



The Data Behind the Personas:  
Sample Quotes

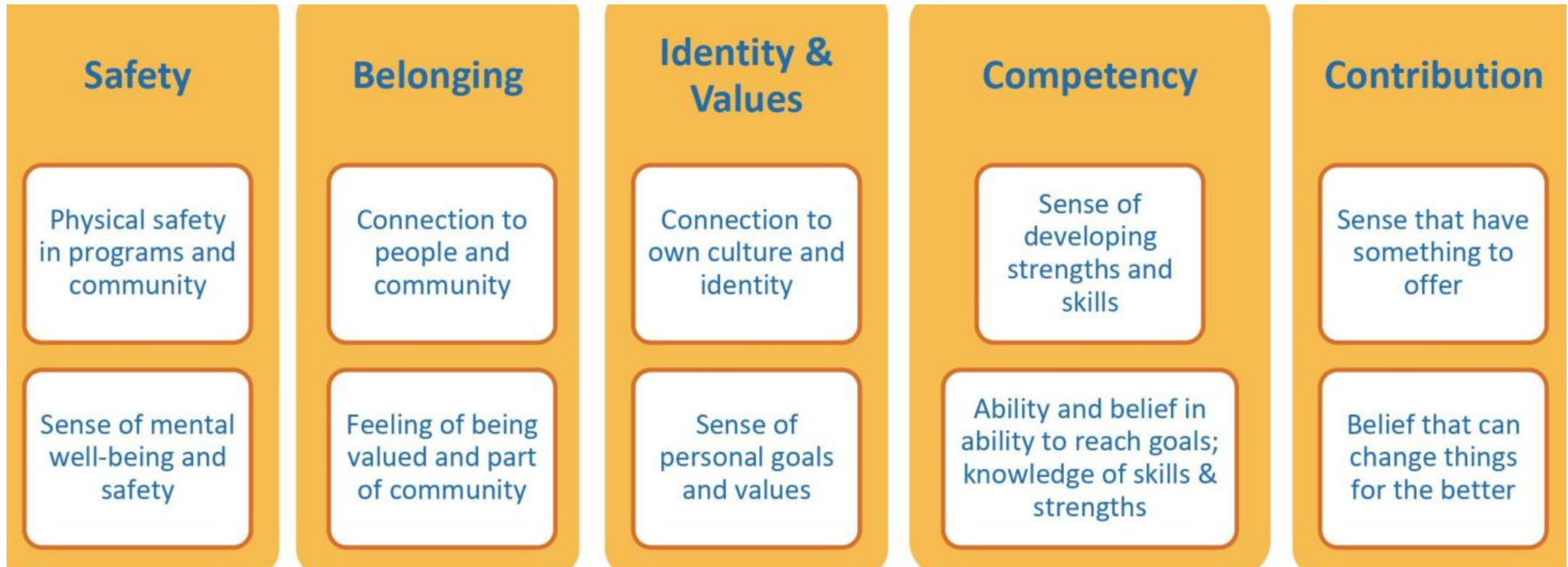


# Sample Quotes

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- Pulled from approximately 20 interviews conducted of justice-impacted emerging adults.
- Participants at the event, *Understanding the Lived Experience*, used these quotes to inform the development of the personas.

# Framework for categorizing interviews



# Sample Quotes on Safety, Belonging, Goals, Identity + Competency, Concerns, & Thrive



## Safety | What makes you feel safe?

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- “I feel safe when I’m locked up. The only thing to worry about when I am incarcerated is someone wanting to fight me but it’s not like anybody can kill me in here.”
- “Definitely relocation. That’s a big part. Not saying you can’t feel safe in DC. There is so much going on. When you go somewhere and a lot of people don’t know you, you are fresh to the community.”
- “Being away from DC makes me feel safe.”
- “Belonging in the community.”
- “Getting closer to God. I’ve never felt as safe as I do with God in my life.”

