

## College Guild

PO Box 696, Brunswick, Maine 04011

# Challenges to Justice and Freedom

Unit 4 of 5

## Internal Challenges

This unit focuses on how the brain and behavior may provide challenges to how choices and decisions are made.

### Glossary of Terms:

1. **Adage** - a proverb or short statement expressing a general truth
2. **Dementia** - progressive deterioration of brain functioning
3. **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)** - intellectual and adaptive behavior functioning issues usually starting at birth
4. **Mental Illness** - wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking and behavior (schizophrenia, bipolar, obsessive compulsive disorder)

*I send my work to College Guild  
and then I have to wait.  
I look for my next Unit  
I hope it won't be late.  
With joy I get the envelope  
by now I'm sure you see  
when I'm working on a Unit  
at least my mind is free.*

There's not much question that this poem was written by a CG student, though the sentiment expressed through the centuries, by people in all kinds of circumstances, is: "My body may be imprisoned but my mind is free!"

### PART 1: THE BRAIN



But the mind is not always free. A devastating form of captivity is the betrayal of one's own brain by **Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD)**, **Mental Illness**, Alzheimer's, and other disorders and diseases. Institutions exist to help when other options are gone, but special schools, mental institutions, and nursing homes may feel like maximum security prisons from the inside. In 1996, a psychiatric nurse wrote the book Insanity Incorporated, a statement about a system which:

*"...promotes abuse of power, opportunism and exploitation of those of us who fund it and those of us entrusted to its care."*

It's not unusual for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorder, or IDD to be sentenced to prison, even death row.

1. The following are very different kinds of mental disabilities: How would you distinguish between: intellectual and developmental disability, mental illness, and dementia?
2. If someone with one of these mental disabilities were unable to care for him/herself, or were incarcerated, what kind of special help might be needed?

Imagine yourself impacted by one of these forms of mental disability.

3. Describe your environment/home (family home, special school, nursing home, mental hospital etc.).
4. How much understanding is there when it comes to physically/mentally disabled residents?
5. Are they treated with more or less compassion than the general population by the officers and administration? How about other residents?

## PART 2: EMOTIONS



Some of us are not affected by the abnormal brain functioning discussed in Part 1.

However it is important to understand that 1 in 25 US adults live with diagnosed mental health issues.

Whether we have a diagnosis or not, most of us feel depressed and angry at times – no person goes through life 100% happy.

(Additionally, depression and anger can prosper in prisons.)

6. If you are depressed, what is helpful for you?
7. Which of the following approaches do you prefer when feeling down? Why?

*Look on the bright side! Smile! Cheer up!*  
*I know how you feel, life sucks.*

You have undoubtedly seen those many ads on TV for products treating all kinds of mental, physical and medical conditions, including everything from depression to dandruff! The characters all look sad or ill at the beginning of the ad and full of energy and delighted with life after taking the company's pill. The cost of a TV ad is phenomenal, but advertisers keep buying them. They must work.

**8. Write a TV ad to convince the viewing audience to buy a product related to one of those conditions. Describe exactly what the audience sees and hears.**



There don't seem to be ads that deal with another common emotion – anger. Angry outbursts can lead to violence and violent acts to a prison sentence.

*I miss the sight of sunset  
My window has no view  
I pace in rage within my cage  
There's nothing else to do.....*

Rex Mires

**9. When might you feel the same way as Rex?**

**10. When can imprisonment reduce a person's tendency to anger and violence?**



**11. What would you do if your friend is out of control with anger at another resident or officer?**

**12. Is the amount of anger between strangers increasing in the United States? Why?**



**13. Define "road rage". Write an essay, fictional story, or poem about "road rage."**

**PART 3: SUBSTANCE ABUSE.**



*First a man takes a drink,  
Then the drink takes a drink,  
Then the drink takes the man!*

[F. Scott Fitzgerald]

**14. What is this adage saying?**

**15. Is substance use a mental disability? Why or why not?**

There is plenty of disagreement on the subject of drug and alcohol addiction, including the following theories about what might be responsible for substance use:

- a chemical alteration in the brain
- lack of willpower
- a genetic tendency
- the bad example of alcoholic parents
- trying to fit in with peers
- the desire to escape from life
- another not listed? (\_\_\_\_\_)



**16. Which of these do you think is the major cause leading someone to start using substances and then becoming addicted?  
Write an essay or poem explaining your opinion.**

**17. What advice would you give to a friend/family member to help them stop using substances?**

**Self-Reflection Exercise**

- 1) **What was the most interesting thing you learned about Internal Challenges ?**
- 2) **Which Internal Challenge did you most relate to? Why?**
- 3) **How do the lessons of Internal Challenges apply to your own life?**

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*Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes*