

Running Time: 20 minutes

COPY

THE LIFESTYLE TRADE

Presents....

LIVING ABOVE OUR EMOTIONS

BY

MICHAEL D. JOHNSON

Document type: Play (performance play/screenplay).

Play summary:

This is a play about a group of prison inmates sentenced to indeterminate life terms in the California Department of Corrections who has also served a large portion of their sentences. These inmates are seeking to better themselves by participating in a Self-Help program entitled The Lifestyle Trade, an eight week program designed to provide inmates with the tools they need to become normal again and therefore suitable to be released back into the free world. This play is based on the first week of the program

in which is directed towards "Living Above Our Emotions", where the inmates learn how to manage their emotions-specifically the negative ones.

Scenery description:

Prison Chapel. |

Prison inmates sitting chairs in a group circle formation.

Inmates names:

Michael Dawson (Personality: Group founder; Inquisitive).

Kevin Johnson (Personality: Facilitator; Perceptive).

Jessie Martinez (Personality: Ex-gang member; Honest).

Timothy Chase (Personality: Drug addict; Objective).

Chow Lu (Personality: Culturalistic Asian).

David Pike (Personality: In denial about his problems).

Marcus Pane (Personality: Peace Keeper).

Gregg White (Personality: Sarcastic but honest).

Shawn Vick (Personality: Socially objective).

Jose Mendez (Personality: Emotionally broken).

Opening Statement

Michael Dawson (group founder) stands up and addresses the group:

Welcome to The Lifestyle Trade. This is a program for non-affiliates and inactive gang members. As criminals and convicted felons, The Lifestyle Trade is a resolution to our problems that govern the way we live. The Lifestyle Trade is a Self-Help group correlated between individuals who have already started the change process and those individuals ability to reduces their own current dangerousness to society.

The Lifestyle Trade is a One-Step program: "We have come to agree that the solution to our problems is to change our entire lifestyle.

This is our tool to fix ourselves. <sup>3</sup> "This One-Step is about

making a trade-off: Giving up the criminal lifestyle and replacing it with a brand new lifestyle that is no longer conducive to being a criminal." My name is Michael Dawson, and I am serving a prison sentence of 25 years to life for not having control over my emotions; I've murdered an innocent man because I felt he was challenging the self-esteem that I was establishing through my gang affiliation.

Michael Dawson returns to his seat.

Kevin Johnson stands and introduces the group to the topic of discussion:

My name is Kevin Johnson, and today we will be talking about living above our emotions. How do we, as normal people, rise above the limitations of self control? We live above our emotions. How do we live above our emotions? We accept the fact that we will always feel, we will always have emotions, we will, at some point in our

lives, once again become angry, afraid, jealous, frustrated and much more. Having emotions are normal characteristics within the make-up of who we are as normal people. However, the key to living above our emotions are to accept that our emotions belongs to us: your emotions belong to you. No one ever made you angry: You made yourself angry. You own your emotions and they are yours to keep. Therefore, it is your obligation to manage them.

Kevin Johnson returns to his seat. However, while sitting, he continues to address the group: We will go around the room and individually introduce ourselves, starting with myself. My name is Kevin Johnson and I have come to agree that the solution to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Michael Dawson:

My name is Michael Dawson and I have come to agree that the solution

to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Jessie Martinez:

My name is Jessie Martinez and I have come to agree that the solution to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Timothy Chase:

My name is Timothy Chase and I have come to agree that the solution to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Chow Lu:

My name is Chow Lu and I have come to agree that the solution to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

David Pike:

My name is Davide Pike and I have come to agree that the solution to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Marcus Pane:

My name is Marcus Pane and I come to agree that the solution to

~~agree that the solution to my problems is to change my entire~~  
lifestyle.

Gregg White:

My name is Gregg White and I have come to agree that the solution  
to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Shawn Vick:

My name is Shawn Vick and I have come to agree that the solution  
to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Jose Mendez:

My name is Jose Mendez and I have come to agree that the solution  
to my problems is to change my entire lifestyle.

Group Discussions

Michael Dawson:

Jessie, you and I have known each other for eleven years now and

during the entire eleven years I have known you. I have witnessed the worst of you and I have also witnessed you change as a person, but I don't know who you are emotionally. Who are you emotionally?

Jessie Martinez:

I am an emotional basketcase. On the outside I appear to be cured, but in the inside of who I am I have trouble functioning because I keep negative emotions bottled within me with the hopes that they will someday disappear. After listening to Kevin Johnson's introduction, I realize that my negative emotions belong to me. Knowing that, I can't blame others for how I feel because my feelings belong to the way I think and the way I think belongs to me.

Michael Dawson:

Timothy Chase, how do you feel about anger, resentment and emotional pain?



Timothy Chase:

Wow, anger, resentment and emotional pain is the reason why I've chosen to become a drug addict; Everytime I used rock cocain every bad feeling I had at that time instantly went away, but they came back when I wasn't high anymore. Those specific emotions triggered somany bad decisions that I made and before I can get a complete grip of myself it was too late; I found myself sleeping in the County Jail waiting to be tried for robbery, murder, and possession of drugs; I was dependent upon a drug high to cover the anger, resentment and emotional pain I was experiencing.

Michael Dawson:

Chow Lu, how do you perceive your ability to manage your emotions?

Chow Lu:

Managing my emotions is like drinking water; If I go too long

without doing it I become unhealthy and dehydration starts to set in. afterwards I become delusional, numb and at risk. My ability to manage my emotions are available within me at all times as long as I embrace my will to do so.

