

Mental Models from Families Who Want Out of Poverty

How They See Their Lives.

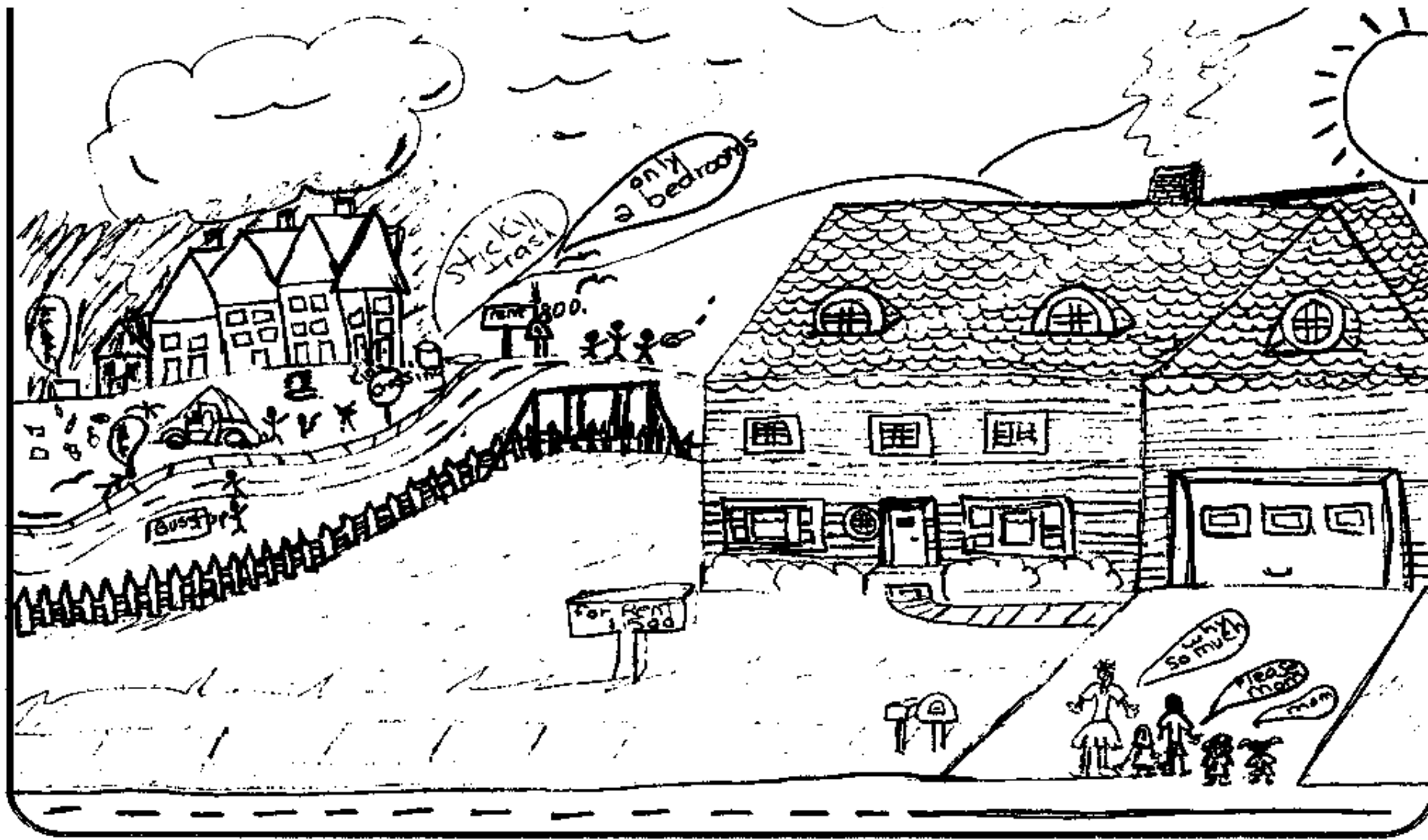


Mental Models

The following pages provide mental models created by families who were working to get out of poverty – it is pictures of their struggle.

REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

Sara was living at the homeless shelter – she spent a long time on her mental model putting in lots of detail. She has 4 children including a set of twins. She is comparing the world she lives in to the world she sees others have. Notice the difference in the settings. Thrash, dark clouds and rain, words like stinky trash, the people fighting or passed out by the street – only two bedrooms and no where to play. The rent there is \$800 and closer to what she can afford on her income. Compare that to the nice house with sunshine, enough bedrooms and a beautiful yard but it rents for \$1,500 way out of her price range. Her kids are begging her. You can feel her frustration and longing. It doesn't seem to matter how long she works – she won't be afford a safe place for her family.



