

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

RELEASE AND BEYOND: LIFESTYLE CHANGES

VIDEO 4 OF 6

“You have to do it because you want to do it for you, not for friends, family, or whatever.”

Overview

Life in prison is a familiar routine where others make most of your decisions for you. Once you get out you become responsible for yourself and your choices.

In this program you learn about the importance of:

- Understanding yourself, your past, and your motivations
- Knowing that familiar things drive temptation
- Making the right choices and telling the truth

One big adjustment you have to make when you are released is to change your attitude. Beyond putting aside your anger, you may also have to change the way you talk and your body language so you don't convey anger and negativity. Employers look for a positive attitude that shows that you think you can succeed. You may send subliminal messages with your tone of voice, your posture, language, and so on. Be aware of the messages you are sending to others.

When you get out you may feel angry or victimized. People will label you and treat you differently. Because of this you may be tempted to go back to what's familiar to you, to a street life where you feel accepted, rather than learn new skills that help you function in the straight world. You have to learn to cope with those feelings and resist going back to old habits.

One speaker in this program introduces a model called Boundaries. He describes three types of people:

- Victim/offender is a person who has been physically, mentally, and emotionally abused. This person is defensive and damaged to an extent that he can't protect himself and always reacts negatively.
- Damaged people have been cared for to some extent, but they have gaps in their self esteem. Sometimes they can accept or deflect negative input. Other times they react to it explosively.
- Intact people have strong self-esteem. They are protected from abusive treatment. However, if they are being justly criticized, they have the capacity to change.

Learning to deal with your negative emotions means understanding who you are and what impact your past has on your behavior. Counselors can help you to understand the origin of your anger. They can help

you to look at your family situation and release your negative feelings about something one or both of your parents did. If the problem that is causing you to have low self-esteem is being repeated from generation to generation, you can pass it on to your children or you can identify it and stop it.

Finally, there are situations where you will be asked about your past, such as on job, credit, or insurance applications. Always tell the truth. If you lie and your employer finds out that you did, even if you are doing a good job the boss may be forced to let you go based on company policies. If you feel you can verbalize information about your crime and rehabilitation that could help you, put a note on the application that you'd like to discuss a question about your past, rather than writing an answer. This may give you the opportunity to give your prospective employer a better understanding of what you've done and what you're doing to move on.

Presentation Suggestions

Use the board or overhead to write this statement: *Life in prison is a familiar routine. Others make decisions for you.* Ask students what things are decided for them now that they will have to deal with when they get out. This might include where they sleep, what they eat, how they spend their days, and who they socialize with. Discuss why having responsibility for those choices once they are released could be difficult or frightening.

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 learning about yourself and your past do to help you make positive changes?
2. Should you lie about your history or tell the truth on job or other applications?
3. How can your attitude be transmitted to a prospective employer or landlord?

4. What should you base your recovery on?

Answer Key

1. You may discover negative family cycles you can break; you may realize that you have low self-esteem that causes you to react negatively in many situations.
2. Always tell the truth.
3. Your language, your posture and body language, and lack of eye contact.
4. Base your recovery on yourself; if you base it on the actions of others, you have no control.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Taking Responsibility

Format: Entire group

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. Using a flip chart or whiteboard, write the heading “Taking Responsibility.” Note that the program stresses that the students will have to take responsibility for their own lives when they are released.
2. Ask each student to come up and write one item on the board for which they will be responsible when they are released. If you need to, provide some examples: finding a job, getting food, taking care of their own health, paying the rent, and so on.
3. When the list is complete, ask students to discuss how they feel about dealing with all those responsibilities. Are they overwhelmed by them? Do they think others will handle some of the items on the list for them? Would they rather be in prison where some of these things are handled for them?
4. After the discussion, remind students that having a plan for how they will handle some of these responsibilities before they get out will make their adjustment easier.

Activity #2

Title: Telling the Truth

Format: Small group

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: None

1. Break students up into groups of 2.
2. Remind them that the program recommends that they tell the truth about their history.
3. Ask one group to come to the front and assign roles of job interviewer and job candidate. Ask them to spend a couple of minutes role playing a job interview, instructing the job candidate to be absolutely truthful about his past.
4. Repeat this with other groups, stopping to point out especially effective ways of presenting information and even body language or phrasing that was especially positive.

Discussion Questions

1. In this program, one person says that people on the street are more real and direct than people in the straight world. Do you think some of the ways that successful people find to be tactful or less direct in their communications help them be more successful? Are these people just putting on a front, and is that a bad or good thing? Is the directness of street people always healthy?
2. Another man in this program talks about breaking negative cycles in families. What cycles have you observed in your own or in other families? What was done to you in your life that you hope your own children never have to experience? What can you do to make sure they don't?
3. Do you think you should have to adjust the way you talk and move to impress others to get a job or just get on in the world? In what ways should you change, and how do you think you can make those changes?

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. Employment applications usually ask if you have been convicted of a felony.
2. A victim/offender type of person doesn't know how to protect himself.
3. Sometimes it's okay to lie on a job application.
4. Your body language can express a negative attitude to a potential employer.
5. Nobody will label or treat you differently when you are released.

Answer Key

1. T
2. T
3. F

4. T

5. F

Take Away Activity

Keep a journal to document how you behave and speak in your current environment. Note your language and how often you use curse words. Note your body language and gestures. Once you have ‘observed yourself’ for a few days, list ways in which you might change each behavior if you were in a job interview or starting a new job. For example, if you have a note that you keep to yourself and never make eye contact with others, how would you change that to convince an employer that you feel confident? If you curse frequently, how would you change your vocabulary to impress an employer? Finally, write down a few ideas for how you could make the changes you noted and who might help you do that.