



Necessary Intentionality

A Socially Constructed Model for Parent-child Relations
with Formerly Incarcerated African American Fathers



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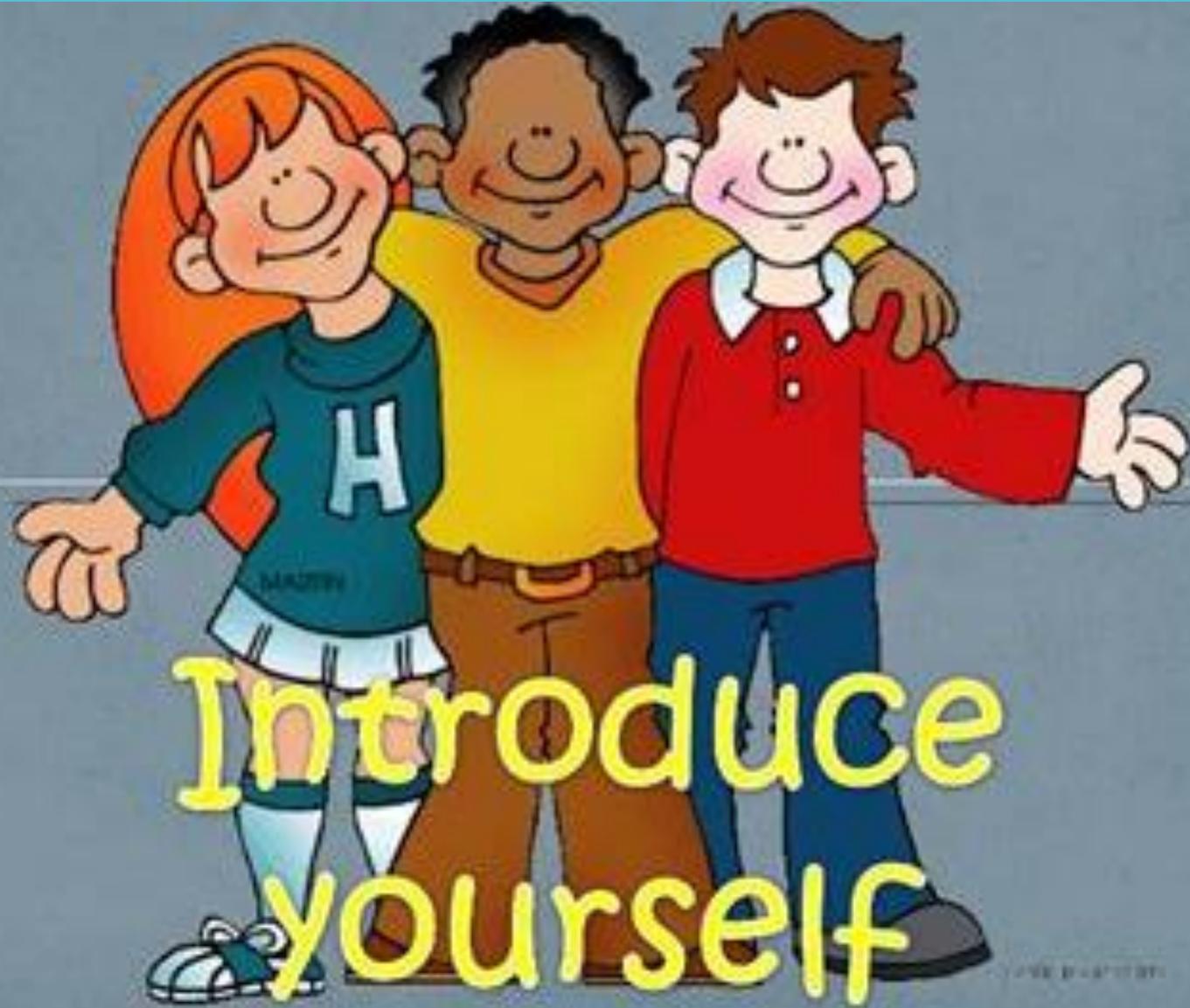
Workshop Purpose

The goal is to answer the following questions:

1. Why African American fathers struggle with parenting behaviors after incarceration?
2. How can educators support African American fathers in efforts to bond with their children?

