

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE
FOR
COUNTDOWN TO FREEDOM FOR MEN VIDEO SERIES

DAY OF RELEASE
VIDEO 3 OF 6

“Anticipation isn’t preparation.”

Overview

Your day of release may be an exciting one, but if you haven’t prepared for it in advance, it may bring disappointment. The outside world will require a great deal of you. For example, you need an address to receive the small stipend the department of corrections provides. You have to pay probation fees. If you have a child support situation, you become responsible for paying that support when you get out. Will you be ready for all these responsibilities the day you walk out that door?

In this program you learn about:

- What to expect on your day of release and how to prepare for it.
- What you can do in the first 30-60 days to increase your chances of staying out.

Housing and employment are two of the most essential things you should prepare for before your release day. On a practical level, the day you are released you should also know these specifics:

- Your method of transportation to leave prison.
- Who will meet you at the gate or at the bus stop.
- Where you’ll sleep after your release.
- What you’ll do for clothing.
- How you’ll spend your time the morning after you get out.
- How you’ll get a job.
- What social services are available through private, government, or faith-based programs.

When you have been released, you may find that life is faster paced than it was inside. You will have good and bad things happen to you. You may be tempted to find a way back to prison, which may feel like a safe haven compared to the demands on the outside. But as one man in the program says, remember, your worst day outside is better than your best day inside.

You will have to look for work, and there are some steps you can take that can help you do that. First, have all your documentation available, such as your birth certificate, social security card, and resume. If you don’t have those before your release, it can take time to track them down--time you have to find the money to survive. If you can get somebody on the outside working to help you find a job before you get

out, that can give you a head start. Be willing to take a less than perfect job to get your foot in the door, and move on from there.

Your family and friends may be a help or may make things harder. Don't go to people who will draw you back into bad habits. If your family cannot provide support, connect with a community group who can line up a support system for you before you are released. Remember:

- Work the plan you created before your release.
- Secure housing, clothing, a job.
- Expect to be surprised.
- Have a support network in place, and use it.

Remember that many people come out feeling that society owes them something. The reality is that you have to be actively involved in the reentry process. Not everybody will welcome you, and you will face obstacles. You have to play the lead role in your own reintegration process.

Presentation Suggestions

Use the board or overhead to write this question: *How will you spend your time the morning you get out?* Ask students to respond to this question. Let them anticipate not only the good (I'll have a good meal. I'll see my children.) but also the challenges (I don't know where I'll sleep that night. I will feel pressure to get a job.).

Give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to viewing the video.

Show the program. Encourage students to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the program.

At the conclusion of the program, ask students to discuss any changes they made to the answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of watching the program. Follow up the discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from the students.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and review the quiz questions as a group.

Assign a **Take Away Activity**, if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You will revise your answers as you watch the program.

1. What can you do to help you succeed in the first 30-60 days after your release?

2. Should you connect with all your old friends?
3. How can you come out job ready?
4. What are some possible people or organizations for your support network?

Answer Key

1. Make a plan before you get out. Contact people who can support you. Find somebody on the outside to help scout out employment.
2. Don't contact those who would pull you back into negative behavior.
3. Have all your documentation, including birth certificate, social security card, and resume.
4. Old friends and family, community organizations, faith-based groups, government organizations.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Your Release Day Schedule

Format: Individual

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. Ask the students to divide the paper into hourly segments, starting with 8 a.m. and proceeding to midnight.
2. Ask them to write in each hourly time slot what they envision happening on their day of release, assuming they leave their institution at 9 a.m. Ask them to include tasks such as preparing to leave, traveling to their destination, what they will do when they arrive at their destination, places they will visit when they get there, meals they will eat, people they will contact, phone calls they will make, and so on.
3. Ask students to review their release day schedule, and discuss any items they have listed that they haven't yet lined up. If they plan to stay with a friend, have they contacted that friend yet? If they want to go have a meal, do they know where they will get the money for it? If they want to contact people, do they have their current contact information and are they sure those people will welcome them?
4. After the discussion, have students write a list of action items they might need to perform before their release to make their release day schedule work.

Activity #2

Title: Setting Up a Support System

Format: Small group

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Board or flip chart paper; chalk or marker pens

1. Break students up into small groups of 3-4 people.
2. Give each group a large piece of paper or assign an area of a whiteboard for them to write on.
3. In 10 minutes have each group list all the possible sources of support they can think of to help them in the outside world. These might include clergy, government agencies, family, friends, social service groups, friends of friends, previous employers, and so on.
4. Have each group spend 15 minutes writing a letter to one support source asking for specific help for their release day.

Discussion Questions

1. In this program people talk about how ex-offenders often choose to go back to the safety of prison rather than deal with life on the outside. People who are in bad relationships or have drug abuse problems often find that sticking with their bad habits is easier than making a change. Discuss the challenges of making a change to your behavior, versus staying with the comfort of what you know, even though what you know may be bad for you.
2. How do you choose which people you should seek out when you are released? If you have family members or friends who push you toward negative behavior, how will you treat them? Will you ignore them or tell them that you no longer want to participate in the negative behavior? What will you do if they refuse to support your wishes?
3. One man in this program says it's harder on the outside than on the inside. In what ways is that true? In what ways is it harder inside?

Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise. If you read the quiz, write responses on the board/overhead.

Directions: Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the program.

1. If you are responsible for child support you will be expected to begin paying it again upon your release.
2. You don't need any paperwork to get a job.
3. Social agencies and the government are responsible for taking care of you after you get out.

4. Housing and employment are two of the most important issues you have to deal with when you are released.
5. One possible source for obtaining your birth certificate is your parents.

Answer Key

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. T

Take Away Activity

Write an essay about your trip home on your release day. How will you get home? Who do you want to meet you either outside the institution or at the end of your journey? What will you do during the trip? What will you have with you? How will you feel? What will you say if somebody on a bus or train asks you where you're coming from and where you're going? What aspects of what you see and experience during the journey will excite you? What might frighten or depress you?