

Chantelle: I didn't expect there to be something like this program to be in jail. It was very compassionate and understanding. And it came from a place of true caring. You can sense it right away when you walked in the room that the guides, and the facilitators cared, and they genuinely wanted to help.

*Meghan: That was Chantelle Peele, a participant from the Enneagram prison project. I recently visited Chantelle at the jail where she's currently incarcerated.*

*Today on the show, I'm speaking with Chantelle and also Leanne Schellenberg and Amanda Dodge, guides for the Enneagram Prison Project, an MCC partner in Saskatchewan.*

*The program uses a personality test called the Enneagram to facilitate trauma healing and self-awareness training for people in prison and jail. If you've never heard of the enneagram, don't worry, you'll learn more in a minute.*

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*I'm Meghan Mast and you're listening to, "Relief, development and podcast," a production of Mennonite Central Committee.*

*(MUSIC FADES UP AND THEN DOWN)*

*Meghan: Maybe you're familiar with the enneagram, or maybe this is the first time you're hearing about it.*

Leanne: The Enneagram is a psychological system that helps us understand why we do what we do.

*Meghan: That's Leanne Schellenberg, one of the guides for the Enneagram Prison Project and a long-time restorative justice partner for MCC in Saskatoon.*

Leanne: In the Enneagram Prison Project, we like to talk about it as a map that connects nine different personality types, to nine core essential qualities that each type brings that really reveals what's right about each of us are the essential qualities are things that each type naturally carries, and can flow with, when we are grounded and present to our truest selves. And so when I think of the Enneagram I love to think of it as this map that we can follow within ourselves, to show us how to come home to ourselves.

*Meghan: I spent a couple days with Leanne when I was in Saskatoon recently, talking to her all about the enneagram and the work she does. She says she thinks of herself not as a teacher, but a guide. Here's Leanne.*

Leanne: In the Enneagram Prison Project, we are on a mission to understand why we do what we do using the Enneagram as a tool to inspire transformation on what we like to say on both sides of the bars.

So people who are inside of jail, but also anyone who's outside of jail. In a sense, we're all in a prison of our own making. And so we really lean in on the qualities of self awareness, self regulation, and self compassion in this understanding that through those things, and in doing the work together, we can actually come to a place of grounded wholeness inside of ourselves. And so when we bring the Enneagram inside jails and prisons, we really love to lean in on the truth about what's right about us.

We like to think about guides as fellow travelers along life's journey who come alongside others as they navigate their own inner terrain. And so we think about a guide, as we think as we might think about somebody who takes people on an excursion to climb a mountain. A guide is somebody who not only loves the mountains, but as someone who has actually traveled the trail and knows how to get to the final destination. And so when we think about ourselves as guides in the classroom, not only are we inviting people to look inside of themselves, and notice their unconscious patterns and habits connected to how they think and how they behave, and how they feel. But we are asking them to go someplace where we have been before, we have also done this work inside of ourselves. We are saying, hey, I am doing this work, I continue to do this work. I've been up the mountain before and it's worth the work. If you want to come with me. Let's do it together.

*Meghan: One of the other guides is Amanda Dodge, who worked in legal aid services for 12 years, advocating for people who are criminalized. She's the program director for MCC Saskatchewan.*

Amanda: Well, EPP fits within the scope of MCC's restorative justice work, as MCC is concerned for people, both who harm and who have experienced harm. And restorative justice for us is about healing and the restoration of relationships. We know that incarcerated people tend to have experienced significant levels of trauma from abuse, neglect, loss, witnessing violence and substance abuse, as well as intergenerational trauma experienced by residential school survivors in indigenous communities. And these experiences are particularly true for incarcerated women. I've seen stats that indicate that over 95% of Indigenous women have in Saskatchewan who are incarcerated have experienced sexual abuse. So MCC's objective in our restorative justice work is to support organizations and programs who come alongside incarcerated people and offer friendship and support to build capacity and promote healing.

