently preparing coffee just the way you like, did not witness any of this. What do you do?

Option one:
You confess that you dropped one of the muffins. You explain that it looks clean enough and that you can both eat half of both muffins. Give the option of you eating the fallen muffin. The score is +1.

Option two:
Place the fallen muffin in front your spouse. Inwardly you reason that what you don't know won't hurt you. Your score is -1.

8. You purchase some candy for $.75 with a $10 bill. The cashier, believing that you paid with the $20 bill, gives you $19.25 for change. This is $10 in your favor. What do you do?

Option one:
You have been shopping here for years. You've supported the store for over a decade. Will $10 really hurt in the larger scheme of things? You do not report the error. Your score is -1.

Option two:
Your integrity is not worth $10. You report the error. Your score is +1.

9. It is rush hour during lunch time at a fast food restaurant. Two different lines form and in a disorganized manner. You are standing right next to someone who has been in line longer than you. When cashier asked for the next person in line, you see that the person next to you does not move up. What do you do?

Option one:
According to the old saying, “the race is to the swift”. Step up! If you snooze, you lose. Your score is -1.

Option two:
You simply tell the person that they are next in line. Your score is +1.

10. You contacted your cable network and canceled a premium channel. A month later, you notice that you still have the channel but have not been charged for. What do you do?

Option one:
You inform your cable company of their error. You want to receive what you have not paid for. This is +1.

Option two:
You reason that a multibillion-dollar cable company will not miss $10 per month. Plus, you've always paid your bill on time. Your score is -1.

At the end of the exercise, the teams may actually be tied. It is truly a 50/50 proposition. That really doesn't matter. What's important is that not all decisions are cut and dry.

You can pose some of the following questions to the class if you have time to drive additional points home.

- Have any of these scenarios actually happened to you? If so, how did you act?
- Does having no money ever justify shoplifting?
- If the only law that existed was “might makes right” like in a post-apocalyptic world, would moral decisions be assessed differently than now?
- From whom did you learn right and wrong?
- Is it cheating if no one ever knows about it?

In the end, morality training can be a bit uncomfortable. Be that as it may, with an icebreaker like mixed morality, you can use interesting segues into these crucial modules.
Modified Roundup - Contraband Trivia

When I was in High School, I had an innovative teacher. We will call him Mr. W. I did not think that I would enjoy Mr. W’s biology class as I was interested primarily in social-sciences. However, his class became one that I looked forward to every day.

To Mr. W, learning could be a fun competition between two teams. He used trivia combined with simple games and called it Roundup. He had a list of questions that were ten points each. If a team answered a trivia question correctly, the team could gain an extra point with a non-question test such as throwing a ball into a waste basket or shooting rubber bands towards a target. If the team failed to answer the question correctly, the other team could answer and earn the points plus a bonus agility task. At the end of the day, whichever team won in points would win a small prize.

Thinking back all of these years, I realize that I remember some of the questions and answers in his game. The wise simplicity of trivia and repetition cannot be disputed. Adding the minor agility tasks complemented the intellectual part of the competition. This made for a nice balance.

Roundup can be easily modified to reinforce corrections lessons. All you have to do is create questions and assign various agility tasks.

You can develop different corrections questions from a variety of topics. They can be specific to your facility, your agency, or American corrections. You can create questions from areas such as international corrections with just a simple internet search. Infamous criminals is another good topic. Policy and procedure is a useful category to develop knowledge of how your particular facility operates. Additional information can be read by the instructor after each question is answered.

Bonus agility tests can be as simple as balancing a book on one’s head for a minute or sinking a wad of paper into a coffee cup from twenty feet. One could even break ties in the game by seeing who can spin a quarter for the longest duration of time.
Below are some sample questions in a Jeopardy style that I created. They are from my favorite corrections topic – contraband control.

**Category: Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Any prohibited good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>What is contraband?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>Contraband can be excessive amounts of permitted items, borrowed property, or altered items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Intuition – knowing that something is out of place.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>What is the X-factor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>Sometimes things seem to be going too well. There seems to be a dry spell in finding bootleg. It may be that there is none to be found, though that is not likely. This will usually spark the x-factor or institutional intuition. Some may dismiss this as pattern analysis. Whatever the term, something may be afoot if it seems wrong.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Seeking contraband while not in the view of prisoners.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>What is the covert search?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>The covert or covered search is performed when you do not want offenders to know that you are searching in a specific area. This could precede a sting operation or be based on an informant letter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Look at me search this area!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>What is an overt search?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>The overt search is a way to demonstrate to prisoners that you are shaking down an area and that they would likely lose any contraband that they attempt to hide there. In many ways, this is like making a round or a presence in an area that is not usually touched.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Written or oral transfer of information about a contraband issue.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>What is communications?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>At times, staff do not have the opportunity to pass observations on to the next shift, to other work areas, or to other facilities. This often leaves a piece of the information puzzle missing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Category: Where is it hidden?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magician trick – not really hidden</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is sleight of hand?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>Be it the shell trick, diversions, or palming, the sleight of hand is responsible for more concealment than one would think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A bitter pill for staff to swallow, a way for prisoners to hoard medication.</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is cheeking?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>Some will also regurgitate the medication and use later – either for themselves or as a barter item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A popular way to ‘defeat’ staff in hiding tobacco and other items.</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is concealment of contraband under insole of shoes?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>Who would smoke a contraband cigarette that has been placed under a foot for hours or days? It is a matter of supply and demand. Demand for such items would be high, therefore, anything goes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oh, Baby! What a clever place to hide just about anything.</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is a diaper?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>Of course, staff in visiting rooms have to follow policy and procedure to the letter when searching in this area. Our quest for safety for all, including the visiting public has to be practiced with professionalism, no matter how undesirable the task of searching a diaper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You have to hand it to them, this method is normally effective.</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is palming?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td>The hand is quicker than the eye. There is also the closed fist stance that some prisoners adopt when they are being searched.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Category: What do you make of this?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is an empty pill container?</td>
<td>A tattooist’s dream as a receptacle for “liquid assets”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ink pads also serve as a convenient place to store ink. Pens, though it seems obvious, also store ink.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a manila folder?</td>
<td>The stock of quality greeting cards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keep an eye on your folders before the Mother’s Day rush. This is arguably the busiest card holiday in the offender year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is chewing gum?</td>
<td>Unobtrusive, dangerous and a breath freshener. This is the bane of door locks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chewing gum is more than a relaxing tool for mastication. It also acts as an adhering agent and a quick and effective way to jam locks. Staff who offer offenders gum might provide more hazards than they suppose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some artificial sweeteners?</td>
<td>Flammable and easy to hide. This kindling is a sweet find for arsonists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The paper of some artificial sweeteners also act as kindling. Offenders will experiment and find which is best for conflagrations. Staff should do the same in order to determine what is most dangerous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a roll of toilet paper?</td>
<td>Ubiquitous, flushable, and hygienically necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prisoners have ample time on their hands to conceal small items in a roll of toilet paper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sky is the limit in the questions that you form and the tasks that you appoint. Thanks to Mr. W. and Roundup for the inspiration.
Offensive ABC’s

If you work long enough in corrections, you will develop an ability to read people with minimal clues. In fact, some of us can just look at an offender and guess their crime with an astonishing accuracy. Games like these sharpen observation skills and challenge our perceptions.

Here’s a classroom exercise that is a review of the many offenses that we deal with regularly in our field. And it’s a good segue exercise into a module on criminology. As criminal justice professionals, we are aware of the variety of offenses and the offending ABC’s is way to review our knowledge.

To start, split the class into groups of four. Have each group appoint a team captain/spokesperson. Another in the group will serve as a recorder. For good measure and to inspire competition, each team will be given a few minutes to choose and then declare the team name.

Once the teams have settled, the facilitator states that the recorder can start immediately by writing the letters of the alphabet at the top left of the page and continuing down. The first line is A, the second line is B, and so forth. In other words, the recorder will write the alphabet down the left side of the page.

