

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

RELEASE AND BEYOND: LIFESTYLE CHANGES

VIDEO 4 OF 6

“Make a plan and work it.”

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.

When you get out you may feel angry or victimized. Some people will not make things easy for you. One way to cope is to change your attitude. You have to accept the fact that you need to deal with basic life skills such as anger management, stress management, dealing with family issues, communication skills, and social skills. Surround yourself with people who are true friends and who don't participate in the type of behavior that landed you in prison.

Time management is another important skill. In prison you didn't need to make many decisions and had a schedule imposed on you. When you get out your time is your own responsibility. You should avoid having time on your hands. Set goals, and then set a schedule and stick to it. Fill your time up with activities, including activity that is not just focused on you but that helps others.

Learning to deal with your attitude and 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, perhaps helping you to look at your family situation to help you to release your negative feelings. Also, realize that your family may be angry about what you've done and where you've been. Allow them their anger; they've been hurt, too.

If you are in situations where you are asked about your past, such as on job applications, always tell the truth. If you lie and your employer finds out that you did, even if you are doing a good job they may be forced to let you go based on their company policies.

If you have children, remember that they are better off with you than without you. You may have to take responsibility for them when you get out, which makes finding work and housing harder. If you can find people or groups who can support you, you have a greater chance of success.

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 will socialize with. Ask 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 role can time management play in your success?
2. Should you lie about your history or tell the truth on job or other applications?
3. What are some examples of basic life skills?
4. What can tempt you to backslide to old habits?

Answer Key

1. Setting goals and managing your time keeps you from having time on your hands, which could cause you to revert to old behavior.
2. Always tell the truth.

3. Anger management, managing family issues, stress management, communication skills, social skills.
4. Familiar things, places, and people.

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 kids, 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: Anger Management

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 learn anger management.
3. Ask one group to come to the front. Have one person be herself and the other person be a family member. Ask them to spend a couple of minutes role-playing by expressing their anger toward

the other. Allow the student to express anger toward the family member, but also allow the family member to express anger toward the student.

4. Repeat this with other groups. When they have each taken a turn, ask them how it felt to express their anger. What did they realize about their own family's feelings toward them and their feelings towards their family?

Discussion Questions

1. In this program one woman states that there are many more decisions to be made every day on the outside than while you're incarcerated. What decisions do you think you will have difficulty making when you get out? Will simple actions such as unlocking the door, going for a walk, and turning off the light feel awkward, because those actions were controlled by others while you were in prison?
2. Another woman advises that you find activities where you can give back to others when you get out. Why do you think that's important?
3. Why do you think the statement "your children are better off with you than without you" is true or not? Is there ever a time when children are better off without a parent?

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 ask if you have been convicted of a felony.
2. If you don't like your job, quit and then look for a better one.
3. Sometimes it's okay to lie on a job application.
4. Women are often the support system for the family.
5. Nobody will label or treat you differently when you are released.

Answer Key

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

Take Away Activity

Imagine you are filling out a job application. You have answered the question about being convicted of a felony truthfully. Now you come to the end of the application where there is a space for additional comments. Write a paragraph that you might include there that explains your past in a way that might help the interviewer to understand how you have committed to changing your future. Share the paragraph in the next class.