Workshop Content

- Introduction
- Section 1
 - Socially constructed parenting...what is this?
 - Activity: The educators duty
- Section 2
 - Literature: A basic contextual frame
 - Study: Incarceration, re-entry, and reunification
 - Related misconceptions debunked
 - Activity: Resounding nuts and bolts
- Section 3
 - A model for father-child relations
 - Strategies to support fathers in parent-child relations
- Closing Remarks



Section 1



SOCIAL & CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF PARENTING



What's on
an *Educators'* mind?

Meet Corey

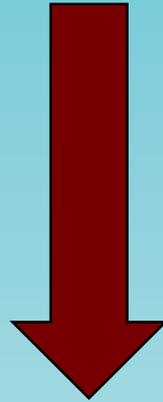
- A 35 year-old African American married father.
- He has two minor children, 12 year-old son and 10 year-old daughter.
- He is an officer serving in the US Army.

Meet Corey

- A 35 year-old African American **married** father **currently on parole**.
- He has two minor children, 12 year-old son and 10 year-old daughter, **whom he shares joint custody with his ex-wife**.
- **He spent 3 years and 8 months in a correctional facility as a result of conviction for kidnapping and aggravated assault.**
- He is a **retired** officer **previously** serving in the US Army.
- **He spends his time reading, exploring entrepreneurial opportunities, caring for his son, and setting goals for he and his family.**

