

Road to Reentry Video Series  
*Succeeding on the Job*  
Instructor's Guide

## Overview

Formerly-incarcerated individuals can relapse into the negative behaviors and choices that landed them in prison in the first place. In order to maintain a successful reentry, individuals need to constantly reevaluate their current goals and continue to set new goals. They must stay employed and advance in the workplace with the hopes of building a rewarding career and becoming a productive member of their community. They also should continue to seek the support of friends, family members, peers, and mentors.

This video outlines specific strategies the formerly incarcerated can use to succeed in the workplace, build a good reputation as an employee, and advance their personal, educational, and career-related goals. The video identifies the soft skills and behaviors that employers value most and identifies the need for lifelong learning and a positive attitude.

Be aware that this video addresses more long-term concerns that can seem unrealistic upon first release. Be prepared to address how looking towards the future can be a powerful incentive when overcoming current barriers.

## Presentation Suggestions

One question employers often ask in an interview is “Where do you see yourself five or ten years from now?” This is a valuable question for participants to ask themselves. The individuals who end up back behind bars are likely the ones who lacked a clear path to success and the support network and mental focus to make it happen. Begin by asking participants to imagine themselves five years down the road. Where will they be working? Living? What will they have already accomplished? What will they still be working toward? What part of the next five years are they most looking forward to?

When you feel participants have a sense of the possibilities in their futures and the hard work required to get there, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the participants to state their answers and discuss them as a group.

Show the video. Encourage participants to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video. If you wish, allow time for participants to do update their answers after each section.

At the conclusion of the video, ask participants to discuss any changes they made to the answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information in the video. Follow up the

discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from participants, or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group.

Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

## Anticipation Quiz

**Directions:** Answer the following questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. What are soft skills?
2. Why is it important to follow company dress code?
3. What are some examples of “people skills”?
4. Why is it important to keep your first job out of prison for a substantial length of time?

## Answer Key

1. Soft skills are transferable skills and worker traits that are valued in almost any position, such as reliability, punctuality, communication skills, and attention to detail.
2. Following company dress code is important, because your personal appearance reflects positively or negatively on the company for which you work. There might be safety considerations as well. Not following dress code can get you fired.
3. (Answers may vary.) “People skills” include being patient, listening to others, respecting others, working with people from different cultures and backgrounds, and managing conflict.
4. Holding a job for a significant time period will help you build a reputation as a reliable and committed worker, which will then help you to get a better job down the road.

## Activities

### Activity #1

Title: The Top Ten Traits

Format: Individual/Whole Group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. Every employer is different and will have slightly different expectations of their employees. However there are several soft skills and personality traits that most employers agree are *essential* for their workers to be successful. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) does an annual survey of employers and the skills they value most. (You can find the 2016 results in the following location: <http://reentry.emcp.net/attributes>.) It is important for participants to understand these expectations if they are going to be successful on the job.
2. To begin, ask participants to imagine that they are the owners of a small company (they can pick the industry) looking to hire for some new positions. Ask them to make a list of the top ten qualities they would look for in a new employee when making the hiring decision. Emphasize that these are not technical skills, but transferable skills and personality traits that they should be listing.
3. When participants have finished with their lists, come back together as a whole group and do your own survey. What was the most desirable trait, according to the group? What were the other top skills and attributes? Are there any that would be useful in some jobs but not others? When you have a consensus of the most valuable worker traits, compare it to the list generated by the NACE. How does the group's list compare to the one listed online? Which attributes seem to be the most important regardless of who is generating the list? And what can participants do to improve these valuable soft skills in their own careers?

## Activity #2

Title: Making a Personal Investment

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. The video discusses the need to invest in your own future and to consider how you can make advances, not just at work, but in all aspects of your life.

For this exercise, have participants divide a sheet of paper into four columns labeled **My Job, My Education, My Personal Health, and My Relationships**. Discuss how making an investment means putting something of value *in* (such as time, money, or effort) with the hope of getting something of even greater value *out* (a better job, a

healthier marriage, a college degree). For each category, participants should make a list of what they are willing to contribute to better themselves in that area and what they hope to achieve as a result. For example, in the category **My Education** they could write, *attend night classes in order to earn my GED*. Or in **My Relationships** they might write, *attend family counseling programs to strengthen my relationship with my spouse and children*.

2. When participants are finished, encourage them to pick one of the four categories and share what they hope to accomplish.

## Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between “keeping a job” and “getting ahead”? Is it enough to simply do the work that is required of you? How do you make yourself stand out in a positive way so that you move up? What are some strategies for building a positive reputation as a valuable employee?
2. Rehabilitation doesn’t stop the moment you are released. For many it is a daily struggle to go to work, stay clean, and avoid the behaviors that got them into trouble in the first place. What can you do to ensure that you stay out of prison? What steps can you take, each and every day, to keep moving forward? How do you maintain a positive outlook in the face of daily struggles?

## Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for participants to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise. If you read the quiz, write or project responses for the group to see.

**Directions:** Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. Employers tend to value reliability and trustworthiness above all other skills.
2. A mentor can be any supervisor, peer, or community member who helps you to advance in your career and assists in your transition.
3. Handling personal business while on the clock at work is a form of theft.
4. Employers never pay for additional training and education for their employees.
5. You should always get involved in workplace politics if you want to be successful on the job.
6. It is okay to look for a new job while you are at work in your current job.
7. You can’t get fired for taking office supplies from work.

8. More education generally leads to better job opportunities and higher income.
9. Volunteering to help fellow employees with their work can help you succeed as well.
10. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the five skills employers look for most.

### *Answer Key*

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|----------|----------|
| 1. True  | 6. False |
| 2. True  | 7. False |
| 3. True  | 8. True  |
| 4. False | 9. True  |
| 5. False | 10. True |

## **Homework Option**

Continuing education is crucial for individuals who want to advance in their careers, no matter what their background. It's especially important for the formerly incarcerated, who may not be aware of all of the technological advances and changes in the field they are interested in.

With that in mind, formerly incarcerated individuals should always be on the lookout for opportunities to learn new skills and further their education. As a homework assignment, have participants research continuing education options that appeal to them and that would benefit their career goals. This could include taking classes online, attending workshops or webinars, or even enrolling in a program at a local community college. Have each participant pick one educational opportunity that interests them and be prepared to share it with the group, discussing the cost and time commitment as well as the kinds of opportunities he or she hopes it will create.