

# The Challenge of Change

— *supporting each other*

A seminar for people who work within  
and care about the prison system

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# Spirituality in Prison – Seminar Report: The Challenge of Change

## Setting the Scene

with Gail Bradley, Governor 5, HMP Channings Wood.

Gail began by acknowledging that change is something that we have to respond to continually. Its source may be organisational, at the level of the establishment, or personal.

The context for this seminar is set by recent changes in government leading to changes in legislation, for example home detention curfew, national standards and seamless sentence. The present ethos of partnership, both outside the Criminal Justice Agencies and within them as well as partnerships outside the Prison Service, all result in changes for prison staff.

There have also been changes within the Prison Service: Area Managers moving out into the regions, new standards, joint standards and the meeting of national audits on pay and grading. One of the biggest changes is the setting up of drug units, reflecting the movement from punishment to rehabilitation. These will impact directly on staff and staff training. Staff now carry out many more tasks, often without support because changes are being made 'on the hoof'.

However, any changes need to take place within an ethical framework that includes an exploration of the use of, and unwitting abuse of power, staff:staff and staff:prisoner relationship, and the aspect of caring for people.

Gail expressed the feeling that all of this leads to uncertainty.

*"However, it is possible that, from uncertainty, we can create change for the better. We need to see change as positive. These seminars provide us with an opportunity to reflect on some of our daily tasks, the dilemmas and difficulties, so coming to embrace change, not wrestling with it."*

## The Challenge of Change

With Malcolm Gillan, Principal Officer, HMYOI Huntercombe and Barbara Marsh, Probation/Health Officer, HMYOI Hollesley Bay.

In this workshop participants were asked to explore what were some of the significant thoughts and feelings that are associated with the process of change. Some of the feedback is recorded below:

<i>Apprehension</i>	<i>Release</i>	<i>Hope</i>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Natural</i>
<i>Commitment</i>	<i>Moving forward</i>	<i>Promise</i>
<i>Step back</i>	<i>Evolution</i>	<i>Conflict</i>
<i>Revolution</i>	<i>Personal growth</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>
<i>Acceptance</i>	<i>Communication</i>	<i>Fear</i>

<i>Positively</i>	<i>Resistance</i>	<i>Why</i>
<i>Stubbornness</i>	<i>Willingness</i>	

Much of the workshop evolved around personal sharing of change, some key points of which are:

- there appears to be common experiences of change;
- even something that is familiar will change with time;
- in a situation of change I need to hold on to my values: those things that I hold true;
- we have to accept all sides of ourselves and then, with a clear values-base my 'broken record' will become whole;
- this dialogue on change is very valuable and positive;
- I am able to express those things that I have kept a lid on in an atmosphere of acceptance and without judgement;
- there is a need to develop an atmosphere of trust at work for change to become less painful.

## Personal Insights into Managing Change Maria Byme, Education Co-ordinator, HMP Wormwood Scrubs

Maria, a lecturer in prisons for over 11 years, spoke of how we incarcerate people who, through their actions, have offended society and how, in doing so, we take away some of their rights, their freedom and responsibilities from them.

*"However, we forget that we have taken on that responsibility. We have to do something with it. I believe we only have one recourse and that is to rehabilitate them or equip them, so that they can live better lives, to recognise societal responsibilities and so fit better into and contribute to society. We are moving slowly towards that but we are still failing because we are not pooling our resources.."*

Maria suggested that although the Prison Service is changing for the better, one area that has stood still is education.

*"With each budget cut, it is education that bears the brunt. While the management structure has been reviewed and changed, what is taught has not."*

Maria proposed three key areas for change.

**1. Address teachers training requirements.** Rarely can you take a teacher who has been teaching outside prison and put them in a prison classroom and say, 'teach them'.. Yet that is what we do. The learning process is long. Some people take to it instantly while others never manage to crack it. Prison education classes are roll on roll off. Each group will have different abilities, learning experiences, life experiences and baggage.. Every teacher should, therefore, be trained to deal with these everyday occurrences as they, like prison officers, are in constant contact with prisoners.