Social & Cultural Construction

Conditioning

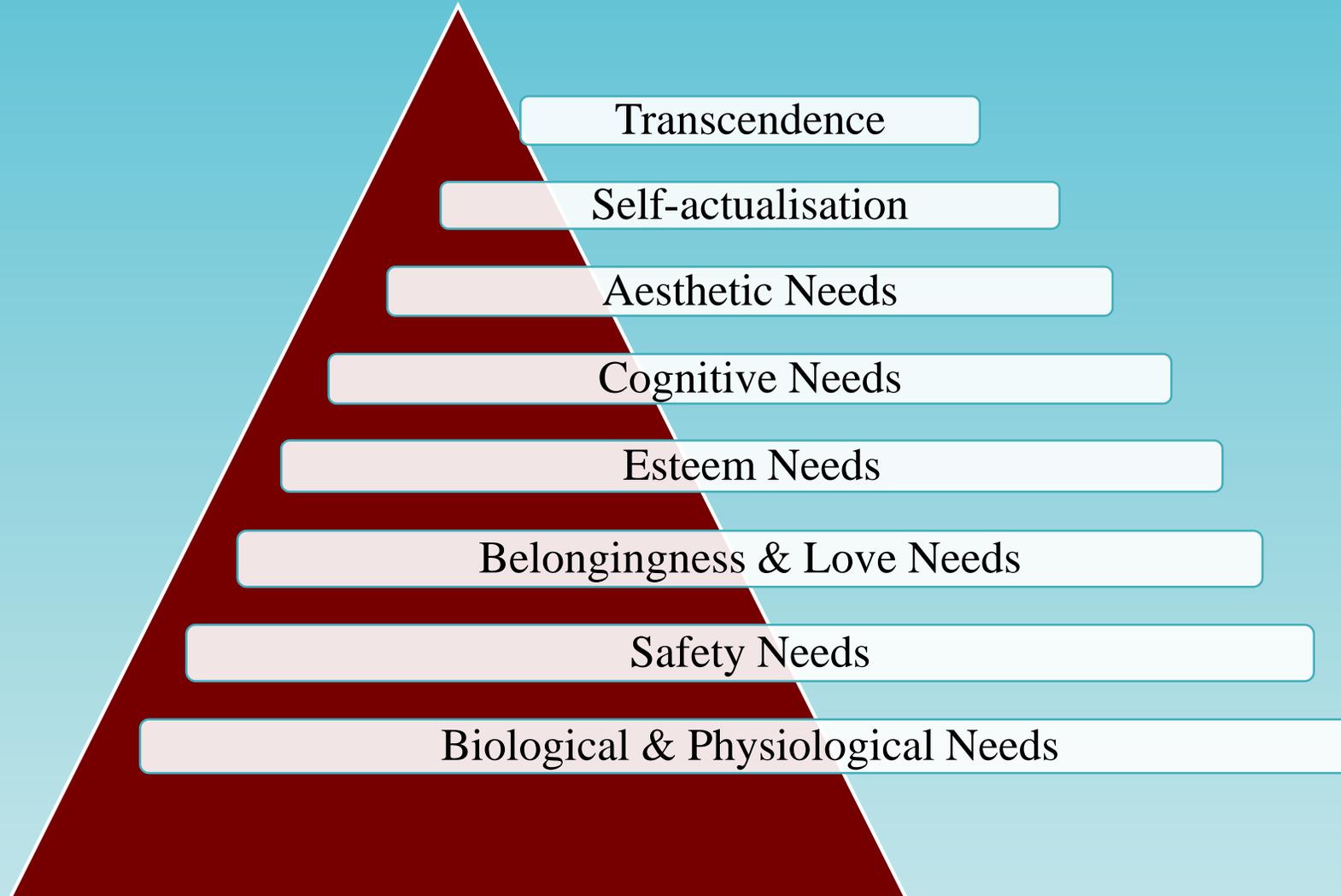


Life Scripts

Social & Cultural Construction

- The generation of knowledge and understanding of the human world shaped by our seeing and experiencing the world through human interaction activity (Andrews, 2012; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985; Heath, 2007).
- One's experience of the world will produce different perceptions, meanings, and constructions of reality conforming to event, time, and place (Burr, 2015; Lock & Strong, 2010; Patton, 2015).
- The idea of reality illuminates the influence of culture on our personal selves that translate into how we see the world; the context and value of some structure of experience (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015; Cunliffe, 2003; Patton, 2015).

The Maslow Prototype - Hierarchy of Needs



Conventional Construction of Parenting

PROVIDER

PROTECTOR

NURTURER

MENTOR

DISCIPLINARIAN

The Most Important Question – WHY?

Intention (n) a determination to act in a certain way; resolve; a process or manner of healing of incised wounds; an aim or purpose.

Incised (adj) engraved; having a margin that is deeply and sharply notched.

Intentionality (n) the fact of being deliberate or purposive; the quality of mental states (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes) that consists in their being directed toward some object or state of affairs; the fact of being done by design.

The Most Important Question – WHY?

Motivation is a desire influenced by our thoughts and feelings that drives our actions.

Priority determines quality of parenting and the active behaviors chosen by the parent.

Both **Motivation** and **Priority** are guided by our socially constructed life scripts that are not constant across the life span or life course.

Responsibility vs. Accountability

Responsibility

- A sphere of **duty**.
- An assignment of **obligation**.
- A determination of **liability**.
- A sense of **authority**.

Accountability

- A process of **reconciling** one's activities.
- A settling of **results**.
- A **measurement**.
- A scorecard of **outcomes**.

