

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

RELEASE AND BEYOND: RELAPSE TRIGGERS

VIDEO 5 OF 6

“Falling back into old habits presents one of the biggest obstacles to success on the outside.”

Overview

This program is about the most common trigger points that may lead you into old bad habits once you are released. It provides practical ideas on how to cope with familiar situations that may cause you to fall back into criminal or abusive behaviors.

Every year the prison system releases more than 600,000 inmates back into society. Ninety percent of people released from prison return to same neighborhood or situation they left, and in many cases that environment is worse than it was when they left. If you want to succeed you have to deal with the things that put you inside.

Surveys in U.S. state and federal prisons indicate that 51 percent of all inmates were under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they committed the crime that sent them to prison. Only about one-third of these people report getting any kind of treatment during their sentences.

Addictions don't necessarily happen to only one kind of person. People may exhibit the same behavior over and over again and not know why. Some common triggers include:

- Stress from relationships or the inability to get employment.
- Being with the wrong people.
- Success that provides money to buy drugs or lulls you into thinking you are “cured” and can indulge in the addictive behavior but not be ensnared by it.

You need to not only say no to negative behavior, but also have something to say yes to. Solutions include:

- Counseling and therapy.
- Reassessing the types of people that you're spending time with.
- Building up your self-esteem.

Remember that in most cases when somebody finally admits that she is tempted to give into a craving, she has already been struggling with it. The only help may be an in-patient treatment situation. Even success can be a trigger because you feel a false sense of being in control of the addiction. Don't wait to seek help.

When somebody has committed a criminal action and is incarcerated, she should be provided with mental health evaluation and counseling. We should remove the stigma that says that seeking counseling means that you're crazy. It is often the case that something that happened a long time ago is the root of a current problem. If you don't deal with the root problem, the bad behavior will be triggered again and again.

Remember:

- Triggers can be physical: Drugs, alcohol, sex.
- Triggers can be environmental: people, places, activities.
- Triggers can be mind-driven: criminal thinking, mental health, success.
- The key to overcoming any trigger is to be self-aware and ask for help when you need it.

Presentation Suggestions

Use the board or overhead to write this sentence: *What is an addiction?* Ask students what things people can be addicted to. The list may include drugs, alcohol, a particular relationship, having money, or sex. Ask them to discuss what it feels like to have a craving for anything. How does it make them feel to want something so badly that they have to have it?

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 should you do if you experience a craving?
2. What triggers may set off a relapse into bad old behavior?
3. Is there a particular type of person who is more susceptible to a relapse in behavior?
4. What can you do if you experience the urge to fall back into bad behavior?

Answer Key

1. Don't wait to seek counseling or support.
2. Stress, the wrong people, familiar places and things, success.
3. No, anybody and experience a relapse.
4. Seek counseling, reassess the types of people you hang out with, find a way to build up your own self-esteem.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Identifying Triggers

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. Ask students to draw a simple diagram of the neighborhood or town they will be returning to upon release, including familiar locations such as family home, neighborhood restaurants, bars, pool halls, schools, and so on. If the person has no place to return to, ask her to draw the locations in a typical town or city that she associates with her former life.
2. Ask each student to mark locations on the map that could provide triggers for relapse; for example their parent's home if they have emotional issues or a local bar where they used to drink or get high with friends.
3. Have each person choose one location that she has marked and write a paragraph about why the associations with that place or those people are difficult.
4. Note that everybody in the class has associations that they feel would be triggers. Ask them to draw in one more location on the map: a friend's house or a community or faith-based organization that will provide support.

Activity #2

Title: Saying Yes

Format: Entire group

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: None

1. Write this statement on the board: *Beyond saying no, find ways to say yes.*

2. Explain this statement by saying that a person in this program says that it's important to say no to bad behaviors, but it's very helpful to have something to say yes to as well.
3. Ask students to discuss what types of things they can say yes to when they are released. Some ideas might include finding and succeeding in a job; developing positive relationships; exploring faith-related activities, helping her kids, and so on.
4. Have students pick one positive thing they want to put their energies toward upon release and ask them to share it with the group.

Discussion Questions

1. In this program one person talks about building your self-esteem. How do you feel about yourself now? What would you have to do to feel proud of yourself? Stay out of prison, be a good parent, stay clean?
2. Alcohol and drugs are not the only types of addictions. People are addicted to spending money, sex, and power. Discuss what kinds of addictions you think exist out there and what addictions have in common.
3. You may not be able to avoid your family. Do you know who in your family pushes you toward your bad behavior and who doesn't? How can you avoid somebody in your family who is not good for you to be around? What will that do to your family unit? Is your success outside worth the impact avoiding somebody might have on your family?

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. When you begin to use hard drugs, your social set changes.
2. Most people who come into prison with an addiction problem get treatment.
3. People who repeat bad behavior are always aware of their motivations.
4. 51 percent of inmates were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they committed the crime that sent them to prison.
5. Falling back into old habits presents one of the biggest obstacles to success outside.

Answer Key

1. T
2. F

3. F

4. T

5. T

Take Away Activity

Imagine you are feeling a craving for something that contributed to your being put in prison in the first place, whether that is drugs, sex, a relationship, money, or whatever. Make a list of the things you would do and the people you might contact for help. If you can't think of any group or person who can help, research possible sources of help and keep that list with you as you leave prison.