The team will then be given instructions to work together to list one official crime per letter. It’s as simple as A is for arson, for example. The teams will be given 5 minutes. At the end of the 5 minutes each team captain comes to the front and announces the number of letters filled with a bona fide offense.

Here are some rules: No cheating. No espionage. No writing answers as they are read by other teams at the end of the exercise. Above all, no help from electronics or any law dictionary will be permitted.

The facilitator is the judge, jury and executioner and decides all. However the facilitator can be assisted by Internet or Black’s Law Dictionary. Also, offenses must be commonly known as crimes. Stretching it is forbidden. For example X equals the xylophone theft or Y equals yak napping or Z equals zoo breaking. These should not be accepted.

The recorder will go to the board and for each team select a color and write the offense for each letter as they are read by the team captain. In that way a red team will have all their offenses in red, the blue team will have all of their offenses in blue.
In the event of a tie, each team will in turn be given a letter to name a crime not already listed. Of course, the facilitator's discretion is important here. Please note that one should not expect XYQ or Z to be filled in this exercise.

Just as in any other competition-based classroom exercise, the facilitator may use incentives. He or she may offer a prize like candy, gag gifts or something of that nature to the winning team.

I now offer a cheat sheet for facilitators here's a quick list of answers for the offensive ABC’s. Of course, you'll see different answers with different crowds.

A. arson  
B. battery  
C. criminal sexual conduct  
D. delinquency  
E. extortion  
F. forgery  
G. gross indecency  
H. homicide  
I. insurance fraud  
J. jaywalking  
K. kidnapping  
L. larceny  
M. manslaughter  
N. negligent homicide  
O. obscenity  
P. panhandling  
Q. nothing comes to mind  
R. robbery  
S. safe cracking  
T. tax evasion  
U. uttering and publishing  
V. vehicular homicide  
W. weapons possession  
X. no idea  
Y. not a clue  
Z. zoning ordinance violation.

On the face of it, Offensive ABC’s is a quick fill in the blank team oriented exercise based on criminal offenses. However prior to going into the criminal justice module, the facilitator can make good use of the time watching how the team members operate. After all, this is part of what we doing corrections – watch people.
More than One Way to Skin a Cat

No matter how you feel about animals – cats in particular, this classroom exercise does not advocate harming of living things in any way. Rather the title selected from a popular idiom. There are many ways to do something. In this case, it is how some offenders use different tactics in order to set staff up for manipulation.

In this scenario, staff members are the potentially skinned cats and unscrupulous offenders who endeavor to manipulate are those who use handling tactics. Part of human nature is the need to gain advantages over who you might consider your adversary. Let’s face it; there are many ways to manipulate.

Below are 11 such ways. How many of these have you experienced?

Affirmation of decision
Appeal to fairness
Appeal to higher power
Challenge to the profession
Charges of discrimination
Disfavor
Favor
Flattery
Probe for leverage
Us versus them
Veiled threat

As always, corrections staff must be forever vigilant and aware of ruses and manipulation tactics. By doing this, we make our facility safer for staff, offenders, and the public. The Manipulating Matching test is a good prelude for any module on the anatomy of a set up or staff communications.
Manipulation Matching Test

Please match the letter of the descriptive phrase below with the term. There is one letter per term.

__ Affirmation of decision
__ Appeal to fairness
__ Appeal to higher power
__ Challenge to the profession
__ Charges of discrimination
__ Disfavor
__ Favor
__ Flattery
__ Probe for leverage
__ Us versus them
__ Veiled threat
In general, people simply like to hear good things about themselves. Some examples are, “It looks like you have lost weight, “or “you are the smartest staff person here.”

Suppose that a prisoner tells you that your program is the worst in the system in order appeal to your innovative spirit.

Some inmates, regardless of background, portray themselves as members of a persecuted group. “You treat all _______ prisoners better than non-__________ prisoners.” Race, ethnic groups, religious affiliations, weight, height, and sexual orientation are just a few topics used by this strategy.

“You did this favor for another inmate. Why didn’t you do it for me?”

An example of this is when a prisoner tells a staff person that “a person could get hurt acting like you do.”

“The Nazis said that they were just following orders – Just like you are saying. Are you religious? Would God approve of how you are treating me? I’ll bet that your mother did not raise you to be like this.”

Some inmates paint the administration as oppressors of prisoners and line staff.

A prisoner complements staff for making a good decision.

“Why are you so happy today? Did you get some lovin’? What’s wrong? Are things bad at home? Do you ever drink to take the pain off life?”

A prisoner tells you that he will write a letter to the warden explaining what an excellent employee you are.

An inmate threatens to write a letter of criticism concerning you to the warden.
Answers to the Manipulation Matching Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manipulation</th>
<th>Letter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation of decision</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to fairness</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to higher power</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge to the profession</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charges of discrimination</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disfavor</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flattery</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probe for leverage</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Us versus them</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veiled threat</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, How about that Weather?

There's nothing quite as universal as discussion of the weather. As a topic, it is unrivaled in accessibility to all types of people. In fact, in modules that outline manipulation, the weather is considered one of the safest topics between offenders and staff.

That's pleasant information as far as that goes. But what use is discussion of meteorological topics for someone trying to enliven (or hone the skills of) a class full of corrections veterans? The weather can be made useful for this purpose by administering a corrections twist.

In corrections, we are trained to notice changes in the ordinary. We are also expected to look at a scene and to derive important details at a glance. This is in contrast to how we watch the weather report from the comfort of our home. Most of us tend to focus on our own local area, memorize the data, and move on. Details beyond the scope of our area are not really retained.

At times, we may devote more attention to upcoming storms and possible weather trends that may impact us. But that does not mean that we will absorb as many details as we can.

Enter the exercise called “so, how about that weather?”

This exercise requires:
- a television that will bring up a national weather channel,
- the moderator to give instructions,
- one person to serve as the tester,
- one person to service a recorder.

The idea is to flash 20 seconds of any national weather Channel on the screen while a weather map is displayed. This serves as the basis of a test of observation skills.

Before hand, the tester will be instructed to quickly jot down conditions at whatever locations he or she chooses during the 20 second duration that the weather map is on the television screen. A range of 3 to 10 locations with their specific temperatures can be jotted down by the tester.

The moderator tells the participants to look at the map and gives no other explanation. The moderator will time 20 seconds and turn off the television at that time.
Then the moderator will explain that they have to give the temperature that was displayed on the map for specific locations as listed by the tester.

As the tester reveals the first location, the recorder will write that on the whiteboard or flipchart. The moderator will ask for the temperature and the recorder will write down all different answers offered.

The recorder will reveal the correct answers while the moderator talks a bit about the nature of quick observation when one is not ready to observe. After all, the first test was a surprise.

The moderator turns on the television for another 20 seconds. The recorder once again selects locations and records are temperatures. And once 20 seconds have expired and the television is turned off, the recorder will jot down the answers that the moderator solicits from participants.

Of course, the point is that once we know what to look for, our observation skills are sharper. With both sets of data compiled, the moderator can compare both of those for the class. She or he may ask questions such as,

- For which tests were the answers most accurate? (It is likely that the participants produced more accurate answers for the second test rather than the first – everyone knew what to expect the second time around.)
- Were you quick to agree with someone who is a known keen observer – even if it was contrary to your recollection?
- Even though you thought you may have been correct, did you succumb to peer pressures as more people registered a popular but ultimately wrong answer?
- When you weren't sure of a certain temperature of the location, did you use deduction? For example, would you have put Miami Florida at 68° during the morning in April because that is what you expect the conditions to reflect?
- Would the international weather reports, such as from the southern hemisphere, then more difficult to guess due to the less familiar geography and change of season?

A large part of our job revolves around utilizing our observation skills. It is necessary to step out of comfort zones and to explore impromptu, uncommon scenarios in order to test the accuracy of our vigilance. And using something as mundane as the weather helps us to do this.
Sock Puppets and Learning

This is a true story that led to inadvertent learning and unexpected classroom rapport. It occurred in the classroom of a college for which I teach. And when you hear the old saying that trainers learn from their students, I realize that it is true.

Let us go back to Gogebic Community College in 2010 during a lesson on contraband control for CJC 104 “Client relations in corrections”.