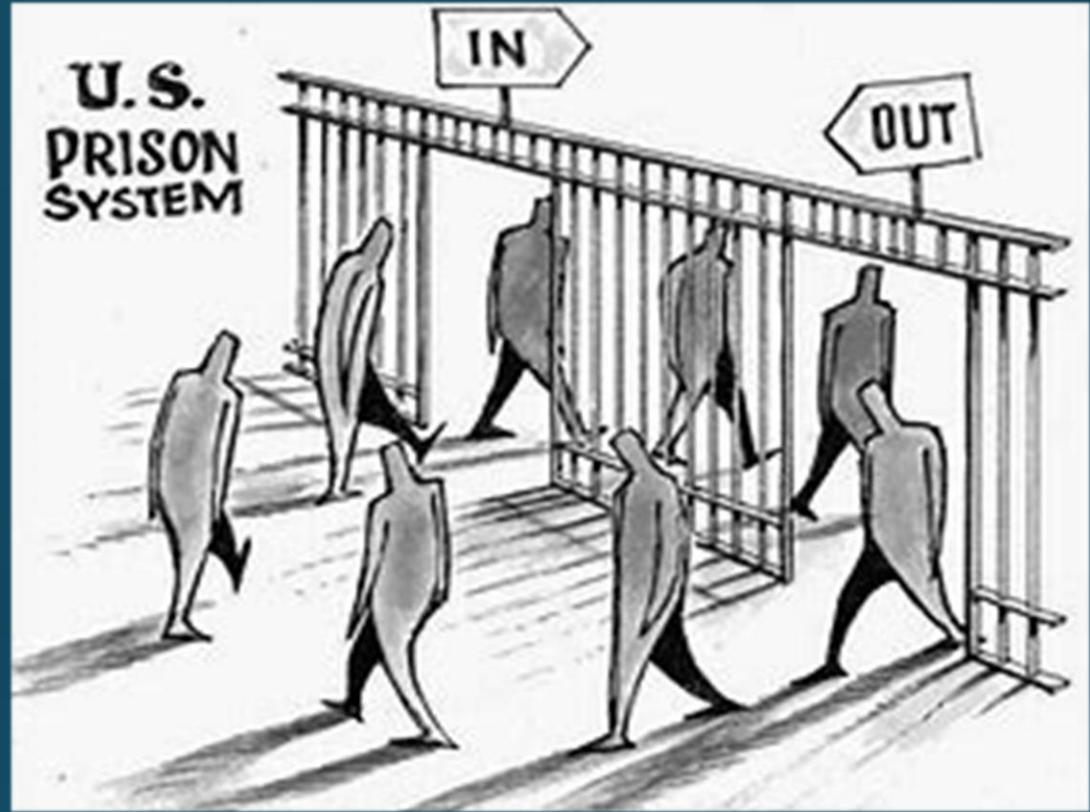
“To be accountable means that we are willing to be responsible to another person for our behavior and it implies a level of submission to another’s opinions and viewpoints.”

