

Table of Contents

1 - Getting Out, Staying Out, Starting Over

Page 1

Most everyone getting out of prison thinks they're not going back; fewer than half of them are right. Ex-offenders' odds are better if they stay clean and sober, develop a healthy self-esteem, and follow through on the goals they set for themselves. By directly addressing those issues, this unit shows readers where to start in order to make that hope a reality.

2 - Rebuilding Your Relationships: Renewing the Good Ones, Letting Go the Bad Ones *Page 10*

Someone newly-released from prison reenters a world where his past relationships may be broken, useless, dangerous, or all three. This unit helps the reader sort out his relationships; offers guidance on how to rebuild the ones worth saving; and gives tips on finding and developing new and wholesome relationships.

3 - Out On Your Own: Tools for Rebuilding Your Life

Page 20

This unit gives step-by-step instructions on the basics of setting up a life on the outside: identity papers, managing money, finding a home, and using reliable transportation. It helps readers confront these challenges head-on.

4 - Getting Back to Work: When You Have a Record

Page 30

It's stating the obvious that people with a record have a hard time finding work. But there are things ex-offenders can do to improve their prospects. This unit focuses their attention so they get started on things that really matter, such as sobriety, honesty, making a plan, job leads, identification papers, and referral letters.

5 - Finding a Job: When You Have a Record

Page 40

For the formerly incarcerated, there's no more important task than finding a job. It's crucial to write effective cover letters and resumes and practice for tough questions that will come during interviews. But where to send those letters/resumes? How to get those interviews? This unit shows your clients where and how to look for jobs as it talks about the three keys to their job search: attitude, action, and assistance.

2

Rebuilding Your Relationships

A new start

Your time of incarceration is ending, and the time of new chances is beginning. You must be pretty happy about that, and so are the people who've been waiting for you to get out.

In many ways, those people are your new chances. All of you have been through a lot because of this experience. You are all a bit different now, and that also means your relationships will be a bit different, too.

This booklet can help you “catch up” as you return to your old life and begin your new one. Just as things have happened to you since you left, things have happened to those who have been waiting for you. After a long time apart, people often expect everything to go back to “the way it was before.” But that's not likely to happen! Two things for you to think about:

- Your loved ones have been living, too. Your loved ones have had time to develop new interests, new activities, and new skills. Many people arrive home and feel left out or forgotten. Thinking about what it's been like for them now will make the going easier for you, all of you.
- The daily give-and-take of a close relationship has to be learned all over again. Just as you needed to adapt to survive while you were “inside,” the ones closest to you had to adapt so they could go on living on the “outside.”

You may not understand — or like — everything you see. But before you react to the changes, try to find out what's behind them.



What's new with you?

In every relationship, there are two people: you and the other person. This means that every relationship you have begins with you. You are someone's grown child, someone's friend, maybe someone's lover, brother or sister, or parent.

Now you are going to pick up with those people, but not exactly where you left off — because let's

face it, the troubles you had before probably were not very good for your relationships.

How have you changed?

As time passes, everyone changes. When that time is being spent in jail, you change even more. Now you are bringing those changes home with you, and it's a good idea to understand them. Think about it:



- ❖ How did your habits change while you were away?
- ❖ How have your beliefs changed?
- ❖ What was most important to you before? What's most important to you now?
- ❖ Has your attitude toward people changed? How?
- ❖ How have your expectations of yourself changed?
- ❖ Do you have different expectations of the people in your life? What are they?

What ways have you changed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



The more you understand about your own changes, the better you can develop happy and healthy relationships. The more you understand about your own changes, the better you can develop happy and healthy relationships.

When addiction is part of the picture

If you were addicted to something when you were arrested, you can bet that your addiction had a big effect on your relationships — and if you are still addicted, the same thing is all but certain to happen again. Even if they only caused problems “every once in a while — it was no big deal,” or even if you don't think you were addicted but you used alcohol or other drugs on a regular basis, your relationships suffered. They always do.

So, what now? Picking up your habit again will put you back behind bars; and it will keep the people in your life from trusting you. People who use the same stuff you do will just see you as a drinking (or drugging) buddy; the ones who are not using anything will turn away because they don't want to be hurt again.

If you find that you miss your habit and you want to go and find something to fill that need, then you need a program. Get started now . . . it's the way to stay out of prison!

Clean relationships

If you are sober, you can have good relationships with your partner, family, and friends, just like anyone else. When you are a sober person, people can trust you; people can rely on you; people can have fun with you; they can feel close to you. They know that you can really be interested in them, and they know that you will be around when you say you will. The relationship will be a give-and-take, with both sides giving and taking.



“I’ve changed a lot”

Being incarcerated forces you to change in many ways, some good and some bad.

- ❖ You had to learn to do without any privacy, and you got out of the habit of giving privacy to others.
- ❖ You had to be on your guard all the time, to protect yourself and your things.
- ❖ Life was tough, so you had to be tough too.
- ❖ Other people may have protected you and you may have given them protection in return, even if you didn’t want to.
- ❖ You may have had a very close friend or two.
- ❖ You may have learned to like reading and learning.
- ❖ You may have developed strong spiritual beliefs.
- ❖ You had your whole day arranged for you; all your daily decisions were made for you.
- ❖ You had a lot of time on your hands, without much to do. Too much time, in fact.

Living like this would cause anyone to change! Now it’s time to think about which changes you want to keep, and which ones you need to leave behind. Let’s look at how it’s done.

Going home

Most people feel that going home — to your hometown, to your old neighborhood, to your home — is pretty wonderful. And it’s true, there are some great things about being home.

There are some reasons to be careful, too. If “home” was where you learned the habits that sent you to prison, then you need to really watch your back or you will be sucked in ... and sent to prison again.

People at home

Your old neighborhood may be full of people you’ve known since you were a kid, and that can feel good. Some friends are just that, but others you need to watch out for:

- People in the neighborhood who are still doing what got you in trouble. They’re not interested in anything but themselves and their needs. If you go in with them, you already know where you’re going to end up.
- Family members who are addicted or commit crimes. You can be friendly and caring but keep your distance; your sobriety is at risk, and so is your freedom!
- People you knew while you were incarcerated. You want a different, better life but not everyone sees a problem with your old life. Just like in prison, some people want to use you to get what they want; they don’t care about you at all.