David Pike interrupts and verbally lashes out:

Oh God stop it! I'm so tired of listening to this psychological bullcrap! I don't understand how you guys<sup>can</sup> come into this Chapel, knowing that God is listening and babble about emotional management like you guys really have 100% control over who you are! But I know you! Jessie, I know you! Timothy I know you as well and you have never been a saint! You guys really need to just....

Marcus Pane interrupts David Pike:

David, calm down man, we're just here trying to get rid of our defects of character. None of us are professing to be perfect. We are all here because we need help and we can't do it on our own. So, lets

get back to our emotional babble if we may. **Mr. Michael Dawson.**

since you're the one that opened up this topic about living above our emotions, how do you manage your emotions?

Michael Dawson:

I don't to a certain degree and I do to a certain degree. I often find myself losing control over my emotions. I gain strength through failing and seeking advice on how not to fail in the same way repeatedly.

Kevin Johnson:

Remember guys, we are here for similar reasons behind our emotional failure. Now, with that said, Gregg White, you've paroled two times during the period of my incarceration and now you're my bunkie. Being able to see you everyday has taught me that you wear your emotions on your sleeves and sometimes they hang over your head like a halo. How do you feel about the way I view you and your failure to control your emotions?

Gregg White:

Honestly, hearing you say those things about me disturbs me a bit because I believe I'm perfectly sane and well put together. I'm not the only one in this room that expresses himself outwardly when upset, but Kevin, you're absolutely right; I do wear my emotions on my sleeves. For that reason, I need help.

Kevin Johnson:

Shawn Vick, if you had the will power to control your emotions, how would you do it?

Shawn Vick:

By coming to groups like this and seeking the advice of others. Being able to talk about my problems and the things that's been eating me up inside gives me an opportunity to release my emotional pain, but most of all, after sitting in this group today, I refuse to blame other people for how I feel.

Kevin Johnson:

Jose Mendez, how do you feel about the circumstances of your childhood?

Jose Mendez:

Nobody gives a damn about me! My father been using dope since I was twelve years old! My mother can't even take a few minutes out of her day just to write a letter to see if I'm well or even alive... and...and (Jose starts crying as he falls to his knees in tears).

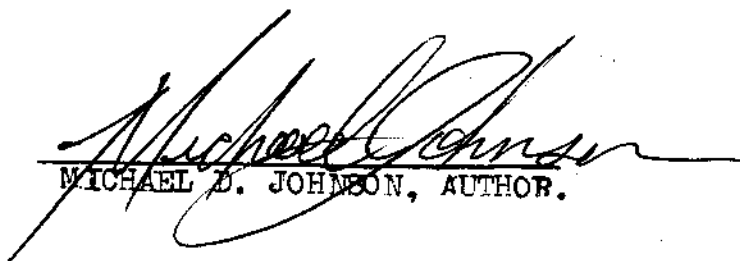
The entire group leave their seats to console Jose Mendez.

Michael Dawson faces the audience:

As human beings it is normal for us to emotionalize our thoughts and experiences. Emotions are a part of who we are. However, how we deal with our emotions decides the conditions of our lifestyles, our friends, our family, our neighbors, our beliefs and most importantly

our freedom.

THE END OF THE PLAY

  
MICHAEL B. JOHNSON, AUTHOR.

DATE: \* 11-24-2014

Michael D. Johnson  
CDCR # J86103  
CVSP/D11-3-1 upper  
P.O. Box 2349  
Blythe, CA 92226

---

---

Safe Streets Arts  
Foundation.

2512 Virginia Ave NW #58043  
Washington, DC 20037

To whom this letter may concern:

Please find enclosed my Play. I have also incorporated a SASE for acknowledgement of receipt of my play. It is not a perfect typing and due to typing errors I made written corrections. However, the storyline is an eyebrow raiser; It is based on a true story. The Lifestyle Trade is real; I

founded the program in September of this year and I, with the help of others run the program every tuesday at Chuckawall Valley State Prison.

I really hope you publish my play; I have seven more parts to the Lifestyle Trade with a total of eight parts, for example: part two is The Lifestyle Trade presents... The Side Effects Of Substance Abuse.

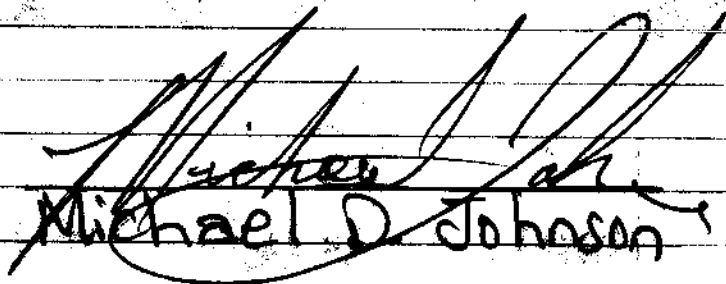
Thank you for giving me a chance. God bless you. I go to my subsequent parole



hearing soon. With freedom  
I can write more effective.

Sincerely,

Thanks Again :-)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M". Below the signature, the name "Michael D. Johnson" is printed in a standard font.

11-24-2014

## "GEORGIA STYLE" - BALLAZ

THE NOTORIOUS KING PIN GEORGIA MIKE and his crew  
still got things on smash in "Augusta Georgia"  
But lil Does Mike and his crew know, things  
are bout to start gettin hotter than the 4<sup>th</sup>  
of JULY. As Georgia Mike gets ready to throw  
the biggest Ballaz Bash Georgia has ever  
seen, Agent Smith from the F.B.I is set on  
putting Georgia Mike and his operation outta  
business. Will Agent Smith succeed or will Georgia  
Mike and his crew take the war to EM.....

Joel cliett

&

Bobby Stevenson