~Wayde Goodall

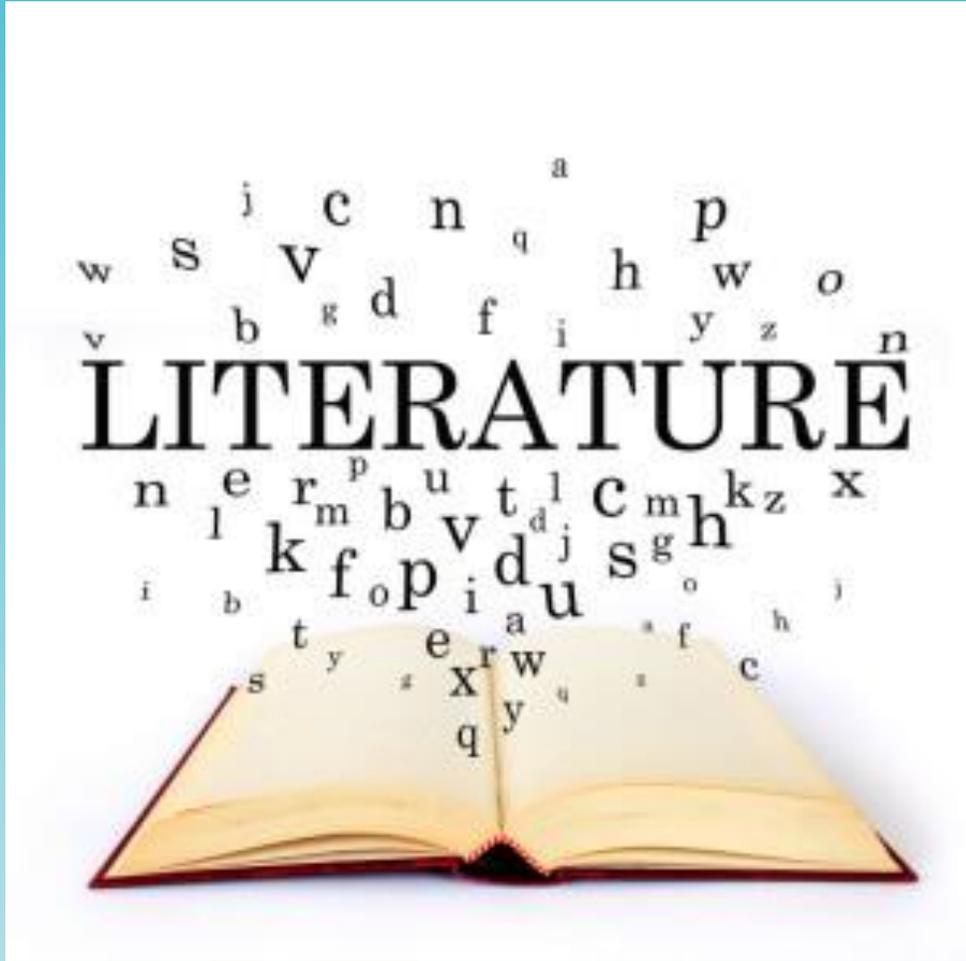
The *Educators'* Duty



Section 2



INCARCERATION, RE-ENTRY, AND REINTEGRATION



A basic
contextual frame

“The struggle you’re in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow.”

~ Author Unknown ~

The Backdrop of Circumstance

- In 2007, 52% of state detainees and 63% of federal detainees were parent to at least one minor child (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010).
- 92% of parents detained in prison are fathers (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010).
- 40% of parolees return to prison for new crime or technical violation (Travis & Stacey, 2010).
- Fathers hold a desire to reunite with children upon release (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005).
- On average, formerly incarcerated fathers are less engaged with children (Woldoff & Washington, 2008).

The Backdrop of Circumstance

Challenges related to Reintegration

■ **Family**

- Incarcerated/released individuals are viewed by family as a financial and emotional burden (Naser & Visher, 2006); paternity and child support are concerns that contribute to relational barriers (Pearson & Davis, 2003; Wilkinson, Magora, Garcia, & Khurana, 2009).
- Gatekeepers (i.e. mother of child, extended family, and community members, etc.) tend to excessively guard the formerly incarcerated fathers interaction with child following release (McBride, Brown, Bost, et al., 2005; Perry & Bright, 2012).

■ **Employment**

- Depending on the severity of offense, individuals with criminal history are less likely referred for employment (Varghese, Hardin, Bauer, & Morgan, 2010).

The Backdrop of Circumstance

■ **Child Support**

- Formerly incarcerated individuals are subject to as much as 65% garnishment of wages for child support (Griswold & Pearson, 2005; Roberts, 2001; Solomon-Fears, 2009).
- Failure to pay child support order can result in arrest/incarceration in accordance with state law (Brito, 2012; Evans, 2014).

■ **Housing**

- Formerly incarcerated individuals suffer eviction or are subject to extreme financial liabilities (Hirsch, Dietrich, Landau, Schneider, & Ackelsberg, 2002; Schneider, 2010).

The Backdrop of Circumstance

■ Education

- Formerly incarcerated individuals are likely to have low intellectual ability which is linked to anti-social behavior (Holland, Clare, & Mukhopadhyay, 2002; Lindsay, Taylor, & Sturney, 2004).
- Education may be perceived as a strain for fathers reintegrating into community following incarceration (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006).

■ Parental Rights

- Involuntary termination of parental rights [within the state of Kansas] includes conviction of a felony, imprisonment, failure to pay child support, or failure to adjust circumstances, conduct or condition on behalf of the child (Revised Kansas Code, 2014).

The Backdrop of Circumstance

■ **Health and Mental Health**

- Formerly incarcerated individuals are more likely to suffer from infectious diseases, blood disorders, skin disorders, co-occurring substance use disorders, and schizophrenia (Cuddeback, Scheyett, Pettus-Davis, & Morrissey, 2010).
- Upon return to community, formerly incarcerated individuals are likely to lack the means to receive the necessary treatment to maintain health (LaVigne & Cowan, 2005; Luther, Reichert, Holloway, Roth, & Aalsma, 2011; Wheeler & Patterson, 2008).
- The rate of re-incarceration is much higher for formerly incarcerated men with physical health conditions (Mallik-Kane & Visser, 2008).