The Circle

We start with nothing
We then add a place to live
Then add household needs
Then other odds and ends

We get a good start
Then we start to plan
Plan to get a job or a better job
Plan to go to school
Plan to save and do better

Then what happens
We lose a piece
Either the car, the job or the place to live
And guess what?

We lose another piece
Then another piece
Then another
Until we have lost it all

Then we start again with nothing
It's all one big Circle
We keep following it
It gets us nowhere
But we try and continue to try

We need out of it
But it's all one big Circle
That we can't seem to get out of

I have heard of it being done
It can be done
It needs to be done

We just need the right strings
The right ones pulled tighter
And the right ones cut loose

The right people
The right places
The right things

Cuz - it's all one big Circles
And we can,
We will,
We have to!

Danyell M. Kriner
2/23/2010

What It's Like Now

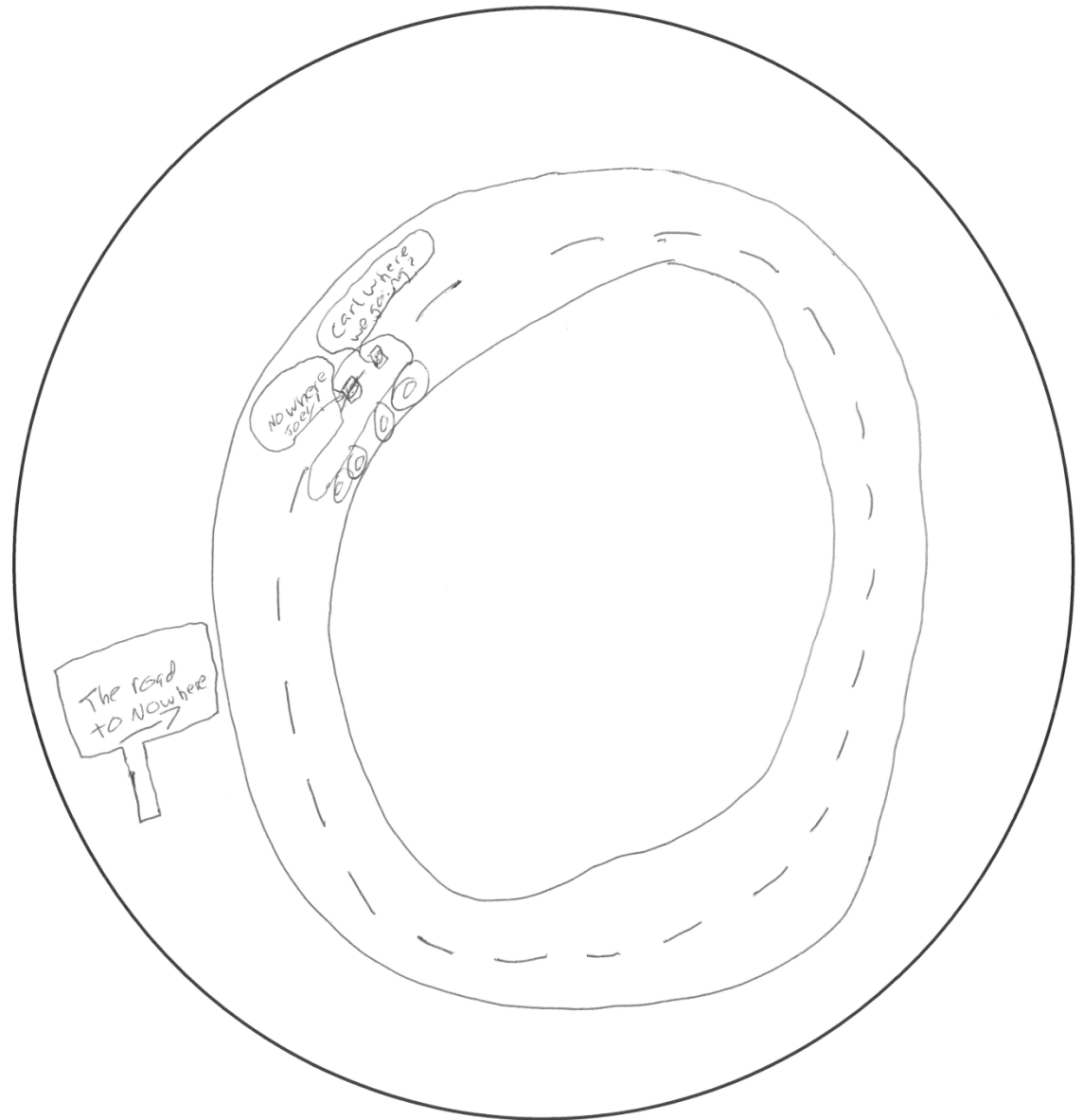
Carl is the stepfather of a seven year old child. He works construction and was living in a shelter with his family.

