

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

PREPARATION FOR RELEASE: PART ONE

VIDEO 1 OF 6

“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”
Benjamin Franklin

Overview

National statistics tell us that two-thirds of those released from prison are arrested again within three years. More than one-half are behind bars again in that same amount of time. This program discusses the importance of making changes in yourself so that you can succeed upon release from prison.

There are four key points in this program. To succeed upon release you need to:

- Accept the idea of change.
- Examine your life.
- Identify what needs to change.
- Ask others for help.

Accepting the idea of change is not easy, but it is essential. Prison won't change you, and other people won't change you. You have to change yourself. Substance abuse is a learned behavior that you have to unlearn. In addition to the problems you brought into prison, whether you realize it or not you probably picked up bad habits from others while in prison. You have to accept the idea that you have to make changes to succeed in the outside world.

You can start by examining your life. You have to identify your problem before you can begin to solve it.

Think about your life:

Who are you?

How were you raised?

What's your relationship to your family?

Who are your friends?

What put you in prison?

What dreams do you have?

What will it take for you to live your dreams?

Think about what needs to be changed. Many people leaving prison have to deal with getting their anger and resentment under control. If you don't get along with everybody, then everybody else is not the problem, you are. Sometimes the behavior that put you in prison isn't the problem; there may be an underlying emotional cause for your behavior. Once you identify the problem, you can acquire skills to deal with it.

Get help from others by using the system to access counselors, attend classes, and acquire skills. Asking for help is not easy, but it may be necessary to your success. You have made mistakes, but you have to accept your losses and forgive yourself. Then get help when you need it while accepting the fact that your future is your responsibility. Prison takes away your responsibility and ability to be self-sufficient. Use other people and organizations to help you gain your ability to stand on your own again.

Presentation Suggestions

Use the board or overhead to list the phrases underlined above. Ask students to consider these concepts and give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to viewing the video. If you wish, allow students to pick a phrase and discuss their initial reactions to it.

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. Why is it important to understand that you can't try to change for someone else?
2. What must you do before you can solve a problem?
3. What are percentage of people released are arrested again within the first three years out of prison?
4. Who is responsible for making changes in your life?

Answer Key

1. If they reject you, you lose control of your change and will fail.
2. Identify it.
3. Two-thirds of those released are arrested again in the first three years.
4. You.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Accepting Responsibility

Format: Small group

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. Organize the class into groups of three.
2. Give each group paper and pens.
3. Repeat the quote at the beginning of this guide: “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”
4. Ask students to each list one thing they have done again and again in their lives that they wish they could stop doing. For example, they might have abused drugs, stolen, lied, not taken proper care of their children, allowed someone in their family to hurt them, taken up smoking, and so on.
5. Collect the responses and list each item on the board. Hold a discussion about whether there is any behavior on the list that is impossible to change, and if so, why?

Activity #2

Title: Asking for Help

Format: Individual

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. For five minutes, have the group discuss an activity they think could be helpful to prepare them for release. Have them pick one activity from their discussion (for example, take a class, go into substance abuse treatment, learn a new skill, etc.).
2. Have everybody write a letter to a person who she can ask for help to get involved in the activity identified. Advise students to put the following in the letter:

Identify what it is they want to accomplish.

Explain why this is something that will help them succeed upon release.

Identify exactly what kind of help they would like from the individual.

Ask for an appointment to discuss their involvement in the activity.

3. Ask for volunteers to read letters out loud.

Discussion Questions

1. One woman in the program says you have to begin to grieve for what you've lost. Why? What will that help you accomplish?
2. The program talks about the fact that you pick up bad habits in prison. What types of habits could cause you problems in the outside world, and why?
3. What is the importance of hope in succeeding in your life? How does it feel to lose hope? What can you do to regain it?

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. Only 25 percent of people who are released from prison ever end up behind bars again.
2. Motivation for change has to come from inside you.
3. There is nothing you can do to prepare for your new life from within prison.
4. Two-thirds of people released from prison get arrested again.
5. Asking others for help can be hard.

Answer Key

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

Take Away Activity

Ask students to consider what conditions or treatment they may have had in their life that caused the behavior that put them behind bars. Were they abused by a parent or boyfriend? Was a friend a bad influence? Once they identify somebody they think helped to cause their problems, have them write a letter to that person, acknowledging that they are now responsible for their own lives and releasing that person from responsibility for their problems.