

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE
FOR
COUNTDOWN TO FREEDOM FOR MEN 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 after you are released from prison you have the best chance of beating the odds and staying out.

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

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

Accepting the idea of change is not easy, but it is essential. If you continue to do what you did before, if you continue to be angry and hate other people, if you don't change your life, you will continue to repeat past mistakes. But if you find motivation within yourself to change, no matter what is going on around you, you can succeed.

You can start by examining your life. Understand your hurt, pain, and anger. Some of this anger may come from issues within your family. But blaming your past doesn't work, because once you are an adult you are expected to be responsible for your own actions.

You have made some choices in your own life and suffered the consequences. Take a look at yourself and ask yourself whether you like what you see. 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 you need to change. Many people coming out of prison have to deal with getting their anger under control. Anger and hatred aren't productive and only hurt you. Find ways to build up your skills so that you can meet the challenges of finding a job and functioning on your own. Take courses, read, and do jobs in prison that may help you get work when you're released. Keep yourself healthy and find ways to nurture your spirit. Decide what you want to achieve and then work toward that goal every day.

Get help from others by using the system to access counselors, hanging out with people who are succeeding and not struggling with the system, and developing a plan to obtain the support you need. Asking for help is not easy, but it may be necessary to your success.

Presentation Suggestions

Use the board or overhead to list the phrases underlined above. Ask students to consider these concepts. If you wish, allow students to pick a phrase and discuss their initial reactions to 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. If the environment in your institution is not always positive, can you still set goals for yourself and achieve them?
2. Where can you get the motivation to change yourself?
3. What percentage of people released are arrested again within the first three years out of prison?

4. Is your family responsible for any mistakes you've made?

Answer Key

1. Yes
2. From within yourself.
3. Two-thirds of those released are arrested again in the first three years.
4. Though your family's influence may have contributed to your actions, society views adults as responsible for their own actions.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Accepting Change

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, picked the wrong friends, 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 anything on the list that is impossible to change, and if so, why?

Activity #2

Title: Asking for Help

Format: Group/Individual

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Paper and pens

1. For five minutes, have the group suggest people or organizations they think could be helpful to prepare them for release. Have the group pick one person from their discussion (for example, family member, minister, social worker, counselor, past employer, etc.).
2. Have everybody write a letter to the person who was identified, asking for help. Advise them to put the following information in the letter:
 - Identify what it is they want help with.
 - Explain why this is something they cannot do without help.
 - Explain exactly what kind of help they would like from the individual.
 - Describe what goal this help will enable them to reach.
3. Ask for volunteers to read letters out loud.

Discussion Questions

1. Can anger be productive? In what situations and in what ways? In what ways can anger get in the way of your success?
2. The program talks about the importance of interacting with successful people. What types of people would it be best to be around when you get out?
3. If you feel you were unfairly imprisoned, are the messages in this program any less valid? Why or why not?

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. You can't begin to acquire the skills you need to succeed 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 write a description of their ideal life after prison. Have each identify where and with whom he would like to be living, what job he would like to have, what his favorite activities would be in that new life, and what types of friends he would like to have. Suggest that they keep that description with them and begin to identify the specific actions they can take right now that will help them to build such a life.