*Meghan: The Enneagram prison project runs an eight module program and each module is three hours long. The course can run anywhere between four days to 20 weeks.*

Leanne: And we love to begin with the basics around what's actually right about us. And so we spend some time talking about how personality develops, beginning with our divine spark and then flowing outward in a way that as children, we just naturally form different defense patterns and habits so that we can actually survive our childhoods. And so we spend time learning how

we develop and in the context of that, we talk about trauma, we talk about attachment theory, we talk about how addiction affects all of the ways that we develop as humans.

Chantelle: It was almost like I was reading a narration of my entire life. And it would almost be spooky at times. Right? That it was it was just telling the deep things about yourself that you always knew but you weren't aware of.

*Meghan: This is Chantelle Peele again, who we heard from earlier, a participant in the Enneagram Prison Project.*

Chantelle: My name is Chantelle Peele. I am originally from Esterhazy Saskatchewan and I'm 35 years old.

*Meghan: I was able to speak to her in person when we visited the jail where she's staying.*

Chantelle: Learning about the Enneagram for the first time was like finding a treasure that I didn't know that I was looking for until I found it. Once you started once I started going in it, it was almost like I was reading a narration of my entire life.

So bringing all those things to the surface made it easier to go through pain, made it not so painful to go through the pain. Because there was very outlined and very easy to understand and easy to process ways of going through that pain. A lot of times pain is a huge, terrible word and nobody wants to dive into it right away. But when we're going slowly into it, and when we're having tools that are being shown how to use, not just get over it, it's about showing how to get over it and being with the person going through it.

Leanne: So the Enneagram reminds us that we not only have a head intelligence as humans, but we actually come with an intelligence in our bodies, in our bellies. And that we also come with an intelligence connected to our hearts. And so we spend time talking about each of those different centres of intelligence and the natural alarm systems that each of those centers bring. So each of the centers come with an emotional alarm system that can wake us up to us feeling like oh, there's a threat and, and that could look like anger shows up or shame shows up or fear shows up. And to see each of those is actually messengers that have a really beautiful gift to tell us that, you know, something's going on something in me feels threatened either my dignity or autonomy for the belly centre, which is connected to anger. Or let's say, my worth, or my value feels threatened, and then shame or grief can show up. And that's connected to our heart center, and intelligence. Or a fear or terror shows up. That's a really beautiful connection for me to remember, Oh, my mind is disconnected to my head center. And my fear actually has something to tell me, that something matters. And so when we can think about those very primal emotions showing up in ways that are intelligent for us, then again, we can start to understand and make sense of what's happening in them.

*Meghan: There is the heart type, the head type and the gut type. There are nine enneagram types that fit into these three categories. 2s,3s and 4s fit into the heart or feeling triad. 5s, 6s and 7s fit into the head or thinking triad. And 8s, 9s and 1s fit into the gut or instinctive triad.*

Leanne: And then from there, we start breaking down each of the three Enneagram types and each of those centers. And we create a live classroom that allows us to do a type exploration for each of the types. So we will do a little interview connected to type eights and see if there's anyone else in the room that has questions or that can answer questions around type eight to see if they're connected to it. And then we feature our type nines and ask them questions about what it's like to be a type nine, and how the patterns and habits of a type nine perhaps help them survive their childhoods. And then we move on to type one and we go all the way around the Enneagram. And you will type seven. And then at the very close of our program, we spend some time talking about defense mechanisms and reactivity, and how that works inside of our own brain development. And then we have what's called the five A's a universal growth process that we can invite everyone to, to participate in so that they can actually build practices in their lives, around how to keep the work alive in them.