**2.. Extend support to prisoners.** Courses such as enhanced thinking skills or anger management are done in 2 or 3 weeks. A prisoner comes away with the thought to control his anger but after 12 months his recall and practice of what he learned is limited. A vision for prisoners could be that when they come to the Education Department they are not just taught maths and English but are provided support that continues to cultivate the techniques learned on other courses. This would require additional training and to tie in with all the other areas. We need to create a common vision, and not one that is driven by the statistics of Key Performance Targets.

**3. Integrate teachers and others perspective into Prisoner Sentence Management.** People from all the different disciplines who work with a prisoner and see their progress over time should contribute to the sentence planning rather than the current Sentence Management group alone.

To extend that vision, Maria said she would like to see some prisons purely dedicated to education and training, where every prison officer, teacher and instructor is working towards the same goal; to equip prisoner to take back that responsibility that we took away from them; to provide the tools so that they can make the changes they need to make for themselves.

*“To quote Sir David Ramsbottom, ‘Prison staff must deal with prisoners with the same duty of care and responsibility that nurses show to their patients’. This is my vision for prisons. For that we need to have a paradigm shift in our vision of what our prisons are for and we need to look at the role that each one of us is required to play in order to fulfil this vision..”*

#### **Jacky Abbs, Drugs Counsellor, Turning Point at HMYOI Hollesley Bay**

Over the last 14 years Jackie has been through enormous changes including the death of her son and enrolling at a treatment centre for alcohol and drug abuse.

*“For me, change is very frightening, especially when it is forced upon you. When I go through any change I feel scared, insecure and anxious yet somewhere within me I know that there is tremendous possibility and positivity.”*

She explained how she trained as a counsellor with people who were at the top of their profession, Gradually, gaining the respect of these people.

*“They started to look to me for answers and for running groups. It was such an amazing time. I found myself doing voluntary work for 5 years. During that time I kept trying to get a job but nobody would employ me. I was getting really angry and frustrated. Eventually, I was offered a job. I was absolutely terrified but had to get used to the idea of a full time employment and being with other people.”*

*I finally went to work and found myself alone in an office for the first two months! I wasn't sure what it was I was*

*supposed to be doing and I felt this kind of tremendous sense of responsibility. The beginning was quite difficult and I made a few mistakes. I have to cope with being part of a team and we all come from different perspectives and different walks of life. It is not in an ideal setting, but it is always intriguing. Still I have this huge sense of responsibility.*

*I know that this is really contentious but through my own recovery, I can see one of the things that is lacking. There are tremendous resources, money from the government, everybody is working to full capacity but if the prisoners are smoking dope they are not going to take advantage of all the work you do. They are not there. They can't hear. They can't understand. The light is on and no-one is home. All these valuable resources are being wasted. For me, that is very frustrating.”*

#### **Tony Revell, Instruction Officer, HMP Gartree**

*Tony explored the dictionary definitions of the seminar title key words.*

**Challenge:** *someone to take part in a contest:* “We have contests all the time”; *someone to prove or justify something:* “Very often we have to justify ourselves, our roles, what we are saying, what we are spending”; *a demanding or difficult task:* “There seems to be new changes every day and we are supposed to change with them”; *stretch, stimulate, challenges him to produce his best all the time:* “I'm challenged every day.. That's what makes my job interesting.”

**Change:** *an alteration or modification.* “Every day there is a change. Because it is often a knee-jerk reaction what was said yesterday can be different from what is said today”; *change of colour, ethnic minority:* “Maybe we could change the colour of our outlook on life”; *change down a gear:* “Sometimes that is the only way we survive”; *change hands:* “We had a really good governor for 15 months. They come and go.”

