

[Greeting (with your name and statement of gratitude if someone introduced you)]

Good evening, my name is Jesse Vargas and I've had the honor of working as an outreach coordinator for Transcend Behind Bars for over three years now. Thank you, Andrea for that charming introduction and for organizing this dinner for all of us.

[An attention-getter (can be a joke, interesting fact, or short, collective activity)]

Before I get started, let's take 30 minutes to sit silently and meditate until the ice melts in our waters... just kidding. But we are going to talk about meditation, so let's get in the mood by taking a few deep breaths in and out... in and out.

[Present the topic]

Now that we're all feeling more grounded and present. Let's dive into how meditation can be used to help heal and rehabilitate incarcerated peoples.

[Why the topic is important and relevant to the audience]

By a show of hands, how many people know someone or know someone who knows someone struggling with addiction and repeat incarceration? That's a lot of you. Well, I'm here to tell you that there's a better way to help people overcome their suffering and avoid getting stuck in the broken system that's using taxpayer's money to abuse and turn prisoners into customers.

[Your thesis]

Including meditation in the prison system is an effective way to combat addiction during and after incarceration, turning repeat offenders into healthy contributors to society.

[Your credentials (experience and/or education-based)]

So, in a room full of brilliant people who have keen knowledge and experience with the topic, why am I the one up here talking about this? I used to be part of the system, in and out, my addiction growing stronger and stronger each time. That is, until my last stint in 2007 in California State Penitentiary, when I was introduced to the meditative practice and the art of self compassion. Since then, I've devoted my life to the practice of meditation, and I even got certified as a Transcendental Meditation Practitioner.

[A preview of your main points]

First and foremost, I'll discuss how and why the prison system is flawed—particularly when it comes to the high rate of addiction. Then I'll provide evidence of how meditation is one of the

strongest tools of long-term recovery. And lastly, I'll be presenting a working example of how we can easily implement these programs into state and federal jails and prisons.

[Present your first point and subpoints (evidence, data, quotes, commentary)]

- I. Addiction impacts everyone, and studies have shown that half of the people in the prison system suffer from addiction.
 - Only one-tenth of those people have access to recovery programs while incarcerated, and those programs are gravely inadequate.
 - Over half of released prisoners return to prison within 3 years.
 - "Prison is a second-by-second assault on the soul, a day-to-day degradation of the self..." - Mumia Abu-Jamal
 - How do we expect the imprisoned to behave as good citizens, when the system itself is adding to the pool of pre-established trauma?

[Transition to the next point]

II. Now that we know how the system affects the mental health of the people inside, let's discuss the proven benefits that meditation can provide to mold people into healthy, happy, free people.

[Sub-points with supporting evidence (data and personal anecdotes)]

- Meditation allows the mind to relax and relieve pain from deep-seated trauma.
 - Studies have shown that this practice decreases stress, anxiety, depression, and aggression.
 - At first, I thought it was bogus. I thought: I already know how to breathe so why should I need to learn how to do it any differently? Then one day I was in the yard and felt a panic attack coming on, so I figured I'd give this focused breathing thing a try. That day, while observing my breathe and all the activity in my mind, I saw my purpose. And here I am, actively living that purpose today....

[Transition to final main point]

III. Now comes the question of how? Well, now I'm going to give you some examples of prisons that are implementing this treatment plan and having amazing results....

[Transition to conclusion]

In conclusion, we can't allow this broken system to keep breaking people down.

[Summary of main points]

As you've seen, prisons are failing at dealing with addiction (and in some cases, making it worse), and meditation has shown to provide relief and help people maintain sobriety in and out of prison.

[Restate your thesis]

Now's the time to implement this meditation program into the prison system to decrease suffering, heal our fellow citizens, and give them a chance to contribute to society in meaningful ways.

[Memorable closing statement]

For all of you who raised your hands, all of you whose loved ones have been affected by addiction and incarceration, I hope what I've shared with you today has inspired hope that there is a way out for them.

[Final salutations and thanks]

Thank you for your lending me your ears and being such an attentive audience. Thank you, Andrea, for working hard to plan and put on this wonderful event. And a big thank you to Transcend Behind Bars for saving my life and helping me save the lives of others.

[Allowing time for questions (if applicable)]

Now, for about 10 minutes, Andrea will be walking around with a microphone for any of you with questions. Just raise your hands and I'll do my best to provide answers!