## Safety | What makes you feel safe?

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- “When I’m not in the streets. Being at home with my family or when I’m out of town.
- “I’m really focused on relocating to a different community as mine is really not safe.
- Staying anywhere in DC is too close. I need to be in a different state so I don’t have to worry about things in the community.”
- When you go somewhere and a lot of people don't know you, you are fresh to the community.
- When I’m out of town, I don’t have to worry about things like running into people that you went to school with who want to bring you down. Hurt people hurt people. That’s how I feel like in my hometown.”

## Safety | What makes you feel safe?

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- We need more programs like YME (Young Men Emerging unit) in DOC and everywhere. The correctional system can mess people's head's up where they become more troubled than when they went in.
- We need more therapeutic environments where people are behind you and supporting you so that you don't keep coming back. There is always a bright side to the darkness."
- "Being away at college makes me feel safe."
- "I carried a gun around because I have been shot before so carrying a gun on me was for protection."
- "The neighborhood I grew up in was rough. It was all I knew."

## **Belonging** | Who in your life do you find to be most supportive of you right now?

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- “My dad, mom, and my family. I never really saw how getting locked up affected them. Recently I talked to my dad and he started crying. His dad is 58 years old and came to America when he was 20. He does nothing but work, and it motivates him to try to do better.”
- “My mentality, attitude and my dad.”
- “My mom first, then the YME (Young Men Emerging unit) community as a whole. They really support me. Everyone is pushing me to do better. Good is not good enough. They are pushing me to do even more.”
- “My mom and teachers.”



## **Belonging** | Who in your life do you find to be most supportive of you right now?

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- “My two daughters are most important to me.”
- “My mother and brother, Free Minds, and some of my closest friends are who I consider my biggest supporters.”
- “My mother. I give all props to her. Without her, I wouldn’t be able to have the mindset, the courage, the strength, the confidence. She taught me a lot and put me in the schools I’ve been in to see what makes me different as opposed to what I’m around 24/7.”
- “My ‘aunts’ and ‘sisters,’ friends who are like family, Megan (DDS staff).”

## Goals | What are your aspirations related to education and career?

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- “My goal is to curve the incarceration rate of young Black men and try to change the trajectory of their lives. I won’t be free until I’m financially free. I want to experience the world and have fun with the people that I love.”
- “[I want] to finish school and stay out of trouble. I also want to grow a bigger network and stay in contact with those who mean well and mean business, people who can help me grow. Another thing is staying employed and financially stable. Lastly, making sure that my family is taken care of.”
- “I see myself owning a non-profit program. I speak about that a lot. I like helping people. I would help pass out turkeys in the community at Thanksgiving and help at shelters to donate clothing. At the end of the day, you don’t know what the next person will need. I would aim for health in the community, giving books to schools. Wherever I may be needed.”

## Goals | What are your aspirations related to education and career?

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- “I want to be an entrepreneur. I want to do a lot of things and not just be in one box. What’s most important to me right now is getting my life in order, being more active with my daughter, getting a plan in action, getting stuff in order, and deciding what I want to do career wise.”
- “Just trying to stay away from the system and stay in the community. Stop getting locked up and go do something positive.”
- “I would want to stay out of the system but I know that’s easier to say when locked up and that it will be harder once I am back into the community and seeing people getting money and things like that.”
- “I hope to graduate within the next year or year and a half and start my own clothing line, open my own recording studio, and have shares of multiple companies by the time I am in my late twenties. I have also thought about going back to school for sports management.”

## Goals | What are your aspirations related to education and career?

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- “I've written up a non-profit/no-entry business plan to mentor youth and get them outside of the neighborhood and see other things. Some people don't know what Georgetown looks like, what the Pentagon looks like. I want them to see what a normal citizen sees.”
- “In the future, I see myself... talking to youth, giving them an insight to the streets, how it is way more than the streets and bigger than DC. Trying to change their minds and put them on the right path. I was once where they were and I have better insight about life.”
- “I want to be a therapist or mentor; I want to talk to the youth and tell them where I came from and share my experiences with the systems. There's too much in life to be caged in.”
- “I can just go to school and be a teenager.”
- “I want to be on the opposite side of the system.”
- “Having my freedom is what's most important to me at the moment so that I can achieve my goals.”
- “To finish high school, get a job and make money, and learn to drive and get my own car.”

