

# LETTERS TO A YOUNG INMATE LONGER WORKSHOP | VICTORIA'S LETTER

- Looking at time as elastic, the way it is in movies, there are flashbacks and flash-forwards.
- Flashbacks are memories of the past, and flash-forwards are imaginings of the future.

Look at Victoria's letter as an example:

## NO LONGER BOUND OR DISTRESSED

*To be bound is to be constrained by or as if by bounds.... This is how I felt at your age, bound by my need to feel loved and understood. "Why can't anyone see the hurt that I feel?" Why don't my parents see me for who I am?" Can you just tell me you love me no matter what?"*

*What...if....only.*

*I carried my hurt around and wore it like a shield, telling myself that no one will hurt me again. "I'll hurt them before they can hurt me." I didn't want to feel this way but didn't know how else to feel. The hurt is all I knew. I looked around and saw other kids happy. I wanted that but how?*

*"Distress is suffering of body or mind: pain, anguish, desperate need."*

*All the feelings of emptiness, loneliness, being unlovable, unnoticed, forgotten, misunderstood led me to distress. I acted out, hoping for a release from the pain, hoping that I would be noticed.*

*How's that working for so far? It didn't, it just caused me more distress, tightening the bonds.*

*I know that you are hurting, broken within because I have been there. Now I am living the results of my hurt and brokenness. Wishing I had a chance to see where I was leading myself.*

*No one wants to spend the rest of their life in prison! Like you I never thought this could be my life, but I was wrong. I'm sitting in prison serving a life sentence because I wanted to grow up too fast and thought I knew all about life. I have been locked up since I was 18.*

*When I was 17 I was involved in an unspeakable act of taking another's life, all because I was chasing a love that I thought I knew all about.*

*The life that I live locked-up is not an easy life. You have no freedom and you lose the sense and feeling of family.*

*I once was lost but now I'm found but it took me coming here to release the bonds and distress from my life. Don't choose this life for yourself! You don't have to live in your past nor do you have to let other people's choices and offenses toward you affect your future. Want more for yourself – you deserve it and have a choice to be a victim to your circumstances or become victorious over them.*

*Have the courage to live. You are the light of the world so let your light shine. Help is all around. Open your eyes and seek it out. The broken can be raised to life and become whole, leaving you no longer bound or in distress!*

*-Victoria*

*Served 14 years of Life Sentence*



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## QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS:

- The writer says she has served 14 years—she went in when she was 18, so now she is 32.
- She flashes back to her younger self, saying, “I carried my hurt around and wore it like a shield, telling myself that no one will hurt me again. I’ll hurt them before they can hurt me.”
- Write a flashback to your younger self, before you were incarcerated. What were you feeling then?
- Now, even though she’s in jail for life, Victoria no longer feels bound. She says:
- You don’t have to live in your past nor do you have to let other people’s choices and offenses toward you affect your future.
- How do you think she was able to get to this freedom? What happened inside that made her strong? Can you flash-forward to a different life, a different feeling that you might have about yourself in the future?
- Write a flash-forward that imagines you in the future. What are you feeling in the future?