

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

RELEASE AND BEYOND: SUPPORT SYSTEMS

VIDEO 6 OF 6

“Every day that I make one step forward is a step forward to a new life for me.”

Overview

Often people in prison feel that they can't trust anyone. However, to survive outside, you have to reach out to somebody else. It's not always easy, but when you feel you want to give up or go back to prison rather than stay in the outside world, you should find someone to talk with.

In this program you learn about building a support network that fits into your life and meets your needs. You hear that support can come from a variety of sources.

Support can come from:

- Family
- Friends (although not those who encouraged your original bad behavior)
- Counselors
- Former inmates
- Faith-based programs
- Social services

Not everyone will use all of these sources, and not everybody will be on your side, but you should make the effort to find people and groups to help you succeed. However, be careful not to connect with people who could bring you back into the habits that put you in prison in the first place. If they can't adjust to the ways in which you've changed, you may have to leave them out of your life.

Making the best use of your support network involves follow-through and trust. It's not always easy to trust people when you have been burned by relationships in the past, and in prison you may have learned to trust no one. Still, the more people you have on your side, the better your chances of staying on the outside and succeeding. You should take advantage of counseling to help you with issues of anger, low self-esteem, and family.

Remember that people who have been in prison for many years often have trouble adjusting to the world outside. This is understandable. They have become institutionalized in their thinking and comfortable

with a regimented existence. They may have trouble accepting keys to an apartment or be uncomfortable attending parties or being around large groups. People need help to make these adjustments.

If you open yourself up to others, you will find that there are people who care about you and that you will work harder to not disappoint their faith in you.

Presentation Suggestions

Use the board or overhead to write this statement from the program: *The need for other people is built into us.* Ask students what they think that means. If it is human nature to connect with other people, how can that desire be a sign of weakness? How could anybody, whether they are coming out prison or not, survive without some kind of support from other people?

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. Who can you ask for help when you get out?
2. What obstacles do people have to overcome to trust someone?
3. Is every source of help right for you?
4. Which old friends are not a good source of help?

Answer Key

1. Family, friends, faith-based groups, social services, counselors, former inmates.
2. They may have been rejected, abandoned, or manipulated in the past.
3. No; you have to pick the sources of help that fit you and your life.

4. Those who were part of the environment that put you in prison in the first place.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Counting Your Friends

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. Ask students to draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper.
2. On the left side of the line, have them write the names of people who they trust to help them when they get out. Then have them write the names of people who formerly had a bad influence on them on the right.
3. When they have finished, suggest that those who have few people in the left column write in organizations or other people that might help them, such as church groups or counselors.
4. Ask students to share the sources of support they have listed to see if they might make suggestions to each other that could be useful.

Activity #2

Title: Changing Habits

Format: Small group/individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: None

1. Break students up into groups of 2.
2. Ask each group to come up with a list of two things they have become accustomed to in prison that will be different on the outside. For example, they have not had free access to a telephone 24 hours a day or been able to stay out all night.
3. Ask each group to share their two items with the rest.
4. Have each student pick one habit and write a paragraph about how it will feel the first time they are able to change this habit, including both the good feelings and strange feelings it will invoke.

Discussion Questions

1. The narrator of the program says we have to trust other people to survive outside. He also points out that most of us have been disappointed by others. How can you overcome problems in past relationships to trust others when you get out?
2. The program speaks of the value of family in your support group. If you have family members available to you when you are released, how can you fit them into your support group? What kinds of help could you ask them for?
3. A counselor in this program notes that many people fail because they don't follow through the entire help process. How can you focus so that you stick with a group, program, or individual relationship to keep you going? Why would you stop asking for help?

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. People who have been incarcerated for a longer time may find it more difficult to break out of their institutionalized habits.
2. A friend is important to involve in your support network, even if he was involved in your previous negative behavior.
3. Asking for help starts with trust.
4. Faith-based programs must be part of everybody's support network.
5. People in prison become institutionalized in their thinking.

Answer Key

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

Take Away Activity

Do some research or ask your counselor about organizations and people in the community you will return to who might help you when you get out. Then draw a large circle. Put yourself in a small circle at the center. Imagine the network of people and organizations that could surround you when you get out. Write the name of each person or group along a line that forms the spokes of a wheel. Try to draw a dozen

spokes. If there is a gap, ask questions and research until you find another person or organization that you can place there to make the wheel more stable.