

GANGS: 50+ STORIES OF FRACTURED LIVES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARISE Foundation: An Overview.....	4
Preface.....	5
Using the Gang Stories to Create Memorable Learning Experiences.....	6
PART ONE	
The Yellow Folder.....	7
Childhood Promises.....	9
Self-Portrait.....	12
Sanctuary.....	15
The Man Who Liked Gang Warfare.....	17
The Blame Game.....	20
A Mother’s Love.....	23
The Pink Phone.....	26
Your Personal Gravedigger.....	28
Timing.....	31
From a Mother to the Boy Who Killed Her Child.....	34
Life in Prison.....	37
The Locksmith.....	40
A Day at the Beach.....	43
We Seal Our Fate with the Choices We Make.....	46

Table of Contents continued on the next page

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONT.)

Thumbs Up.....	49
Knock-Knock.....	52
A New Friend.....	55
Options.....	58
A Day for Regrets.....	61
Triage.....	64
Gang Baby.....	67
Conversations Behind Razor Wire:	
ARISE Interviews Incarcerated Gang Members.....	70
20 Thoughts Before You Join a Gang.....	75
The Role Listening Plays in Preventing Gang Membership.....	78
50 Tips for Becoming a Better Listener.....	79
PART TWO	
Gunslinger’s Prayer.....	83
There Is an Old Saying.....	85
Momma’s Cooking.....	88
Big Dreams.....	91
Say No to Earth.....	93
The Choices Before You.....	96
Life Is Never Fair.....	99
Wanted.....	102
Second Chances.....	104
Road Trip.....	108
The Red Car.....	111
Trapped.....	114
Off to College.....	117

Table of Contents continued on the next page

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONT.)

Chances.....	120
Where Are They Now?.....	123
Do Humans Have Brains?.....	125
The Visitor.....	128
The Funeral.....	131
Hope General Hospital.....	134
Abduction.....	136
The Green Jacket.....	139
The Broken Heart That Kills.....	142
A Different Path.....	145
The Road Not Taken.....	147
What I Did for My Summer Vacation.....	150
Redemption.....	153
My Phone Keeps Ringing.....	155
A New Song.....	158
True Life Tales of Survival: Inmates Speak Out About Gangs.....	163
Story Credits.....	178
Resources to Help You Stay Out of a Gang.....	179
Tips to Avoid Gang Violence and Help Solve the Problem.....	180
How to Effectively Use the ARISE Motivational Posters.....	181
ARISE Motivational Posters.....	182
ARISE Curricula and Training.....	196



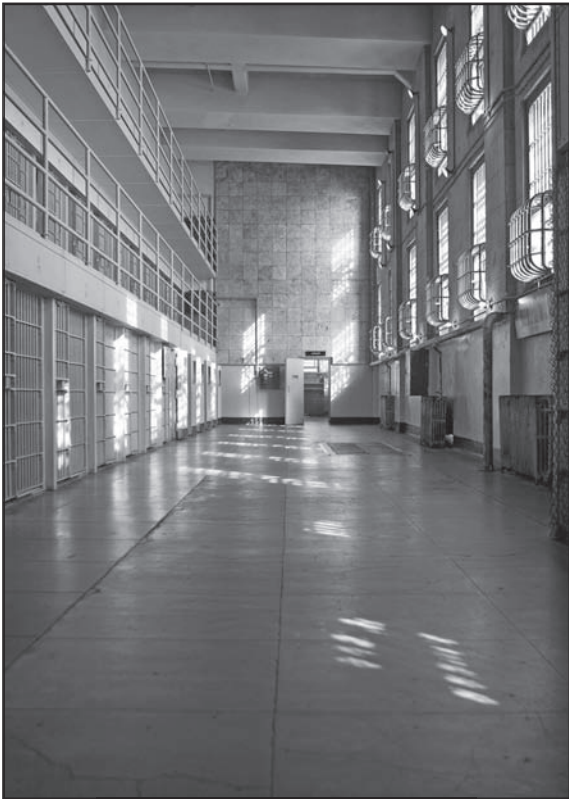
EDMUND AND SUSAN BENSON, FOUNDERS

THE YELLOW FOLDER

There was a time when I thought the neighborhood gang was the only real thing in my life. I felt like I belonged, like I was part of something important. The gang was my family. Each member was my friend.

The truth is, gang members are not friends, and they are not around forever. Some leave in body bags and others go to jail. A lucky few move on to a better way of life.

Time has passed and I have nothing but this cement box with bars where windows should be. I spend my days collecting letters from people I once knew, friends I once had, and my real family—the family that would have done anything for me.



I save the letters in a yellow folder. I chose yellow for hope, because they say hope is the last thing you lose.

I hope someday I will be able to help somebody by sharing the letters. They have kept me alive. They have made me laugh and cry. I have learned about myself through the letters, and I have learned about other people.

The letters I have collected in my yellow folder are from people who used to be part of my life. People who want to share with me because they want to stay connected and help me. They want me to know there's a world out there where it's possible for good things to happen. They don't want me to lose hope.

What does the narrator of this story mean when he says the letters have kept him alive?

What did you learn from this story?

CHILDHOOD PROMISES

The last time I saw my cousin Eric, he was on his way to prison. He and his girlfriend had been arrested for beating up a kid. They had stolen his cell phone so they could become part of the neighborhood gang. I have not been to see Eric in prison. I'm too busy taking care of his child.



Eric and his girlfriend have a little boy. He is only four years old and he misses his parents. But they are not good parents. They proved this when they chose to join a gang.

I feel sorry for the little boy.

He keeps telling me he wants to go back to his house, but it's impossible for anybody to live there. The house is filthy, the refrigerator is full of rotten food, and the toilet is broken. That's no place for a child. I guess teenage parents don't know much about raising children. Neither do I, but I know what it feels like to have a rough childhood.

I used to go to bed hungry and cry myself to sleep. I never had clean clothes. I never had toys to play with. I don't have any memories of good times with my parents. I know Eric doesn't either.



photo by pherkad via sxc.hu

We had miserable childhoods. We were always lonely. Other kids had toys and went to movies, while we had nothing and stayed home. We had a television, but we didn't have cable. A lot of the time, we didn't have electricity.

One day, Eric and I made a promise that we would never treat our children the way our parents treated us. We promised that we would buy food and toys for our kids. We would enjoy the time we spent time with them, go to their sport games, and throw big birthday parties for them. We would show our children love and be there for them no matter what.

We promised to take our children to baseball games, not inmate visitation day.



What promises have you made to yourself and to other people? Have you kept those promises?

What did you learn from this story?