The Backdrop of Circumstance

Challenges specific to African American Fathers

- African American males have the highest imprisonment rate compared to all other groups (Carson, 2014).
- African American males experience constant psychological distress due to discrimination around criminal history and race/ethnicity following release (Turney, Lee, & Comfort, 2013).
- African Americans exist with a racialized worldview that shapes their beliefs and behaviors in relationship to self and others (Unnever, & Gabbidon, 2011).
- Consequences of criminal justice involvement includes distrust in government, negative attitudes toward law enforcement, reduced or absence of political participation, and an increased perception of discrimination (Lee, Porter, & Comfort, 2014).
- Parental role-modeling wisdom held by African American fathers is likely given by their mothers or a significant social figure with the community (Coles, 2001; Forste, Bartkowski, & Jackson, 2009).

TRAUMA

Trauma

a mental and emotional response to a terrible event like a fall, car accident, rape, or natural disaster.

Developmental Trauma Disorder

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Complex Trauma

African American Males' Lived Experiences of Fathering Following Incarceration

Qualitative Phenomenological
Study, 2015-2016



Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

Characteristics of study participants:

- Ethnicity, Gender & role restriction
 - African American fathers
 - Biological parent to at least 1 child above 3 years and less than 17 years
- Age restriction
 - Between the ages of 28 and 50
- Location restriction
 - Kansas City metropolitan area or within 25 miles outside
 - Lives outside the home of minor child
- Criminal Justice participation restriction
 - Formerly incarcerated
 - Released within 6-12 months
 - Mandatory community supervision
 - Conviction non-sexual in nature

Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

A Father at the Crossroad

- Personal privacy vs. Personal interest
- Criminal justice & child support vs. Personal necessities
- Us vs. Them
- Free citizen vs. Social citizen
- Object vs. Human being

Surviving on the Edge

- Fear of reincarceration
- Fear of society (social stereotypes)
- Fear of retaliation (by adversaries)
- Fear of loss (of relationship)

Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

By the Way...I've Changed

- Mental and emotional changes after incarceration.
- Ability to articulate and demonstrate mental and emotional changes.

It's Been Too Long Without You

- Fathers made effort to encourage a reciprocal exchange with children.
- Fathers attempted to influence changes in their child's attitude toward them.
- Fathers attempted acts of affection to counteract damage of absence.

It Hurt Me But Helped Us

- Incarceration was the rite of passage to responsible father.
- African American fathers have the capacity to care.
- Being hurt was about healing from hurt to build strong bonds.

Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

I'm the Father

- The struggle experienced by fathers was not mainly because of interference by their maternal counterpart.
- Value and worth is associated with the father-child relationship.
- Clashes with maternal counterpart regularly led fathers to reluctantly choose to be indifferent.

It's Father Time

- An attempt to reverse the effect of absence.
- Opportunity to bond based on who father is now, not who father was before incarceration.
- An attempt to invest in the child's life.
- A fathers understanding of his own father.
- A chance to build a new legacy.

Study: Incarceration, Re-entry, and Reintegration

No Family No Life

- Children are primary motivator while on parole.
- Children are biggest accomplishment since returning to the community.

A Work in Progress

- Increased awareness of self represents strength and the ability to apply parental wisdom.
- Success is not in a positive father-child interaction but in achieving a strong lasting bond with children despite children knowing their flaws.

