

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

PREPARATION FOR RELEASE: PART TWO

VIDEO 2 OF 6

“You have to decide to change your life.”

Overview

Staying out of prison can be a very hard thing to do. Being prepared for your release will help you. That means that achieving success after your release begins long before the day of your release. You have to decide what you will need and then make a plan to get it.

In this program you discover the importance of:

- Deciding what you can do with yourself and your assets.
- Developing a realistic reintegration plan.
- Understanding the obstacles you face.

It is nobody's job but your own to decide how to change your life and heal yourself. Long before you are released, you need to take an honest look at yourself and determine what skills you have and where you need to improve. Don't wait until the last few weeks or months to get ready. Being prepared is your best ammunition for success outside.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you really want to succeed on the outside?
- Are you prepared to change what needs to be changed?
- What assets or strengths can you build on?
- What do you need that you don't have?
- What will you do for housing when you're released?
- What type of job skills do you have?
- Is it likely that someone will hire you, even with a record?
- Have you done anything while in prison to build your existing skills or develop new ones?
- Who do you know that can help you?

You should begin to make a plan and to line up resources that you will need upon release, such as housing and clothing, well before you are released. You may call on your family, clergy, or community groups for help. Your plan should be realistic and specific. Consider the following needs and how you will deal with each:

- Birth certificate
- Social security card
- Valid driver's license/photo ID
- Medical records
- Resume
- Personal budget
- Housing needs
- Job opportunities
- Addiction counseling
- Medical care

Start to put your plan in action before you are released. Write to others who could be of help in giving you work or helping you find housing. Take classes to acquire skills. Qualify for your GED. Learn how to set goals and make plans to reach those goals. Figure out how to tell your story to prospective employers, new friends, and others.

The key to success after release is preparation you put in before you get out.

Presentation Suggestions

Use the board or overhead to write this question: *Are you prepared to change what needs to be changed?* Ask students to respond to this question. Why is change so difficult? How can people prepare to change?

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. How long before you are released should you begin to plan for release?
2. What should you avoid when you are released?

3. What are some documents that you will need to get by when you get outside?
4. What are arrangements should have lined up for the first 90 days after your release?

Answer Key

1. As soon as you get in.
2. Anything or anybody who helped to put you into the situation you were in that caused you to go to prison.
3. Birth certificate, social security card, valid driver's license/photo ID, medical records, resume, personal budget.
4. Housing, employment, clothing, transportation, and a support system.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Short-term Plan

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. Ask each person to create a timeline for her remaining time before release. Suggest that they start by placing some major goals such as acquiring at least one new job skill, getting pre-release counseling, or finding prospective landlords, employers, or support groups.
2. Then have them add in the action steps for each of these goals, such as signing up for a class, making an appointment with a counselor, and writing letters to people on the outside. Give them 15 minutes to do this.
3. Ask the students to share their major milestones. Did anybody get ideas from another person's list that they hadn't thought of? Are there resources one student is aware of that others aren't? Suggest that they each take what they have written as the core of their personal release plan.

Activity #2

Title: Life Description

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. Ask each student to spend 10 minutes writing a description of her life as she would like it to be a few years from now. Have each include where she will live, who her friends will be, what her relationships with her family will be, and what her job will be.
2. Based on the description, ask each student to write down at least two things she would need to do to realize that life.
3. Have volunteers read their descriptions and their two action items aloud. Suggest that the students make those two items goals that they will work on in the time before they are released.

Discussion Questions

1. One woman in the program says nobody else can make you happy. Have you ever counted on somebody else to make you happy? Why could that be a bad thing?
2. If you are trying to do your best to be a good person and you fail, how is that better than not trying at all? Can you succeed at anything by not trying?
3. One person in the program states that you didn't get into prison overnight and you won't get out of the situation you're in overnight. How does that statement make you feel?

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. Preparation is the key to success after release.
2. You should change to be the way others want you to be.
3. Planning a budget is an important part of your reintegration plan.
4. Every reentry plan will be unique.
5. You can get by without job skills.

Answer Key

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

Take Away Activity

Write down a brief description of your ideal job. Then, create a skills assessment: First, list the skills you think you need to work in your ideal job. Then compare your current skills against that list. Note the places where you have to add skills to get the job of your dreams. Finally, note three steps you can take to acquire those skills.