The stage was set. The class was divided into two competitive teams. Each team was provided with a sock and a small metal container filled with mints. In a purposely vague manner, I told them that the sock and the tin of mints were all that they could use to construct a weapon (or weapons). They had fifteen minutes to complete their task.

The only other rule was that they had to conceal their work whenever I was within arm’s length of their work area. As I “made rounds”, the students were very creative in camouflaging, making distractions, and keeping me oblivious of their craftsmanship.

While making a round to the team that dubbed themselves “The Average Joes”, I was knocked off my square (albeit briefly) by what I saw. One of the participants had used a marker (an unauthorized tool in this exercise) and drawn a Joe Bouchard puppet on one of the socks that I provided. It was unflattering, but amusing. In the many times that I have facilitated this exercise, I had never been “rewarded” with a sock puppet of myself. Live and learn.
The sock artist looked at me with an expression of amusement and challenge – clear provocation. What is an instructor to do? Did I risk losing face by letting this insolence go unchecked? Should I take control in a commanding way? Should I feign indignity to lighten the mood?

I simply looked the artist dead in the eyes and demanded with faux disapproval that the sock portrait should have a goatee. Without missing a beat, the artist’s teammate implored that the puppet should also have hair.

It was a great teaching moment for me. A student’s creativity pulled us into a spontaneous bit of levity. I believe this loosened the class a bit more and allowed for more creativity.

There is a fine balance in training between command and clownery. This condition is complicated by the various classroom personas that instructors adopt. I am sure that one can chart on a continuum the dogmatic and entertaining types of facilitators. And certainly, more instructors are plotted in the middle rather than on the extremes.

When things work out well, the facilitator recognizes creativity among the students and allows this to lead the class in other directions. Therefore, the instructor must be willing to give up a little control in order to let others instruct. Otherwise, the lesson is more of a two-dimensional lecture with unrealized possibilities.

The flip side of that is pandemonium. The instructor must be able to ride what may become a high powered sports car in the form of creativity run amok. And when participants are very creative, it is not unlike a white knuckle drive in a very powerful and dangerous vehicle.

This philosophy of balance has been with us since ancient times. Remember that Icarus was advised to take the middle road – not to fly too close to the sun, nor to have wings wetted down by the sea foam. Moderation is the key.

In addition, facilitators must be true to their natures. If you are more comfortable as a factual conduit of knowledge, that is the path you should take. If, on the other hand, you shine as an entertainer, that should be your teaching tactic.

And all of this is tempered by the nature of the training. Some topics are dry due to their content. That does not, however, lessen their importance in the scheme of things. Also, there are very serious topics and debriefings that should be presented in a straight forward, serious manner.
Keep your eyes and minds open, trainers. In training, one never knows what funny, strange, or instructive things can occur. In addition to providing circumstances where pre-professionals in a college class could learn about contraband, there was more. I saw teamwork, camaraderie, quick improvisation, and humor. Plus, I have a sock puppet souvenir.

The Name Game

No matter how lax the trainer may be, immature behavior is generally not fostered in the classroom. In particular, name-calling is discouraged. Certainly we can make allowance for an occasional incident of rough verbal camaraderie. However, one would not expect the facilitator to encourage or even mandate name-calling.

Of course, pride in one’s team can bring out the competitive edge, thus forcing the teams to coalesce. So, in the spirit of group identity, I give you The Name Game.

What follows is an icebreaker that can be used in all exercises that have teams. It is a very short exercise that precedes any team icebreaker. At the start divide the class into two teams. The facilitator will then tell both teams that they have to name the other team.

Then, each team is given a list of 20 words – 10 rows of words in two columns. On both pages, the left column will feature ten adjectives. The right column will feature ten animal names.

For the sake of variety, at random, one team will receive a list of strong, positive adjectives and traditionally weak animals. Conversely, the other team will receive the list with pejorative adjectives and traditionally strong animals. That will make for an interesting mix. (Please see two lists below).

Once each team has a list, they will be told that they have 5 min. to name the other team. They have to use one word from each column. There will be a lot of silly combinations that come from this. For example, one team may name the other the Frustrated Eagles. On the other hand, the other team can be called the Vicious Wombats, depending on the words on the list.
Sample list number one: positive adjectives – weak animals

Choose one from each column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive adjectives</th>
<th>Weak animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bold</td>
<td>Weasels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferocious</td>
<td>Earwigs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undaunted</td>
<td>Mice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorious</td>
<td>Kittens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing</td>
<td>Shrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful</td>
<td>Slugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Capybaras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfathomable</td>
<td>Wombats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indescribable</td>
<td>Hamsters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The great</td>
<td>Hummingbird</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample list number one: pejorative adjectives – strong animals

Choose one from each column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pejorative adjectives</th>
<th>Strong animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>Dragons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td>Oxen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moronic</td>
<td>Bears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clumsy</td>
<td>Lions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gullible</td>
<td>Wolverines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossipy</td>
<td>Wildcats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurotic</td>
<td>Raptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotic</td>
<td>Alligators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>Wolves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauseous</td>
<td>Elephants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are some tips for a more successful running of The Name Game:

This is designed as an icebreaker that proceeds in icebreaker. In other words is a set up for another team driven icebreaker.
This is a quick moving game whose results will be evident in the next icebreaker. You may think that you are done once each team names the other. However, depending on audience dynamics, this game could cast a long shadow.
Rough verbal camaraderie can be productive in fostering competition and bringing the best out of participants. However, this will not always be the case. If the exercise flounders, move on to the main event of the team driven exercise that you have in store for the class.
This exercise works best with extroverts or with audience members that may know one another. You may have difficulty with this in a more formal setting.
The focus is on team pride. You may wish to intervene if the chatter gets too personal or tends to focus on the individual.
Be prepared to see strange plays on words for the name selected.
It's also possible that the teams may embrace the quirky names and perhaps even draw a mascot. Whether you permit this, of course, is up to you. It is up to many factors such as your patience, the amount of time that you have, and the sense of creativity in the teams.
Keep a lid on it. Always remember your facility's discriminatory harassment policy.

How do you get a group of people to work as a team? Sometimes an encouraging name can help this. But when opposing teams are permitted to tease their adversaries a bit by assigning a less than complementary team name, the results can be encouraging. I will not go on record as saying that blatant, malicious name-calling is a healthy teamwork event. However, I know that The Name Game can inspire teamwork and creativity.
The Parable of the Hummingbird and Raven

This is a story-based icebreaker. It is an excellent point of departure for a module on working with difficult colleagues.

It is a story of human concerns masked in the guise of talking birds. Basically, it is about someone who has great difficulty rolling with new changes.

Questions follow the story. All of them come back to addressing being stuck in the rut of routine.

To keep interest, a short PowerPoint might be a good tool. This can feature a picture of each character to correspond with the paragraph that the reader is on. For example, when reading a paragraph about the raven, an image of a raven can be on screen. The initial work for this would be worth it for keeping interest. Also, it makes the facilitator more familiar with the story.

I believe that this should be read aloud by the facilitator. Having the class read silently would lend to skimming and less comprehension. It helps to train the trainer. Also, the instructor can gauge the crowd as the story goes on.

At the end of the reading, questions one through ten are asked of the participants. In an active group, answers will inspire more answers. Sometimes, as we have all found, we need to prod the group a bit. A recorder can be appointed to mark answers on the board or flip chart.

Also, there may be animosity driven by the story if similar incidents occur in the facility. Therefore, the facilitator must be mindful of events. It is wise to state that participants should not attack individual but should talk about concepts.

Now it is story time…

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Sometimes, we perform a task so often that we can do it with our eyes closed. In fact, if not for change, we could cruise along in perpetuity in a blindfold. Yet, that is a perfect world. As reality teaches us, the world does not stand still for anyone.

Did you ever hear the one about the Hummingbird and the Raven? I think that it is a good story.