*Meghan: Chantelle's personality is a type three. According to the Enneagram Institute, threes are self-assured, attractive, and charming. Ambitious, competent, and energetic, they can also be status-conscious and highly driven for advancement.*

Chantelle: So I am in the heart center. And I look for achievements to gain connection with people. So I feel like my success is a part of who I am and who I need to always be. And that was proven to be right. A lot of even me going into the negative side of me getting into addiction. It was all me covering up my pain and my grief and my guilt that even with me being an addiction. It's where I put on the mask, I guess you could call it of covering up all the pain and the guilt, the grief. All those negative feelings I wanted to cover to show my success still I wanted to still look successful, I still want to look like I was achieving. And those emotions were going to interfere with that success and it was going to interfere with me looking like I had it all together. And it fueled the addiction is really what it does what it did. And once I got caught into that trap, getting out of that trap was almost impossible on my own and being an achiever however, I wanted to do it on my own. I didn't want to ask for help. I didn't want to look like I was weak. I didn't want to look like I had failed. And just reading about all of that in there, when I when I came across wasn't my type I just, it knew me, the book knew me.

*Meghan: How does that feel to be known in that way, by a book?*

Chantelle: To be known by a book is almost startling in a way you think it's because this isn't a fiction book, this is a fact book, this is something that when you, when you start reading about all the types too, you can see different types and different people, you can see those different types in yourself. And it gives a connection to other people in that way. Because if there are little pieces of you, in a larger part of a person, that means that there is connection. And it's a way that you can understand people and understanding people is the first step to forgiveness and to compassion, and to everything that that you need for real connection, not a false sense of community or connection.

Leanne: There's a part in us that wants to fix ourselves and that's the very part that can't fix ourselves. And so when we do this work inside of jails and prisons, we actually want to

unconsciously disarm people's defense system. And so we come in, and we really lean in about what's right about us what works, what is really intelligent innately about how we're built as humans. And when we can start realizing that the very behaviors that showed up in our childhood, were actually helping us survive really distressful circumstances, that shifts our ability to be compassionate with ourselves. And instead of saying, Why do I do this? Or why did I respond that way, we go, oh, I respond that way because of this. And when I can understand that, that just changes how I can behave from this moment forward.

Chantelle: What I've learned about myself is that I still have that potential that I had thought that I lost a long time ago, because of the failure, my need for achievement and for success was so strong that when I failed, I felt like I no longer had that potential and finding more about myself through the Enneagram and seeing all the ways that I can take the negative and put it into positive, it gave me my sense of potential and my sense of purpose back.

I was able to do the work on myself that I've been wanting to do since I came in here with some guidance. It was one thing for me to know that I wanted to do that work on myself, know that it was time for me to do that. It's all about how and it's about asking for that help and having that help available.

At first I was doing it very inwardly I was writing, that's what I originally started doing was just my feelings, my thoughts and everything, and to be able to narrow that down, and be able to have those stepping blocks to be able to work on yourself, that's where you're able to get somewhere, you're able to climb the stairs, when you have the steps to go up. Instead of bumping into walls is what you feel like and, and repeating certain pains and griefs and losses and everything, it's a direction to go to heal with and that's what EPP offers is that direction.

It starts with the material, it starts with the class, it starts with all that. But then it's inside of you and you can hold that inside of you and you can keep growing off of it. And it gives you all those all those tools that you need. Life is all about tools, whether you're building a building, or whether you're building your personality, or whether you're, you know, trying to take down your personality to find out really where you are and where you want to be. It all requires tools. And this program gives all the tools.

Meghan: At the beginning of the episode, Chantelle talked about how she never expected a program like this would exist in jail. After 12 years of working with people who are criminalized, Amanda Dodge has seen the violence of the criminal justice system. She sees EPP as an important countercultural force.

Amanda: I think that this program is so important because the criminal justice system can be a violent place. It can worsen the broken relationships between harm doers and those who experience harm. And it takes a punitive approach to folks who have been harmed and traumatized and caught up in addiction and other coping strategies to deal with that pain. And that punitive approach reinforces the social stigma that folks in conflict with the law experience and it deepens the message that they're bad or inferior, unwelcome. And the EPP program is important I think because it serves as a valuable counterpoint to that. It reinforces participants

worthiness and compassionately illuminates the reasons for their less than constructive approaches and patterns. It helps them to shed the less constructive patterns in ways that connect them to their true selves, ultimately, right and their true value. And the fruit of the programming demonstrates this as we see the growth and self-awareness and self-compassion which promotes healing and emotional regulation.