**Support:** *Carry all or part of weight.* “We shoulder our responsibility and sometimes we cover for the mistakes of others”; *keep from falling, or sinking, or failing:* “Flexibility is required, sometimes in the extreme”; *give help to; backup, second, speak in favour of; supporting:* “Support comes in many forms”

*“In my position as an Instruction Officer, there seems to be so many changes. Changes occur from day to day, week to week and to survive, we have to follow the latest change. Many of these changes seem to happen without any discussion or communication and their implementation appears to be without consideration to the people on the floor. Sometimes the changes come with threats, all of which creates tremendous stress.”*

*“When change comes about it should be with teamwork, by going in the same direction, with discussion and communication. Then it becomes exciting. The challenge is implementing the changes. As you grow and develop, the level of support required becomes minimal..”*

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### Lee Cooke, Prison Officer, HMP Norwich

On leaving the army 9 years ago, Lee trained as a prison officer.

*“At training school every lesson ended with the comment: ‘Remember, they are all scum and don’t trust any of them’.. I took that on board. In post at HMP Norwich, I started strutting around, all this ego stuff and macho prison officer role which had been portrayed and in which I believed. I was taken under the wing of an officer, whose nickname was ‘Psycho’. An alarm bell rang and he was first there every time. If there was some one who needed ‘bending up’, he was there. I was always following him like a little puppy.”*

Lee explained how he moved to reception where he was completely in control and able to bully them around. Yet, after 9 months he was so unhappy and angry.

*One day an inmate came in crying. He said he want help as he had this image in prison where people expected him to deal drugs, to be a big user. I couldn’t offer anything apart from talking to him. Soon after that a Drug Rehab Unit opened. I felt, ‘Yes, I need to do this’. From the day we got our first inmate into the Unit my perception of everything in the Prison Service changed.*

*Today, I can be me. I don’t have to put on any masks or put up any walls. I don’t need to portray an image of this macho Prison Officer. I am just me and that is really nice. By doing that, suddenly these masks from the inmates started falling off too. I have got relationships with inmates that are unbelievable; people that I quite honesty call really good friends. It has been the most exciting time, not just in my career but in anything I have done.*

*“The inmates don’t see an officer or a uniform, they just see Cookie. I get birthday cards made by them. I get letters from men who have gone out, saying, ‘Thank you’.. The key is I have realised that they are humans, they are people too. Just through taking my mask off, such a simple step, not to pretend to be something that I am not, straight away their masks came off”*

Lee described how one difficult inmate, having been sent to the Unit by Psycho, did really well and became a peer supporter. When he moved back to his landing Psycho wouldn’t talk to him as he thought he was taking the micky out of him by being polite and showing respect.

*“A couple of weeks later Psycho was in front of the Governor asking to work in the Rehab. Unit. What is fantastic is that he just had the courage to say ‘I want that. I want to make that change’. Inmates have known him for years say, ‘If Psycho can change, so can I.’*

*It is not about going out and making the effort of changing this and that. Just look at yourself and change yourself. We are the people who are going to make the difference. Having that courage and commitment to make that difference, if we all take that little risk, it will happen.”*

### Tools for Embracing Change

with Mike George, International Development Consultant and Coach..

Mike drew attention to the fact that we are living in a world that is changing faster than at any other time in history. When that change is not quite the way we like or something is deemed to be going wrong, we typically respond by implementing action plans. However, what is really required is to slow down, reflect and see exactly what is going on both inside and outside of you.

Mike explained that the session would evolve around the management of four things: responsibility, relationships, resources, and roles.

*“In a very practical way, as it is myself who is in the centre of these things then their management begins with the management of my self, in other words, the management of my own thoughts, feeling, attitudes and behaviours.”*

*“If I examine these four areas in my life and I don’t like the outcome in any one of them, it probably means that I want to change something. However, I can’t change the events, so I have to change my response to the events. Therefore, I have to be aware of how I am responding. The most common form of ‘event’ in most of our lives is other people!”*

When we think about change, we have to look very closely at how resources are being managed. Our resources can be summed up in one word – energy. Any change, whether it is the amount of light in a room, or the amount of light in your consciousness, or the culture of your team at work, there has to be an input of either physical, mental or spiritual energy.”