One day in late June, Raven sat on a railing overlooking a blooming garden. She was basking in the sun, reflecting on the past winter. As we all know, ravens stick around for the bad weather. They do not fly elsewhere during the hard times of the year.
Raven’s solitude was shattered by the sickening thud of bone on a plate glass window. There she saw Hummingbird in avian agony, amid recently loosened feathers from the little bird’s noggin. Hummingbird massaged his crown with his wingtips. Chirping in high pitched, impatient expletives, Hummingbird shook off his stupor.

Raven suppressed her smirk as much as she could. This was the first time that Raven saw Hummingbird since he had flown south to escape the bad weather. And it seemed to Raven that Hummingbird had not changed. He was still too busy to be careful.

“Who put that building there? I almost killed myself!” Hummingbird squeaked. “How am I supposed to get to the flowers with that thing in my way? I always used to fly this way. Now I am blocked!”

Raven said dryly, “It is for tools. What does it matter who put it there? It looks like you have to find a better way to the flowers.”

The rant continued: “It’s stupid! Why is it there? There is no rational reason to put a building in my way!”

“Still, it is there. Never mind the rationale,” drawled Raven.

“But I cross pollinate and help keep Spring and Summer diverse and beautiful. Without me, this would be a drab place. It may as well be winter. What do you want, a world of weeds? Don’t they know that my job is important?”

“Yeah, I am sure that everyone knows how important you are,” mocked Raven. “But the fact remains that you should have slowed down and assessed the scene. You could have been done with your job by now if you hadn’t stopped to complain.”

Defensively, Hummingbird squawked, “What do you know? All you do is scavenge off animals that are already dead. I am part of a living system. You are the reaper’s bird. And you have the luxury of flying around for your work. My path is very well defined – and now it is blocked!”

“Well, well,” croaked Raven, “It didn’t take you long to get personal with me. Quit ignoring the fact that YOU slammed your head into a solid object. I did not. If you are moving too fast to be
safe, that is your problem. If you can’t adapt to new, immovable circumstances, how can anyone help you?”

Hummingbird glared at Raven, chirping in contempt. “Sanctimonious Raven! So proper, so righteous!”

As Raven flew carefully away to tend to the next carrion, she could not help thinking that Hummingbird would end up hurt or worse.

Raven was right. It was just two days later – right in the middle of the bird work week- that Hummingbird was found sporting x’s for eyes. Did he die from a concussion? Was stress the main factor in his demise? Did he implode out of frustration? Was it his time to go? Did he forget about the new obstacle? Raven simply did not know.

She did know that though both of them had bird brains, one of them had survived the occupational hazard of change. Hummingbird’s inability to relearn, adapt, and navigate around new obstacles were the chief factors in his death. Fellow birds had warned Hummingbird to slow down many times. Perhaps it was in his nature to operate in that way.

In the end, it may be a waste of time to wonder why we have to circumvent what we perceive as impediments. Instead, we need to assess, adapt, and act accordingly. Those three A’s can help us to cope with a new paradigm and prevent us from banging our heads on a new, often intractable reality.

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Here are some questions to consider:

What was the hummingbird’s problem?

Why did the hummingbird resort to insulting the raven when the raven was being honest?

Is it possible to work too fast in corrections – like the humming bird?

What are some of the consequences of working in a rut of routine?

To which character do you most relate – the hummingbird or the raven?

How do you deal with corrections’ hummingbirds?
The Parable of the Hungry Rat

This is another story-based icebreaker. It is an excellent point of departure for a module on working with difficult colleagues.

It is a story of human concerns masked in the guise of talking animals. Basically, it is about a line level employee who becomes a tyrant.

Ten questions follow the story. Five are about the characters of the story. These are followed with five questions related to the story, but more conceptual. All of them come back to addressing a tyrant/bully.

To keep interest, a short PowerPoint might be a good tool. This can feature a picture of each character to correspond with the paragraph that the reader is on. For example, when reading a paragraph about Connie the rat, an image of a rat can be on screen. The initial work for this would be worth it for keeping interest. Also, it makes the facilitator more familiar with the story.

I believe that this should be read aloud by the facilitator. Having the class read silently would lend to skimming and less comprehension. It helps to train the trainer. Also, the instructor can gauge the crowd as the story goes on.

At the end of the reading, questions one through ten are asked of the participants. In an active group, answers will inspire more answers. Sometimes, as we have all found, we need to prod the group a bit. A recorder can be appointed to mark answers on the board or flip chart.

Also, there may be animosity driven by the story if similar incidents occur in the facility. Therefore, the facilitator must be mindful of events. It is wise to state that participants should not attack individual but should talk about concepts.

Now it is story time…

No one is immune from the seductive Siren songs of power. Almost everyone in the workplace is likely to face a megalomaniacal monster. This is the person that dreams of authority and becomes drunk on it. It can be line staff or official supervision.

Sometimes we delegate power to someone who is very eager to perform a less than desirable task. When the task is complete, we sometimes have to pry the fingers off the position. In other words, when we appoint someone to do a difficult job, they may be reluctant to relinquish power.

This little story asks the question: What do you do when you empower a megalomaniac? Please suspend your knowledge of how animals actually act and interact in the wild. With a little anthropomorphism, I spin the parable of the hungry rat.
The Cast:

Alice – a hard working ferret – owner of a farm

Rudy – an insightful rabbit who has an infallible bovine-scatometer (BS detector)

Connie – a power hungry rat

Alice, a hard working ferret, ran a farm. She was successful in selling surplus produce to the local area. Alice liked her work and was happy, for the most part.

Rabbits were employed to keep the insects off of Alice’s crops. The rabbits were very adept at keeping weeds away from the commodity. On paper, the rabbits did very well.

On occasion, they did not.

You see, most of the rabbits did not always work well because they were easily frightened. They tended to scatter or hide under one another when adversity struck. Outside forces sometimes shook their mettle. They found themselves unable to concentrate, for example, when they were spooked by coyotes that prowled around the perimeter. It was very disruptive.

It was unfortunate that Alice could not control the outside forces. She thought about it and implemented defensive training for the rabbits. Alice hired an expert (a clever fox) who trained the rabbits in un-pawed self defense. The training seemed to go well. Yet, on the first occasion when a coyote attacked a rabbit, the results were not optimal. The violent passing of three of the more audacious rabbits was a somber occasion.

Rudy, an outspoken and bright rabbit, told Alice and her colleagues that fighting was not in a rabbit’s nature. The training, she said, was counter to rabbit psychology. One might as well expect a pig to walk on two legs - like some sort of Orwellian vision.

Determined for success of the farm, Alice tried some new training. A pensive owl lectured on the importance of self esteem to the rabbits. Predictably, the rabbits sat riveted to the words of the sagacious bird. Weeks later when a new round of harassment from the coyotes occurred, the rabbits fell apart. Fear overtook the feelings of empowerment instilled by the owl. The psychological training did not work.

Rudy reminded Alice that this group was not built for this sort of training. They needed protection from Alice in order to do their work. Frustrated, Alice said that she was too busy running things to protect the rabbits. Rudy rolled her eyes and went on with her work day.

Connie had a solution. She was a hard working rat who always seemed to keep her area orderly. However, she was known throughout the farm as bossy. On occasion, she would show her teeth and frighten her colleagues. In fact, all but Rudy would do her bidding when she snarled orders.
Connie asked Alice for power. In the wake of two expensive training fiascos, the ferret was at wit’s end. She granted Connie the authority to act as a surrogate in the interest of the rabbits.

Connie did not have the tact of Alice. She was feared, whereas Alice was generally respected. In addition, Connie used fawning to stroke Alice’s ego. She did not mean the compliments. They were merely a tool to get things to move her way. The beleaguered Alice did not see through Connie’s sycophantic ways.

It was fear of Connie that kept the rabbits busy. Then, the test day came. Another round of coyote prowling commenced. Connie was on the fence, hurling invectives and brandishing her teeth. Surprised by the resistance, the bulling coyotes looked for easier prey. Connie was a star!

More coyote harassments came. They were deflected by Connie.

Unfortunately, Connie’s actions were fueled by hostility and not by professionalism. After each trouncing of the coyotes, Connie was an unbearable tyrant on the farm. She was, no doubt, emboldened by each new success. The ends were admirable. The means were dubious.