He drew his life in poverty as a circular road called

'The Road to Nowhere'

His stepson says **"Carl – where we going?"**

He answers **"Nowhere Joey."**



What It's Like Now



Scott works at a factory and does very manual labor for just above minimum wage.

He shows his job.

“Working all week.”

Then pays his bills
“Everyone with their hands out.”

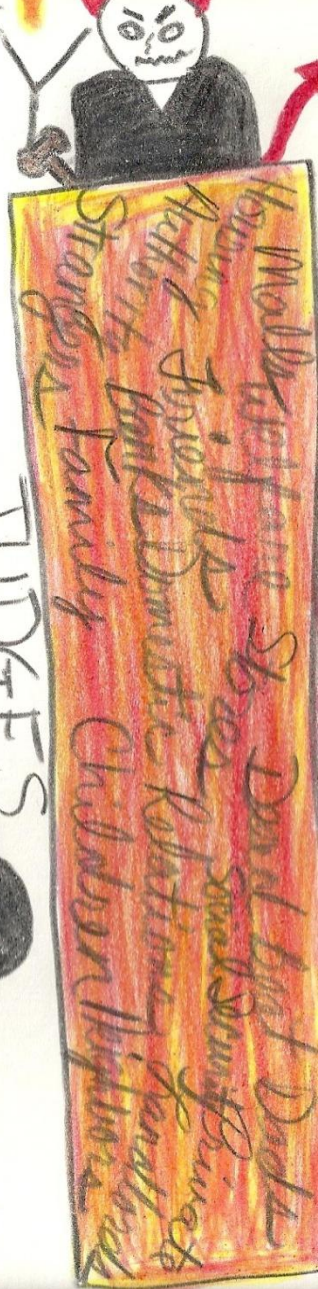
and at the end of the week he has nothing left – it feels futile.

“Broke again”.

DREAM WORLD



REALITY



Angie drew her dream world and her current situation. In her current world she is just a number and everyone judges her and laughs at her. She feels trapped. It is in color because it is so real. Her Dream World is where she is going – no agencies, her own home, a business that she worked to build, college for her children – it is in black and white because for now it is just a dream

Monthly Costs for a Parent, Infant and Preschooler to be Self-Sufficient

Housing + Utilities	\$1000
Child Care	\$1200
Food	\$500
Transportation (used car payment, gas, insurance, maintenance)	\$550
Health Care	\$400
Miscellaneous (diapers, clothing, shoes, etc...)	\$200
Totals (This is bare necessities – no vacations, cell phones, cable, birthday parties, car repairs, sports for the kids, or loans/credit)	\$3,850 – after taxes needed monthly More than \$45,000 per year after taxes is needed to be self-sufficient

United States Official Poverty Guidelines: 2010

Family Size	Annual Income
Four	\$22,050
Three	\$18,310
Two	\$14,570
One	\$10,830

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (January 2009)

The **parent** of a family of three would lose health benefits when their income reaches **\$5,600**

The family would lose food stamps when their income reaches: **\$29,296**, access to **Food Pantries at \$27,465**

The Wage Gap

<http://www.circlesadamscounty.org/wagegapvideo.html>



Poverty is a **HUGE** multi-faceted problem requiring many solutions

- We must change the dialogue
- It can't only be only about families making better choices and working harder
- It is also about broken systems – it should not get harder to break as a family works harder to make it.
- It is about community solutions and effective supports!

How Can You Help?

- Become informed about the issues! Learning never stops and education brings power.
- Attend a Bridges Training, Poverty Sim or other event to listen to families. Challenge your own thinking.
- Get involved – volunteer, become a mentor, life coach or Circles Ally to help families with your skills and expertise!
- Share what you are learning with others!

How Can You Help Continued

- Advocate and demand more from our legislators, non-profits and ourselves – the goals have to be moving people out of poverty.
 - Frequently that is an “and” statement.
 - It is more jobs AND fatherhood initiatives
 - It is strong family units AND fixing broken systems
- Find your niche and do the part that means something to you and then offer moral support to the others.

Thanks So Much for Meeting With US!

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