When we input energy into anything there needs to be two things present in order to turn that energy into power.. Firstly, purpose as this provides a focus. Secondly, we need to make sure that there is no leakage.

The session focussed on the mental and spiritual energy.

#### Power leaks

**Purposelessness:** If I don’t live my life with the focus that a purpose brings me, then I live my life by accident. Closely aligned to purpose is vision and values.

**Insecurity:** There are many faces to insecurity e.g. fear, worry and tension and anxiety. These arise because we don’t know who we are; a false sense of identity. To base our sense of identity on what we do will create trouble as that will change.

**Low self esteem:** We are taught to base our self-esteem on external things e.g. our environment, our talents, the prosperity of our family, on. These

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things will always change and so this is not real self-esteem.

**Self limitation:** Every time I am challenged that little voice of doubt inside passes judgement. In this way my boundaries are set and my power and energy limited..

**Attachment:** When I hold onto anything; an idea, a person, an opinion, a position, there is an underlying fear of loss. To create space for something else to enter requires a degree of detachment.

**Laziness:** It is something that has entered our society, but is down to personal responsibility.

### **Power Principles:**

What follows are some important principles on which empowering actions, rooted in truth, are based.

**Past is Past:** Learn the lessons from the past and then leave it behind. Let my future be guided possibilities. Do you think in terms of problems or possibilities?

**Take Risks:** Develop the perception that problems are opportunities to be risked not obstacles to block the way

**Keep Commitments:** We lose our personal power when we break a promise or fail to keep a commitment, however small. Build your power by fulfilling your commitments – but start small.

**Want To:** “I want to” and “I choose to” are attitudes that we can consciously hold each day. Otherwise we fall into the consciousness of “I have to”, and life becomes an uphill struggle.

**Accept Responsibility:** Whatever you are thinking or feeling at any moment is your own creation. To blame someone else is the easiest way to disempower yourself.

**Self Approval:** Stop looking to others for approval. Connect to the seed of your inner power, your spirit, and draw on that. This is the basis of self-esteem and the rebuilding of trust in yourself.

**Let Go:** If you have an opinion on an issue be prepared to let it go as soon as you have expressed it otherwise you will waste time and energy feeling threatened by others opinions and defending your own. Have a point of view and seek the wisdom of others points of view, so showing your humility to say you are still learning.

**Let Be:** Never try to fix or change another human being. It is always doomed to failure. Let others be as they are – acceptance is the basis for positive influence.

**Give Yourself:** We can choose the context in which we operate and contribute our energy towards at any moment. Identify your talent and speciality and ask yourself in which context would you like to make your unique contribution.. Your purpose will become clear.

### **The Self Empowerment Process**

There are five integral steps to the process of self-empowerment.

**Awareness:** This is the beginning, middle and end of all successful self-change. When we have an awareness of

where we lose and where we accumulate our energy, only then do we see what needs to change.

**Acceptance:** Never struggle with yourself, or put yourself down. Wherever you are at, inside and outside your self, is exactly where you are meant to be at that moment in time.

**Assimilation:** Be humble enough to acknowledge the need to assimilate new knowledge or wisdom, and that it could come from any source inside or outside the self.

**Awakening:** Assimilation of new knowledge will result in some kind of realisation and release of previously unavailable energy.

**Action:** Real power will come when you put into practice what you learn - and that focussed by a clear sense of purpose.

### **Power Tools**

Such tools ensure that we use and enhance our personal power and these include:

**Right Thinking:** Not just positive thinking but thinking connected to truth.

**Empowering Others:** Whatever you give, you get back.

**Purposing and Visioning:** A well defined purpose creates a clear vision which becomes your motivation.

**Continuous Learning:** Learning means growth.

**Ownership:** To serve others will result in positive energy in return.

**Meditation:** The accessing of unlimited power from within.

**Intuition:** It is the truth that we all carry.

### **Power Sources**

The deepest dimension of personal empowerment is the level of spirit, the essence of who we are. Just as the bodies greatest need is water so our greatest need is spiritual energy. There are seven essential sources of energy that we can tap into.