Connie, never shy about reporting her achievements, trumpeted her victory over the coyotes to Alice. Relieved, Alice gave Connie what she directly asked for – more power. Grateful for the apparent rise in productivity, Connie was given carte blanche. From there, Connie’s reign of terror intensified. Connie had barely acknowledged her rabbit peers as colleagues. Now they were merely subjects.

Rudy saw through the incident. She knew that Connie was successful. But in the retelling, Rudy noted that Connie elevated herself to mythical proportions. It was only Rudy who stood up to Connie’s tactless, officious ways.

Alice was away often, a bit intoxicated by less responsibility. An imaginative, if not deluded ferret, Alice believed that all was working as it should.

The gardens became a mess, as the intimidation tactics used by Connie eventually froze the rabbits into inactivity. When Alice timidly asked about this, Connie said that with more power, she could get things in shape again.

Rudy, being a good observer, noted that Connie was getting power drunk and more offensive. Yet, Alice was blinded by the result over the means. Alice was now intimidated by Connie, having given authority to a bully. Rudy pointed out to Alice that she has empowered a megalomaniac and that wresting the power from her would be like dislodging a deep rat’s nest.
This parable is without an ending. I would be nice to say that Connie realized the error of her ways and dropped the bullying act. It would also be nice if Alice seized the reigns of the farm. Here are some questions to consider:

What role does Rudy play in all of this?
Should Alice have seen through Connie’s false compliments?
Do you view Alice as too weak or too busy?
Can Alice get any credit for trying new training?
Is Connie a horrible bully or an opportunist with aspirations?
How do you keep in charge even when there is a nasty job that you would rather delegate?
Are outside forces part of the stress of any job?
Is the bottom line result more important than the process?
Does training always work? Should it be tailored to fit the needs of the group?
What do you do when you empower a megalomaniac? What are some of the consequences?
The Predator Test

In corrections, we deal with a variety of personalities. Perhaps all the most challenging of these is the predator type. Therefore, is very likely that academies and annual updates may feature some training on predators. Here's a way to use something unexpected to draw parallels and to make predator training a bit more entertaining.

The facilitator may start like this -

“Can anyone here define predator in a few short words? (Pause for class participation and mark on board as answers are offered.) A good definition is someone who preys on the weaknesses of others for their own gain or gratification. Now, our agency’s policy directive defines the predator as (fill in the blank with your own official definition of predator).

Still, how much do we know about predators? I suggest that we take this little test.”

The instructor can very easily find out natural predators and prey and put them in opposing columns and with those conduct a matching test. These are animal predators, not human. At the end of these directions is a sample test.

The point is to think about natural ways in a certain environment where there is prey and the Hunter. This is not some sort of Darwinian or Discovery Channel sort of exercise. Rather, it demonstrates a food chain of sorts. The object, of course, is not to reduce human behavior to that of animals. But the test does illustrate the ways of an institutional environment.

After the test is completed, one may even award the individual or the teams with the most answers correct a prize of some sort. The predator test can also be placed on a PowerPoint presentation and conducted as a Jeopardy quiz.

The instructor can ask teams to compile a list of human predators outside of an institutional setting. Give the class a few minutes to come up with five of these. Some examples include:
- An unscrupulous mechanic who fleeces naïve consumers;
- Identity thieves;
- “Agents” who handle models and dupe them into posing in compromising positions;

Then the instructor asks the ways that offenders may victimize one another. Some answers are sexually, through intellectual coercion, and via groups. The quiz is a way to get a little class participation before launching into the official module on how to deal with predators of various types in the prison setting.

Sample predator test

Name the natural predator for the following animal:
Cobra
Salmon
Seal
Mouse
Rabbit
Cat
Deer
Zebra
Fly
Capybara

Answers:
Mongoose
Grizzly bear
Orca, polar bear
Owl, cat
Dog, cat
Dog, eagle
Wolf
Lion
Spider
Piranha
There is a Word For It

Sometimes, a single word does not seem to fit. For example, I once used the word vex in place of harass in a charge of insolence. The word actually fit and was used properly. But it did not read well because it is not a common word. In fact, some colleagues checked up on me to see if I invented a word. They found it in the dictionary. But it was a matter of ridicule and eyebrow-raising. It simply did not fit.

What if convention was thrown to the four winds and we used less official language in our misconduct reports? The results would be hilarious on one hand and ineffective on the other. Potentially, all of these are legal documents. Misconduct writing is a serious matter.

What are some possible pitfalls? We could create misconduct reports that are too pompous, too archaic, too judgmental, or too far away from the facts. How do we reinforce good ticket writing skills?

You could start by considering a sentence from a generic misconduct report. Do not reveal the sentence yet. Ask the class for a verb. Have a recorder write the first ten verbs offered. You may jumpstart the shy group by reminding them that a verb is an action word. You can offer RUN as an example. From there, you might get a list such as EAT, POINT, LAUGH, etc.

Then you display a sentence from the misconduct on the board or on the computer screen. “At the above time and place, I directly observed…” The word to replace is “observed”. Plug each of the words into the blank spot left by the vacated “observed”.

“At the above time and place, I directly _______…”

The results can be strange or nonsensical. The point is to reinforce the idea that words should be useful and descriptive and accurate. In other words, they need to fit the tone of the misconduct.

From the same sentence, we could eliminate the adverb “directly” and replace it. Again, ask the class for an adverb, a word that describes how you do something. For example, I can run (verb). But how can I run (adverb)? I can run quickly, furiously, sloppily, etc. You may solicit answers such as LAZILY, HAPPILY, LOUDLY, POORLY, and so on.

Now plug the adverb into the sentence with the adverb “directly” omitted, “At the above time and place, I _______ observed…” Run through the adverbs offered by the class one by one by plugging them into the vacancy of “directly”.

In essence, this is like using the old road trip word game. Instead of filling in the blank on a script or short story, you use a generic misconduct reports as a framework. It teaches parts of the grammar, context, and verbal restraint. In short, it demonstrates how a misconduct report can be miswritten and how it ultimately should be written.
This can be done on a projected word document, on a PowerPoint slide or on a board or flip chart. The most practical and easiest way to do this is to reproduce a misconduct report, remove some words, and number the spots.

If the first word you removed was a noun, on a separate piece of paper it should say “1. provide a noun”.

If the second word you removed was an adjective (a word that describes a noun), then the next line should read “2. Provide an adjective).

If the third word you removed was a number, on a separate piece of paper it should say “3. provide a number”.

The instructor should search the internet or a bookstore for a short description of parts of language. This will help the instructor maintain authority and also settle any disputes over grammar.

It is clear that we all have to write within a certain style, vocabulary level, and tone. “There is a Word for it” shows us how bizarre a misconduct report can look and implores us not to follow those poor examples.
This is Only a Test: Some Uses for Trainer Cells

Wouldn't it be great if good ideas could be implemented immediately? However, brainstorm must be filtered through institutional needs, resources, space, and time.

Still, one can dream. Just because an idea cannot be immediately put into play does not render it perpetually shelved. And creative thoughts are often modified and brought into every day practice, given time.

If time, space, and expense were no object, I would like to see this training exercise mandated at every correctional facility. It is called, “This is only a test”. It is a practical, hands-on learning exhibit for contraband control.

Here's how it works. In the training error of each facility, there'll be built one each of the cell types used in the institution. In other words, if the facility in question has a segregation cell and minimum-security parts, each will be available as trainer cells in the training area. Optimally, these training cells are located outside the secure perimeter for user training and demonstration.

The chief reason for having a trainer cell is to educate staff on the many hiding places that offenders may utilize. They would serve as a useful tool to instruct pre-professionals of many different contraband concealment methods that one can find within the prisoner’s area of control. The trainer cell also serves to hone the skills of experienced professionals.

Also, these trainer cells shall not be used by offenders, as issue of harassing searches can be dismissed. Trainer cells shall be stocked with goods and furniture that simulate a prisoner's presence and should be as realistic as possible.

The institutional training officer can place any contraband item in its hiding places prior to each search exercise. Of course, we all have different perspectives. Therefore, it is wise to get other staff to help conceal the bootleg. And it is best to rotate staff in and out of that position in order to offer as many hiding scenarios as possible.

Whatever the hiding procedure, each training officer should note the nature and location of each item hidden. And in much the same way as a teacher will assess which questions are answered incorrectly, the trainer can determine which locations are typically left unsearched. This information will indicate points to be emphasized in future training.

In addition, the trainer cells can be used for emergency response team members. This is an excellent way to simulate cell rushes.
Thirdly, a trainer cell is a good demonstration for members of the public that may tour the facility. This would give those on tour a pretty good idea of the physical conditions in which offenders are housed. Liability is lessened in this case. Granted, I believe that criminal justice students and pre-professionals should also witness and experience the inside of a facility in order to gain understanding of what goes on. But in many cases, members of the public who may tour prisons would be able to gain enough of an understanding in a trainer cell.

I know that the idea is not strictly original. I believe that many worksites and academies employee dummy cells for training purposes in some form or another. But I wonder just how fully utilized these trainer cells are for contraband control exercises.

I believe that training in hands-on contraband control is essential for the safety of staff, offenders, and the public the construction expense and vocational payroll to run such an exercise is an investment in the future.
Twisted Tales

Once upon a time there was a man who loved words. Unfortunately, he often used his words to make others feel bad. He would purposely use old, rare words of which few would be familiar.

His friends (decreasing by the day) and those that he worked with would ask him, “Why do you talk down to us?’

He would reply, “I'm not ‘talking down to you’ as you so ineptly assert, beloved cretin. I am merely expressing myself to a mental inferior through a state of condescension. Empty your drool cup, now!”

These are the type of people who get punched or sabotaged.

Perhaps you know someone like this. And I'm not talking about the normal, benevolent verbivore who just happens to like large words and a varied vocabulary. I'm talking about the pompous ass – the intellectual bully – that specializes in making others feel less intelligent by speaking down to them. He uses others like intellectual toilet paper.

All that almost sounds like an old folk tale where someone in the story does something bad and is punished by the end. These are simple cautionary tales that have been with us for centuries. They act as a moral compass and also as entertainment.

So let's mix big and obscure words gone wild with famous folktales or children's stories. This is a very good way to start a communications module. It is a test that is very simple to take. It is a fill in the blank quiz. Below you will find a brief description of a famous folktale or fairytale. However, the description is written in pompous phrases. Here is a list of 13 for good luck:

A troika of porcine siblings attempt to maintain status quo with their habitation whilst matching wits with a lupine figure. What is the name of this tale?

(The three little pigs)

Corpulent and gregarious, this crimson clad personification of benevolence distributes complementary favors on a perennial basis. Who is the name of this figure?

(Santa Clause)

A recluse residing in an area where deciduous foliage is prominent uses confections to lure a pair of immature versions of her species in order to engage in cannibalism. What is this tale?

(Hansel and Gretel)
Her most prominent feature was her integumentary system that seem to know no bounds. Who was this figure?

(Rapunzel)

Out of a sense of duty to his recent rescue from cryonics, this colossal bovine assists a Titan in defoliating much of the North American continent. Who is this?

(Babe the blue ox)

His mistake was that he fallaciously and repeatedly announced the presence of an Uber-canine. Unfortunately, for him his paranoia and his poor reputation led to his demise. Who is this person?

(The boy who cried wolf)

Due to the monarchs reneging on the agreed-upon remittance for rodent removal, the next generation was kidnapped. Who is this person?

(The Pied Piper of Hamlin)

This extraterrestrial assimilated and donned a trichromatic ensemble in order to assist the criminal justice system. Who is this person?

(Superman)

She was oblivious to her next course of action due to her prolific nature. It is noted that her dwelling would be more comfortable for metatarsal. Who is this person?

(The old woman in the shoe)

She learned the tricky lesson of moderation from a trio of ursine antagonists. Who is this person?

(Goldilocks)

Miniscule and edible, this item tested the sensitivity of this hesitant dreamer. Who is this person?

(The princess and the pea)

She was redeemed from unfair physical labor, verbal abuse, and a general lack of camaraderie through the identification of footwear. Who is this person?

(Cinderella)
Of Mediterranean descent and constructed from vegetation, this figure gain mortality. Who is this figure?

(Pinocchio)

Above all from this we can learn that you can dazzle them with brilliance or baffle them with bull. There are so many different ways to say the same thing. And twisted tales is a great way to illustrate that point and to break the ice.
Wanna Bet?

Corrections staff serve as role models. Though offenders do not necessarily want to admit it or may not even realize it on an obvious level, they look to us to do the right thing. It is also vocational fact that many offenders will point out when we do the wrong thing.

Per civil service rules and policy directives, gambling is prohibited among staff. However, “Wanna bet?” is a classroom exercise that uses the idea of gambling in order to introduce concepts of manipulation. We can learn a bit of psychology by applying a wager to a team-oriented icebreaker.

This is how works:

Very discreetly, give a roll of clear tape to a preselected person. For the icebreaker to work well, the facilitator must tell the selected person of the plan in advance. No other team is to know that the selected team will be given an undeclared advantage. If any other party knows of this, the exercise will likely not work.

Divide the class into teams of four.

Give each team a deck of 52 playing cards. If your budget does not allow, a local casino may donate as many deck as you need.

Announce that there will be a competition in the spirit of teamwork. Teams will compete to build a house of cards. You may allot 10 minutes to do so. The team that builds the tallest structure wins. If the house of cards falls, teams have an opportunity to rebuild as long as they do so without going over the time limit.

Remember the team that was specially selected to have tape. The tape will be used to build a secure structure that will not fall.

One of the team members on the specially selected team with the tape says something like, “Let's make this interesting. I bet you we can build higher.” Of course, this line and the timing was fed in advance by the facilitator.
The facilitator permits this and keeps an eye on the dynamics of the room. Competition is increased with just more than pride in one's team on the line. How the bet develops will, of course, depend on a variety of factors. But it is important that there is an incentive to build taller card houses than other teams.

With the unfair and unseen disadvantage of clear tape, one team should have a steady structure and should easily win the bet.

If the cheating team played well, they would have blocked off any spies with auxiliary team members. The other team would not have known that they had the advantage of tape. And that is part of the rooms that the facilitator must implore to the selected team members that they must sell. The tape advantage should go undetected until it is revealed at the end.

When all is said and done, the facilitator will announce that one team was purposely given an unfair advantage. This was done for very valid reason. This was to illustrate that there really is not a sure thing to bet upon.

The facilitator can ask a series of questions: Did something seem not quite right? Did anyone honestly suspect that there was tape in the room? If not, was there anything in retrospect that indicated that the team may have been cheating? Did any of this seem out of character? When the truth was announced, did you feel manipulated? How did inter-team dynamics change when the bet was proposed?

This scripted misdirection is an effective way to guide a group into a module about manipulation.

Naturally, if the facilitator is leading a particularly playful group, comments about the bet will resurface. If the group knows each other well enough, there will certainly be some rough verbal camaraderie. Therefore, the instructor must be on his or her toes and direct the group well. This means either guiding the group away from any argument or finding lessons within the ribbing.

Also, it is not out of the question for a group to later play a prank on the facilitator. It is simply a matter professional pride and playful revenge. If you pulled one over on a whole group, they may try to pull one over on you.

So this icebreaker may not be for the less than playful instructor. However, if you are one who does not mind some scrapes and bruises on the ego and if you don't mind a little playing a classroom, “Wanna bet?” may be the perfect icebreaker to set the stage for module on manipulation of staff.
Many of us in corrections develop a gallows sense of humor. Perhaps we do this in order to cope with the seriousness of the job. This can be deemed as a general stress reliever.

Is there way to proactively harness this and place it into an icebreaker? I believe so. This can be done with simple introductions. As you start a module, you may write on the board or display on the computer screen these words:

- Name
- Current position
- Time in corrections
- The most horrible way to die is...