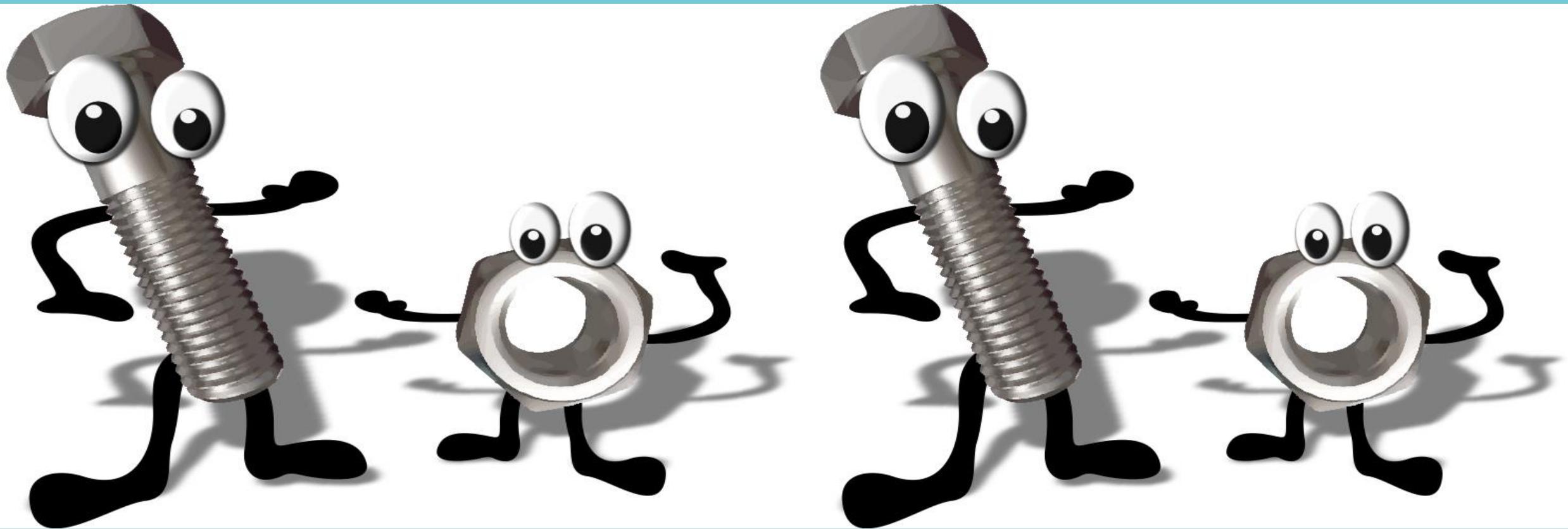
TRUE
 FALSE

Common Misconceptions

Misconceptions Debunked

- The role of “mother” is primary and outweighs the role of “father”.
- Formerly incarcerated African American men are incapable of effectively executing the father role.
- Formerly incarcerated African American men want to stay uninvolved in their children’s lives and reject the responsibility of being a father.
- Children of formerly incarcerated African American men are afraid to build relationship with their father.
- Formerly incarcerated African American fathers who aspire to realize the “traditional nuclear family pattern” will be most successful in parenting.