### **The Self**

**Innate Wisdom:** We carry all we need to know. It is a matter of accessing it.

**Values/Virtues:** In connecting to the thing you value most you are connecting to your primary virtue. The meeting of values and virtues is the meeting of your own spirit.

**Silence:** Inner power is sourced through silence.

### **Others**

**Experience and Wisdom:** A source of power and enlightenment.

**Blessings:** The natural return of our positive actions.

### **The Source**

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**Love:** The warmth of unconditional love. This is at the level of experience rather than just the level of belief.

**Light:** The Light of Truth.

Mike closed the session with the following thought:

*‘What do I need to do?’ is the wrong question. The right question is... What do I need to be? Gandhi gave us the simplest answer when he said, ‘We have to be the changes we want to see in the world’. Why? Because when we change the world changes – the world of our homes, workplaces and communities..’*

**Address by Dadi Janki,**  
Co-Administrative Head, Brahma Kumaris

The external atmosphere has a lot of impact on our inner state. Likewise, whatever is happening inside of us has an impact on what is going on outside of us, too. For instance, if I am feeling upset or angry then, no matter how much I try to suppress those feelings, they will definitely be projected outside. The internal state of happiness, peace and love has to be maintained in such a powerful way that we remain unaffected by external factors and at the same time it has an impact on what is going on outside of us.

*‘Let each one go inside themselves and see what are their original, positive qualities. By finding out what lies inside yourself it is possible to remove unhappiness, sorrow and peacelessness and replace it with happiness, peace and love. That internal understanding gives me inner strength and courage with which I can change external situations.’*

**How can I stop negative change without negativity emanating from me?**

Dadi suggested that we have to choose not to allow negativity to affect us. When there is a negative situation in front of us must recognise it as something that is outside and separate from us. Inside, consciously make extra effort to create positive feelings and thoughts for then we are able to do something about that situation.

*‘Neither should I be judgmental of the situation. If I think, ‘it shouldn’t be like this’, I’m going to compromise my inner state of being. I have to maintain positive and determined thoughts so not to be affected by the situation.’*

*Let me see the situation as a test that has come to me to check the strength of my inner thoughts and attitude. My inner state of being can change that situation, maybe not totally, but it won’t be as forceful as it was. Internally maintain a deep state of peace, an incognito stock of pure, positive and powerful thoughts, that will work at the time of need to change the situation.’*

**In the Prison Service there is a lot of subtle mental bullying, how should one respond?**

It was suggested that there has to be a lot of coolness and serenity in our thoughts for then we will have the

strength to face and deal with that. However, we have created the tendency to oppose everything with our thoughts, attitude and words, creating jealousy, conflict, displeasure or dislike for people. These become a hindrance for us.

*‘I should accumulate such peace and coolness inside me so that no matter what the situation is outside of my self, I should be able to influence that with my internal state of being. When I myself become so silent, so cool and peaceful, others will also become like myself. They may at first react with me but later they will realise they should not have done it. Whatever it is that enters my mind, it is possible for me to do it, if I accept it.’*

*It is essential to understand that when I talk about ‘I’, and ‘me’, who ‘I’ is. When I talk about myself, am I referring to myself as this body or is there more to me than that? When I say ‘I’ or ‘me’, I refer to the spirit that dwells inside the body. When I consider myself to be the spirit, the soul, then I am able to recognise that everybody else is that also. It is then the Father of all the souls and that helps me to change my vision, my attitude and makes it very positive. This body has a beginning and an end but I am that living being that resides in this body and through that there is an inner awakening.’*