It is best to stack the words in four different lines for clarity. The facilitator simply states that everyone will give a very brief introduction of themselves. This will be done by stating your name and current position and the time that you have worked in corrections. The part that (ironically) enlivens participants is their opinion of the most horrible way to die.

In the spirit of teamwork and interest of instruction, the facilitator should go first. Mine would be like this:

Hi, my name is Joe.
I'm a corrections librarian.
I have been in corrections for 18 years.
I believe the most horrible way to die is being eaten by rats. Naturally the facilitator will set the tone.

My thought is that creativity can flow if there are few constraints. I believe that the shock value at the start of the session may spark more active participation later. Then let the group go one by one. Here are a few notes.

Remember that there's a fine line between bizarre, yet effective instruction and creepy answers.
There will be repeated answers. And this should be permitted. After all, if you think that drowning is a horrible fate, you should be able to agree with someone who answered that previously.
Be compassionate as needed. Someone may render a heart-wrenching true story of how a loved one recently passed a terrible manner. The mood of the room can shift in a millisecond.
Reel in the class and if things get too jovial. Remember the unique pull of gallows humor. There may be a string of answers designed to disgust others. Be prepared for a gross out/shock contest.
Keep a sense of humor. Perhaps someone will list the most horrible way to die is “to be bored to death by this training”.
Keep a lid on things. There may be some rough verbal camaraderie. Prepare for wild answers as the audience becomes more comfortable.

This is a true icebreaker. And nothing breaks the ice quite as easily sharing the universal fear of mortality. This can go well with an introduction to communications module. I also see this as a way to enliven (again ironically) and unarmed self-defense class. Perhaps one can use as a prelude to a retirement seminar.

Why not give this icebreaker try? After all, we only live once
What Are You Talking About?

Our inability to understand transforms us into helpless actors on the stage, unable to read the cue cards. When we hear words and do not understand them, our audience is aware of this. That dilutes our effectiveness and lessens our professional credibility.

The slang that one hears in a correctional facility can be very vexing and confusing at times. This is true even for seasoned corrections professionals. The argot is dynamic, fluid, and decentralized. These are colloquialisms that are often morphed by intentional masking. (Do you know what this jargon says?)

Time does not stand still in language. What you learned in slang when you started may have become as dated as the more public terms such as “sweet” or “sick” or their older siblings “cool” and “groovy”.

No matter how tenuous or daunting this may be, we need to get a handle on the inside language. We need to realize the slippery and fleeting nature of slang words. What better way is there to accomplish this than through an icebreaking exercise?

This is what you’ll need – markers and a board or a flip chart. This can also be created on a slide show format projected on a screen. Of course, the flip chart works and is also a good platform for “What are you talking about?” It is adaptable and easily translated for any classroom or trainer inclination.

This is how it works. The class is split into two teams. The instructor may make a sub game out of this by appointing leaders to select their team members. The interesting part comes when the facilitator directs the team leaders to change teams when all players are in place. This builds an interesting competitive spirit. Another tactic to build friendly competition is to have teams choose their team names. The names that teams select can be very surprising.

The facilitator preselects twenty slang terms spoken currently or historically by inmates. The first term is displayed. And each team is given a chance to define the word. When both teams have guessed, the definition is displayed. The first team to correctly define the term scores a point.

There are many texts, articles, and internet sources that feature prison argot. Finding them will be easy. The difficulties may be in assessing the sources for timeliness and choosing just twenty terms.

Of course, the old stand-by for trainers is the trumped up prize with very little value. Part of the fun in distributing candy bars or inexpensive gag gifts is the reactions from participants.

“What are you talking about?” works well with corrections students at the college level. We can use words that most corrections staff know for the college student versions.
It works well with corrections professionals. It is as simple as employing more obscure words in the presentation. Since the novice/college student version would be too easy for a group of corrections professionals, some of the common slang words can be substituted with less obvious selections. There is even an opportunity to review historical words for a bonus round.

There is no doubt that slang, like graffiti, is difficult to understand. Its fluidity will ensure that. However, corrections trainers do our profession a favor by featuring this sort of training. And pre-professionals benefit by having a little more understanding of the language before they enter into service for the public.
We work in an environment where we hear an extraordinary amount of expletives every single day. Potty mouths and potty humor are rather prevalent in the corrections setting. Love it or hate it, it does not matter. It is one of those vocational realities that we face regardless of stance.

Every now and again, an incident arises in our profession where we are forced to re-examine the role of profanity in the workplace. Policy directives and civil service rules outline behavior expected of us. Therefore, at one time or another most trainers will facilitate a module on the elimination of profanity on the worksite.

I admit that the following is a very, very strange way to address this topic. But, as it is a touchy subject, perhaps a little bit of wry humor may aid in making the anti-swearing training more palatable.

The facilitator might say something like this:

“Because of recent incidents, the department has implemented some mandatory training that addresses the use of profanity. It is a very serious topic. And in many ways we are judged not by the many good deeds we do, but some of the few verbal mistakes that we perpetrate. So before we delve into this topic, you're going to take a few minutes and take a 10 question quiz. This, in fact, is the potty mouth quiz.”

Perhaps the class will expect an origin of swearing exam. Or maybe they may think it's a survey on their favorite expletive. But that's not it at all. The facilitator will distribute a 10 question quiz
that relates directly to the toilet. Don't worry, there's nothing scatological here. It is a simple curveball thrown to take some of the gravity off of the serious topic of expected conduct. (see Toilet Trivia Test below)

It is a trainer’s discretion to offer a prize for quickest done or most questions correct. Over the years I have collected cheap and chintzy items and offered them as rewards. The “winner” simply reaches into the “box of dubious prizes” as I like to call it and revels in the tacky glory. It is more about bragging rights. After all, not everyone gets a prize. Other inexpensive giveaways can include suckers, candy, or other snacks.

A friend of mine offered a suggestion for prize. She believes that the winner of the Toilet Trivia Test should be given a fresh, unused roll of toilet paper. Of course, it's best to know one's audience before offering such a practical, yet unusual reward for knowledge. And I certainly would not advocate this prize strategy for all groups.

This test can be recycled from the one provided below. Also, the enterprising and creative facilitator can create one. There are plenty of websites that speak to this topic.

I will grant you that this is not an icebreaker for the traditional, straight-laced instructor. However, experience tells me that something slightly out of left field such as this icebreaker goes a long way in taking the stigma out of a weighty, mandatory module.

It is up to the instructor, however, to apply the appropriate amount of dignity during the module. This icebreaker is merely a way to introduce an important topic in an unorthodox way. I actually field tested this exercise and the participants said it was fun.
Toilet Trivia Test

In which direction does the toilet water flow when the toilet is flushed in the northern hemisphere?

What is a standard toilet seat measurement?

In the United States what is the standard capacity of water in a standard toilet?

How many times per day does the average US family flush its toilet(s)?

What is the average number of toilets in United States household?

What material are toilet rings made?

Which historical figure is credited with having the first flushable toilet?

Who is erroneously credited with inventing the first flushable toilet?

What are the three most popular colors for toilets in the United Kingdom?

What is the proper way to hang toilet paper – with the paper draped over the roll or under the roll?
Answers:

Generally counter clockwise. However, lots of water pressure will make the water flow straight down.

14” x 16” x ½”. A padded seat will naturally be thicker.

1.6 gallons – the 1980 standard.

Five to five and ½ times per day. That’s around 2,000 flushes per year.

Two.

Toilet rings are generally made of beeswax, though consumers may purchase synthetic varieties.

King Minos of Crete (circa 2800 B.C.) is credited with having the first water flushing toilet.

John Crapper has that dubious distinction.

White followed by pink then peach.

There is no official manner to hang toilet paper. This question is a historical source of bitter animosities.
You Villain! Icebreaker

Here is a bad joke:

What did the over-weight polar bear say as he sat down hard?

Hi! I am the icebreaker!

This joke has inspired groans during its long life. And it points to the nature of bad starts. As any seasoned trainer knows, a failed opening line can knock one off one’s square.