*Meghan: At the end of the EPP course, Leanne asks participants to answer the question, what does freedom look like to you? Here's Chantelle's answer.*

Chantelle: Freedom to me, in a short word is purpose. I have been searching for my purpose for so long. And getting farther away from it the more I've tried to cover my negative emotions. I thought for me to live out my purpose I had to be happy and put on the show of being happy. And it wasn't until I realized that the pain is part of my purpose. And getting through my pain and accepting my past is part of my purpose. And that's what really came out of this program for me is how to how to deal with that pain. It is something I have struggled with my whole life and it had almost taken my life and I've been saved by my purpose. So that is absolutely what freedom means to me. EPP was something that came into my life exactly when I needed it. It came in my life at the perfect time and I couldn't have I didn't even know that I needed it until it was there. It was something that I needed so deep within me to be able to start becoming the person that I want to become, and to be able to heal from all of the trauma that was done to me that I had caused other people. I came at a standstill where I was just running into a wall, and I didn't know what else to do. And this gave me a direction to turn around in to see that there is another path and there is a journey that I can keep moving forward.

I can't even express how grateful I am to be a part of the Enneagram Prison Project. I want to hold it with me can continually my whole life when, I'm whether I'm incarcerated or whether I'm on the outside, I want it to be a part of my life forever.

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*Meghan: That was Chantelle Peele, a participant from the Enneagram prison project, a partner of MCC Saskatchewan.*

*Thank you to Leanne Schellenberg for speaking with me, and Amanda Dodge as well. Special thanks to Chantelle Peele for sharing her experience with EPP.*

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*This episode of Relief, Development and Podcast was produced on Treaty 1 territory, the original land of the Anishinaabeg, Cree and Dakota peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. This episode was hosted and produced by me, Meghan Mast. The head producer is Leslie Boctor.*

*To end the episode, I asked Leanne Schellenberg if she could lead us in a grounding exercise she often does to start the class. Leanne says she opens with this to develop self-awareness*

*and emotional regulation, as it strengthens the ability for people to observe their inner state and manage reactivity.*

*I'd encourage you to join. Stop what you're doing if you can, and take a four minute break. Or if you can't right now, maybe pause the episode here and come back to it when you have a quiet moment. This is the "presence practice."*

*Thank you for listening.*

Leanne: Well, let's just take a moment. And wherever you are, I'd invite you to find a chair or settle into the chair that you're sitting in. And just find a comfortable position. Uncross your legs or your arms. Allow your feet to be flat on the floor, and rest your hands comfortably in your lap. And then allow yourself to just close your eyes or soften your gaze, whatever you feel most comfortable with. And take a moment to be still. What is it like to come inward for this moment. Allow your attention now to just shift to your breath. And take two deep breaths, allowing your belly to fill as you inhale. And then to relax as you exhale. Now see if you can make your inhale as long as your exhale. So breathing in for eight seconds. And then breathing out for eight.

As you do this, allow your body to relax, to soften with each breath. Allow yourself now to feel your feet on the floor to actually feel the floor that's holding you up to feel the chair as it holds your body and just see if you can deepen your bodies rest into those into your chair and into your feet. And now let's just do a quick body scan. Note if you're carrying tension in your feet or your legs and as you follow the rhythm of your breath. Just allow yourself to notice as you breathe in. And then to release and soften on the exhale. Pay attention to your abdomen, your back, your shoulders, your neck, your face muscles. And again, breathing in noticing. Breathing out, relaxing and softening. If your thoughts start to wander away from your breath. Simply allow yourself to bring your attention back without any judgment. There's something beautiful and valuable to learn that we can just notice our preoccupations and let them go. At this moment, there is nothing we have to solve. There is nowhere to go. No one you have have to be. Right here in this present moment is all you need. So take another moment to just be here, present and available to yourself and savor that and then gently when you're ready, wiggle your fingers and your toes and bring your awareness back to the room.

*(MUSIC FADES UP AND THEN DOWN)*

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To learn more about the Enneagram Prison Project, visit [here](#).