**Is there a difference between happiness gained from being oneself and just being?**

*‘First, one has to recognise who I am. The more I recognise myself, the more I am able to be what I am. To recognise myself means to recognise my original state of peace, purity and happiness. Previously, we were unaware of who we truly were and so the influence of one’s own body, relations, and the world outside was hiding my inner, original state of being, my inner light.’*

*When I, the spirit, begin to recognise and experience myself then my qualities return. When somebody is half asleep their eyes open a little bit and then they go back to sleep again but when they are awake and alert and are acting, interacting and working, there is total awakening and alertness. In the same way, when there is the full recognition of the soul or spirit, one is alert to one’s qualities. Then it is as if that spiritual power returns. When we practise that understanding of the original self and recognise it as my real form then the mask of superficial physical awareness is removed. When we come into action and interaction with that real form, then I am able to experience these 5 qualities: purity, peace, love, happiness, power (wisdom). As I begin to recognise and go into that experience of myself, then I also bring about the awareness and consciousness of that higher Spirit, the Supreme Spirit, God.’*

*When there is this recognition of one’s own self as the spirit, then it is as if there is light and darkness is dispelled. We think a lot about the body, the world, our relationships and all of that creates a burden. With the recognition of the self as a spirit, then it is as if all the burden is removed and one becomes very light and very*

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*free. When I recognise that my original form is the form of peace I don't need to think too much, because I know that whatever happens and whatever I do, will come from that place of peace and then everyone will co-operate. When the recognition of the spirit comes, then all the ego is shed and there is a great deal of ease."*

### **What is love?**

*"God is love. I too am love, for love is a state of being. When I experience love from God then the interactions I have with others are on the basis of that love that I have received. Where there is love, there can be no trace of anger, arrogance or of authoritative behaviour (bullying). With humility and truth I embody love."*

Dependency or clashes indicate that there is no love. When we look at other people's behaviours and interactions we begin to think about convincing and changing others but when we amend our own attitude and behaviour it changes the situation automatically. Yet when somebody has truth and humility then they won't need to argue, discuss or debate anything with anyone; there is peace not conflict. Inner truth automatically corrects things.. Sometimes it is not even a question of saying anything in words, just of going inside into that state of truth and humility. When that experience is there it will automatically come into the atmosphere and others will become influenced by that.

*"When we become free from ego and anger, then peace and love is able to flow through us. When I say 'I am peaceful' then my mind automatically becomes peaceful."*

*My actions and interactions become are of peace.. I don't need to say much but others automatically experience peace through me. When this kind of atmosphere is created in prisons, what could happen? When you say 'I, think about who you are. What or who do you mean?"*

**What is the answer if you have been a victim of racism throughout your life, and you are projecting that positive image described, yet there is no response?**

*"We must never let go of our humility, remain co-operative with everyone and remove any trace of animosity or revenge.. Someone might treat me as their servant externally but inside I am a master. The real success that comes internally from that is power and happiness. Externally it may seem as if there is no success, but internally there is victory."*

*I must never let go of my own true actions, my honesty and truth. The practise of absolute truth and humility will take me beyond all of this and will change the external situation. This is the kind of power that is required in today's world. The barriers and conflicts that exist as a result of caste, colour, creed or religion will only be removed when we have this kind of power. This understanding will find solutions to any problem.."*

**Can Dadi give any help concerning the sadness experienced when an inmate and mutual friend committed suicide?**

*"As we both know, he had looked after himself internally through meditation, and that was his fortune. Whilst in prison, he endeavoured to forge a relationship with God, and fill himself with that positivity and goodness. He has taken that with him. He had prepared many things in the workshops and given them as gifts, so creating a memorial of himself."*

*There are many beautiful people and many wonderful things that they have done. They die and yet we feel they could have done a lot more, but they have to go. Don't feel unhappy about it. Whatever they have done, they have done well."*

*Even if someone does something that is not right, I will say, 'OK, whatever has happened is done now'. If I have respect for them, then I will maintain peace inside. When I am able to maintain my peace, I will be able to give peace to that individual. To remain peaceful, to take peace from God and give peace to others is an act of charity. If I say, 'Why did this happen. It shouldn't have happened', then I become peaceless. We have to pay attention to what we are doing, what is accumulating on the spirit, so that we are able to take those experiences with us when we leave?"*

### **Creating a Vision**

with Robin Barr-Thomson, Prison Service Nurse, HMP Norwich

Robin spoke of how he has been inspired by John F. Kennedy when he spoke of having a dream.