## Identity + Competency | How would you and other people describe your strengths?

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- “People say that I’m a good person to be around. I have good energy when I come into a room, I light the room up because I have a smile on my face. That’s just me, I’m always going to smile because I’m still alive, I’m not going to let nothing down.”
- “I’m confident that the work I’ll do will be very effective. Sometimes the solution to the problem is in the problem. I will have more effective influence on the youth than someone who is older and has a different background.”
- “Patience. Everything doesn’t happen fast. It takes time. Since I’ve been incarcerated, I’ve learned how to be patient. Surrounding myself with people who have the same mindset as me who want something different and better to change their life. That’s what will motivate me to keep going. Being humble. Knowing that one mistake can end me up back here where I am today. I want to do something better with myself.”

# Identity + Competency | How would you and other people describe your strengths?

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- “Communicating with others. Lending a helping hand and using my life as an example for others, but I understand that I’m a work in progress.”
- “The obstacles that I had to go through to get to my goals, like getting locked up and how that might stop me from finishing school. I want to look at it as a stepping stone instead.”
- “I am caring, social, resilient, and creative.”
- “Reading people and their body language.”
- “[My biggest strengths are] my ability to learn new things, take advice and fix my mistakes.”

# Identity + Competency | How would you and other people describe your strengths?

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- “My voice, being able to articulate myself, not being afraid to step up to the plate to advocate for what we need.”
- “I had an opportunity for college in the past, but my eyes are open now. I have opportunities. I am in school in Georgetown University, taking 3-4 credit based classes. I’m taking Philosophy and Critical Thinking, Writing Fiction, Social Justice, and DC History.”

## Concerns (Competency + Contribution) | What concerns do you have about achieving your goals?

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- “[What I fear is] the unknown, not knowing if I am going to fail. Being able to stay calm and stay on the right path and not put my foot back in the streets and take fast money; there’s a lot of temptation.”
- “Staying alive and being able to provide for my mother. I hope that I can make it to that point. At times, I’ve put myself in some messed up situations.”
- “My past haunts me and I still feel fresh at this stage because my past is only a couple of months behind me. It feels like a burden to me because I don't want to unintentionally step the wrong way.”
- "As a kid, I always had honor roll until I reached middle school.



## Concerns (Competency + Contribution) | What concerns do you have about achieving your goals?

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- Once I moved to a foster home, things went downhill. Since I was always in a new home it meant that I was always in a new school which also messed up my grades and just made me not want to be in school anymore. Schools didn't have my transcripts so I started missing days and not really caring because I felt like I was being held back.
- Now I am attending Maya Angelou Academy at Youth Services Center and I am either in 11th or 12th grade. I am kind of back on track with school but I think I may try to get my GED instead because I don't want to be behind. If I wasn't put into a foster home, I believe that I would've actually done well but always moving to different homes and living with strangers threw me off."

# Thrive | What else is needed to help you and others thrive?

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- In DC, they only give youth mentors after they get in trouble. If we had mentors to guide us beforehand, it could reduce the crime rate by juveniles. We need more rec centers to keep the youth involved in activities and away from committing crimes. We also need more stable jobs for youth. In order for youth to get a job, you need a work permit from school but some youth aren't in school because their parents may be on drugs and they have to provide for their families which leads us to robbing and selling drugs because we can't get a work permit."
- "A mentor to show them the steps to changing their life, taking them to job interviews, practicing with them the proper way to go to a job interview and just being there for them the whole step of the way. That would help me. I can say I want to do things with my life, but may not have the motivation. It may take that one person to believe in me."