Sometimes the bad start is built into the makeup of the class. Imagine the discomfort of facilitating a module to a group composed of representatives from diverse agencies and occupations. The division in the class is palpable. In fact, the division is almost hostile. Never mind the topic. That is a bad beginning even before one has begun.

Not every class is like that. But if you have been training long enough, you will encounter such a scenario. How do you introduce the group to common ground and salvage what could otherwise be a tense class? The answer could lie in the You Villain! Icebreaker.

You Villain! is a way to get everyone in the room familiar with each other in a very short time. No props or markers are necessary. The facilitator simply starts like this:

“Good morning. Welcome to (title of the module). I am your instructor. Before we start learning about the topic at hand, we need to do some quick introductions. I need each of you to state:

your name,

your agency,

time in the agency and

your occupation.

Then you need to tell me who you consider the worst villain in history or literature and why. I’ll go first.

My name is Joe Bouchard. I work for the Department of corrections and have been employed here for 18 years. I am a librarian/trainer.

I believe that the most evil figure in literature is Sauron – the Dark Lord from Lord of the Rings because he wanted to cover the world in darkness and make slaves of the free people.”

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You should not expect such obscure references. Still, you should not be surprised if you get some like that. The purpose is to let people be themselves and to see the similarities in others. As a facilitator, you can make quick mental notes about who was selected and perhaps incorporate that into your presentation.

There are a few caveats.

First, you need to be on your toes when someone mentions a colleague. Perhaps a good natured reminder is warranted. You can stipulate that naming colleagues is forbidden in this icebreaker.

Also, current political figures may be named. Be prepared to defuse an argument between the left and the right. This may be especially explosive during an election year. If there is animus in the class, that could inspire silence. You must utilize all of your skills in order to break the ice. This could be by reading the audience and choosing a hopeful.

In the event of shy students, you could offer another villain as a point of departure. Some love to hate ‘em candidates are Hitler, Stalin, Genghis Kahn, and Satan.

A divided class can be a distraction for the facilitator. And the You Villain! Icebreaker may provide the common ground needed to break the ice. Use evil figures in history and literature to your advantage.
Afterward – A Bonus Story

Blazing and Training Dynamics – A Tribute to Terry Satterfield

There are some staff dynamics that look uncomfortable to the untrained eye. However, many seemingly contentious exchanges are really the expressions of respect. In other words, this is an instance of professional blazing meant in the best of ways.

Last year, one of my favorite out-of-state colleagues, Terry Satterfield, attended a presentation that I conducted about effective icebreakers and group activities. There were two good dynamics in this for me. First, this colleague is an accomplished trainer and would certainly offer good, constructive suggestions to me at the conclusion. Second, the person in question is my all-time favorite sparring partner. She is an incomparably adept blazer, playful and unyielding.

As a bit of background, whenever she and I meet on a one to one basis, we are quite civil and professional. However, when there is a crowd, one of us will slip the other and cry foul loudly. Those who know us understand that this is our twisted yet endearing manner of interaction. They know that if we are not play-fighting, one of us is ill or deadly tired.

Back to the icebreakers presentation – In what was an informal train the trainer session, she shot across my bow first as she introduced me. Feigning indignity, I continued in a hurt manner, milking the most out of the persona that I don during these conferences. She set the stage for a playful time. I trust her assessment of audiences and I followed suit.

And now I present the story within the story. One of the icebreakers that I demonstrated was an exercise in impromptu weapons making. I set the scenario: A staff person who is not security conscious loses a tin of breath mints inside the secure perimeter of a facility. I split the class into small groups and together they make a weapon out of the stock haphazardly left by the scenario’s incautious staff person. As I made rounds, the participants were instructed to divert me and hide their shank making enterprise.

The four groups were progressing nicely. Each time I approached the group with Terry, I was greeted with fawning conversation meant to dissuade inspection. After what would be my last round, I heard the rapid foot fall against the conference room carpeting. I did not turn, as I suspected that my pal was trying to demoralize me. I should not have ignored her. I felt the
sharpness of a skin puncture in my lower back. I was literally stabbed in the back by a colleague – my favorite sparring partner.

(Don’t worry, Dear Reader. It was actually just a little poke, not anything to worry about. I barely felt it. Of course, in the spirit of teasing and camaraderie, I did the best acting of my life. I concluded my howls of pain and told all involved that it was really nothing.)

I will mention here that I always bring adhesive bandages to the training. I caution participants to be careful when handling the thin and pliable metal. After all, someone in this session might cut their palm or their phalanges. However, this was the first time that there was an actual puncture wound. How fitting that I would be a victim of my own exercise!

My “stab wound” has long since healed. I now reflect the professional relationship of me and my sparring partner. We were able to have some fun and take the other participants with us because we adhered to a few rules of blazing:

· We knew each other’s limits;
· We did not hit below the belt;
· We let the content come through. The reciprocal teasing did not obscure the lesson;
· We gauged the audience;
· We understood that there was room for play. Not all audiences or venues or topics allow for play;
· We showed gestures of friendship as we parted.

You can be assured that this story is the absolute truth because of my unwavering devotion to professionalism. And let there be no doubt that I very much respect her work. Anytime with a mentor is a fantastic time, even if you incur your first physical wound during training from that person. Still, let there be no doubt that I can’t wait to see her at the next conference and engage in rough verbal camaraderie.

Thanks for everything, Terry.
Afterward – Another Bonus Story

That’s What Friends are for. - A Tribute to Michelle VanDusen

And as any veteran trainer can assert, you may learn a little something about yourself as educate others. That is one of the beauties about training – one never knows exactly what will happen. The point is: A trainer can plan and plan and have all of the best icebreakers up his or her sleeve. But all of that can be challenged and altered in an instant. At times, it is a very good thing. Here is an example taken from the pages of my training life…

That’s what friends are for

There are moments in one’s life that are AH! moments. That is to say, we take a quick second to look around and see that everything is in place and that all plans have come together in a harmonious intermingling. You know, AH!

In Nashville for ACA, I was presenting “You Animal! An anthropomorphic look at staff relations in corrections”. Just as the crowd settled in, I had the AH! moment. I was elated because the flights went well, I was prepared to speak, handouts made it to the presentation, and all seats were filled.

And then she came along.

“She” was Michelle VanDusen. We have a five year history of feigning anger and meanness to each other. Michelle and I are sparring partners. (I know, Dear Reader. I seem to have a lot of sparring partners. It must be that my kind, endearing nature attracts these types.) It is the stress relieving way that we interact. Our feelings are never hurt. However, it is the job of one of us to knock the other off of the other’s square. I am not sure who fired the first shot in this rough verbal camaraderie campaign. But, it exists. It is all in fun and none of it is unwanted. In fact, it is expected from both parties.

When I espied Michelle, the AH! turned into Uh-oh! What would she do? Would she embarrass me in front of all of these corrections colleagues from all over the country? Could I take that chance?

I knew that I was vulnerable. There was that mischievous twinkle in her eyes. The expression on her face matched a cat that swallowed the canary. Yet, this cat was trying to impose a straight-faced innocence over her apparent guilt.

Offering my right hand, donning my humble look and probably slipping my head in the noose, I asked for a truce. She agreed. It was almost too easy. Has the playful Michelle been stricken with collegial compassion? Was I in the clear? Or was she selling me a well-rehearsed lie?
A moment later, I formally began my presentation. As I spoke in earnest seriousness about the ill effects of staff division, I noticed that there were five—not just one—but five people in the audience wearing plastic Groucho Marx glasses with noses and fuzzy eyebrows and mustaches.

Let me be clear. These comically adorned people were five trusted souls.

Michelle lied to my face about the truce, involved others, timed it correctly, and delivered a resounding KO punch to my dignity.

And it was the funniest thing that could have happened. The audience loved it and everything loosened up. The presentation went very well, with a judicious mixture of levity and seriousness.

Michelle’s joke made a positive impact, and it brought up a simple truth. You cannot be afraid to appear a bit foolish if it is in the name of illustrating a serious point. Staff division is a very significant problem in our vocation. Sometimes, it takes a whimsical approach to reinforce that message. Thanks so much, Michelle and co-conspirators!

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