*"Our dream or vision of the future should encourage, enable and empower each of us, no matter what we represent in the Service, to feel that we are respected, that we do have a place and that we are all contributing to the improvement of the Service We need to believe in ourselves. There is a need to recognise the whole person.. As individuals we are also going to grow from that.."*

The focus for the session was to create a personal vision of the future. Robin shared a pertinent story that highlighted how one's vision for others, as well as for oneself, can limit or enable personal growth and development towards one's potential.

A newly qualified teacher, on starting work in her new school, was allocated one of the worst, most disruptive classes. After a short period of time, the headmaster's attention was drawn to the much improved quality of behaviour and work from the class. The headmaster called the teacher in and asked, "How is it you are able to get these children to rise to the challenge and produce such good work?" She responded saying, "They are very bright kids with exceptional IQ's" and proceeded to show the headmaster the list of personal IQ ratings. Against each name was 110, 125, 111 etc. "Wonderful IQ's!" The head looked at her and said, "Actually, that's their locker numbers".

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*“What is pertinent is that teacher’s vision for those youngsters was that they were brilliant and they responded to her by being brilliant. Whatever positive vision I create for myself or of others will uplift me and them respectively.”*

Participants were encouraged to explore their vision for themselves either in the context of their work in the prison or their life outside of the Service.

Feedback included the following points:

- each of us has a different challenge
- it can be global or local
- a small vision will be clear to the individual
- there is the need to look at ourselves first
- to be aware of my frustrations and so not to allow myself to waste energy
- finding myself and being myself
- recognising that a gap in my awareness is correlated to an ability to respond appropriately
- inner positivity
- empathise with those around me
- a clear communication strategy
- caring for and helping each other.

### Effecting Change for the Future

with Doug Stephenson, Brahma Kumaris Prison Education Co-ordinator..

The session drew together many of the strands of the seminar and moved it on one final step - to the creation of an action plan. Doug acknowledged that there had been a many good ideas and experiences shared in the time together but suggested that the real work begins when we return to the environment where our challenge of change is coming from. The seeds need to be sown here so we can continue to develop and experiment with these.. This needs to be to be continuously updated and renewed.

Speaking of the relationship between our past, our present and our future, Doug suggested that,

*“If we continue to live in the past then we will never respond to the challenge of change. This is encapsulated in the expression, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you will always get what you have always got”.*

We need to be aware and open to the fact that our present is the result of everything that has gone before, of our past. We can draw lessons from the past but should not live in the past. Also, our future is going to be the result of our present, therefore not to live in the future, always dreaming but to recognise where we want to be and to allow that aim to colour our present interactions.

*“It is always the present moment in which there is power, not the past nor the future. With this awareness my actions will be significant, meaningful, effective and positive results will follow. It is one of the natural laws of the world that is*

*often expressed as, ‘Whatever I give out, I will get back’. Whatever the energy I give out, either negative or positive, then, like the ripples created from throwing a stone into the centre of a still pond, they will go out to the edges of the pond and, when they hit the sides, they come back to the source again.”*

In the creation of our personal vision attention was drawn to the importance of focussing not just on one aspect but to attempt to see the complete picture.

*“When working with the ‘big picture’ we are more effective. We become stable within our own awareness and when faced by challenges. We learn more about the methods to deal with those challenges as they come.”*

Finally, participants returned to their individual visions and, through the creation of an action plan, grounded the vision in the practical. The action plan will enable people to draw closer to and ultimately achieve their preferred future state, their personal vision.