Resounding *Nuts and Bolts*



Section 3



**FAMILY
SUPPORT**

**WE
are
FAMILY**

**SUPPORTING FATHER-CHILD
RELATIONS**

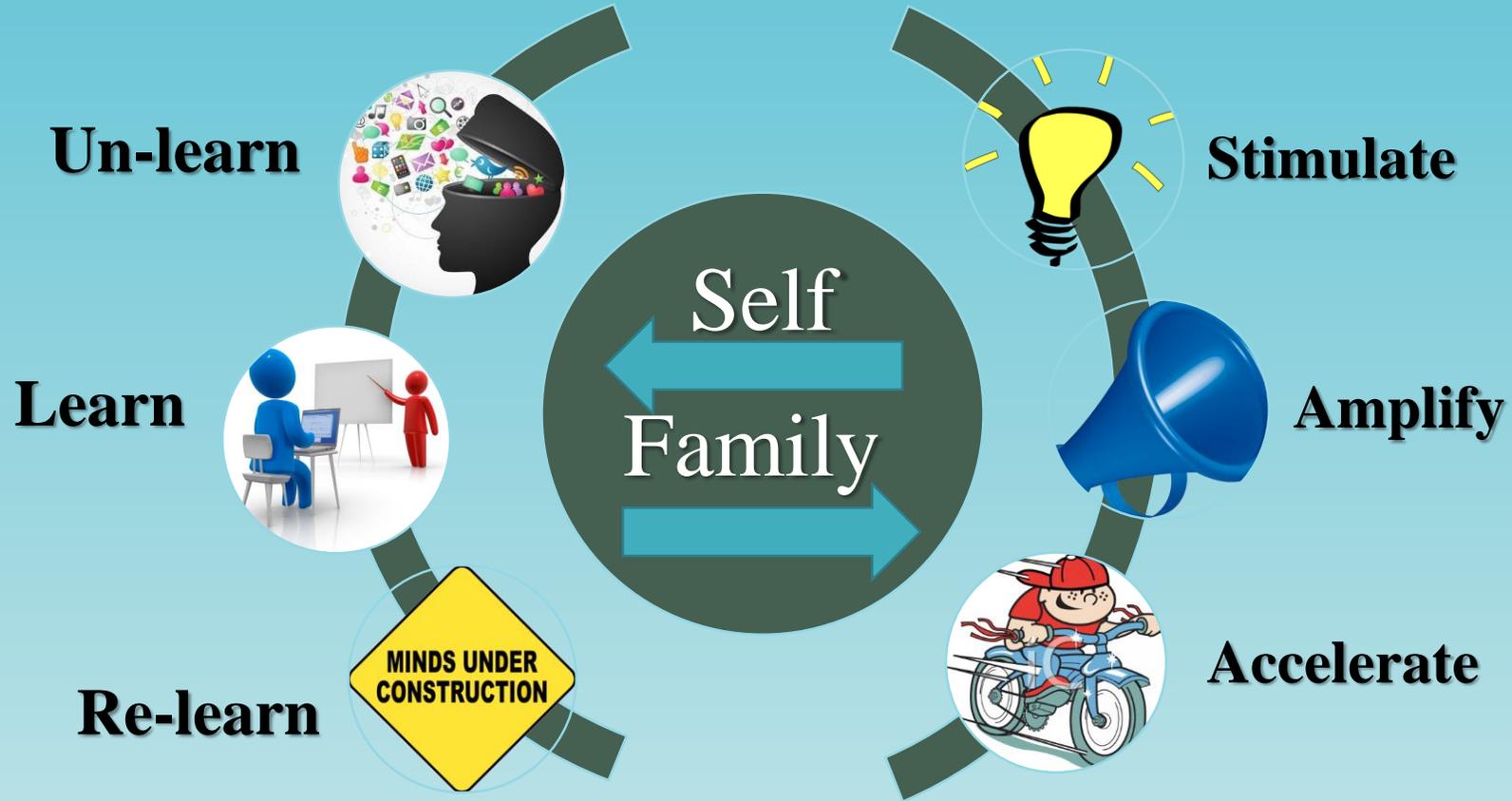
“Optimism is essential to achievement and it is also the foundation of courage and true progress.”

~ Nicholas Murray Butler ~

Observe Other Matters of Distinction

- **Quality 1:** the genesis of the African American culture is grounded in collectivism principles, traditions, and values; however, we exist, assimilated into, and function within a culture that promotes individualism.
- **Quality 2:** African American culture was built upon deep roots of spirituality, but exist in within a culture that exists counter to that foundation.
- **Quality 3:** African American parenting behaviors are influenced by a race-related socialization.
- **Quality 4:** Formerly incarcerated African American fathers tend to have multiple maternal counterparts.
- **Quality 5:** Formerly incarcerated African American fathers operate according to an unpredictable responsibly accountable system of priority.

Father-child Relations Model



Strategies to Support Fathers

- **Strategy 1:** Check your attitude at the door.
- **Strategy 2:** Be not consumed with conviction.
- **Strategy 3:** Flex your style.
- **Strategy 4:** Exercise motivational communication.
- **Strategy 5:** Promote child's communicative ability.
- **Strategy 6:** Work intentional to stimulate and maintain co-parenting collaboration.
- **Strategy 7:** Lead from the third chair.
- **Strategy 8:** Build on what the father has to offer rather than emphasizing the perceived deficit.
- **Strategy 9:** Keep your work in proper perspective.
- **Strategy 10:** Never assume, or use conventional wisdom to define, or design the father role in the family unit to influence your work as an educator.

Final Take-Away

The goal should be...

- To **avoid** efforts toward **changing** the father to fit your preconceived notions or self-constructed parental wisdom.
- **Facilitate** an **intentional shift** toward a more healthier way of parenting aligned with the fathers' adopted parental framework/construct.

Closing Remark

“The heart of a father is the masterpiece of nature.”

~ Antoine Francois Prevost, Manon Lescaut ~

Thank You!

I now invite your questions and comments.

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END OF PRESENTATION