

# Instructor's Guide

for

## LIVING FREE

### Overview

The video presents four ex-offenders who have been out anywhere from a few months to a few years. Each has found employment and built a new life, and each has advice on the post-incarceration experience.

Dean notes that people should take it slow and have a positive, confident attitude. They should use their strengths to succeed. Dean notes, "Go inside yourself, find what you're comfortable with, work it, and adapt it."

Donna expresses the importance of building your self-esteem and being happy inside yourself before you can make others happy. She states that focusing on the future is important and that you can't look back or give up. Her advice is to avoid people, places, and things that are negative or caused you to go to prison in the first place.

Brian encourages viewers to start learning things from the bottom up, if necessary. He notes that they shouldn't be afraid to ask for help and that they may need to be humble and try new ideas. His advice is to accept that life has moved on and look forward. He suggests that success outside is based on what you do while locked up: Work, study, and have a plan.

Charles also encourages making the most of the time while incarcerated. Once released, he advises viewers to focus on being normal. He feels that reconnecting with family life and children is important. He recommends that people make a list of things they want to do when they get out, set goals, and stick with them.

Segments between the interviews discuss recidivism and how education before release, financial status, and employment influence how well people avoid returning to prison.

The final segment is a discussion among people who have taken advantage of the support group EXOFACS in Columbus, Ohio. They talk about how a support group can help you with tasks such as finding a place to live, employment, and ways of dealing with everyday tasks you may have lost touch with.

### Presentation Suggestions

Write this phrase on the board: "You can get out, but can you stay out?"

Point out that staying out of prison can be a job in itself. The world will have changed while they were away and they will have to work hard to succeed. Ask the students to talk about ways in which they had to struggle to succeed as they were growing up and in making a living before incarceration. Note that many of these challenges will be the same, only more so, as an ex-offender.

Ask them to list and discuss the challenges they face as ex-offenders that they didn't face in their previous lives.

When you feel students have begun to understand that they must prepare for the challenges of their post-release lives, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the students to read their answers and discuss them.

Show the video. Encourage students to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video. If you wish, allow students to do this section by section by pausing the video.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss any changes they made to the answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of what they learned in the video. Follow up the discussion with the **Activities**.

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

Assign the **Wind Down** activity, if desired.

## Anticipation Quiz

**Directions:** Ask students to write down answers to these questions and compare them to advice in the video.

1. What role does pre-release education play in outside success?
2. Do you think you are more or less likely to return to prison if you have a job and money?
3. In what ways do you think others can help you to succeed once you leave?
4. What people do you think you should associate with when you are released?

## Activities

### Activity #1

**Title:** What Influences Recidivism?

**Format:** Small groups (4-7 people)

**Time:** 25 minutes plus discussion

**Materials:** Paper and pencils, board or flip chart

**Procedure:**

Break the students up into three groups. Assign one of these topics to each group:

- Employment
- Education
- Financial status

Ask each group to discuss, based on information provided in the video and their own ideas, what they can do in each of these areas to avoid going back to prison. Have them make a list of resources that can help them with these areas both before and after release.

After each group is done, have them list their answers on the board or a flip chart to share with others in the class.

Note that the key points regarding these three areas in the video were

- Education: Three-year study of recidivism notes that among men, 22 percent who attend classes in prison return after three years; 31 percent who don't attend classes return. Among women, 8 percent who attend classes return versus 30 percent.
- Employment: An unemployed ex-offender is three times more likely to return to prison. Job retention can lower the rate of recidivism for sex offenders. Crimes with economic motives tend to increase during levels of high unemployment.
- Financial status: Crime occurs when there is financial despair. Most frequent recidivists commit crimes with economic motives.

**Activity #2**

**Title:** Answering Difficult Questions

**Format:** Three-person groups

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Materials:** Paper and pencil

**Procedure:**

One of the difficult things about getting a job is to deal with challenging questions from potential employers. Advise students that keeping a positive, confident attitude and answering in a calm, non-aggressive way can help them successfully deal with these questions.

Have the students break up into groups of three. Ask that two students role play an ex-offender and a prospective employer. Have the employer ask these questions, and have the third student note the ex-offender's responses.

- Were you ever arrested for a felony?
- How do I know I can trust you?
- What can you do to convince me you won't go back again?
- What strengths can you bring to a job? (Have students focus on skills learned while incarcerated in answering this question)

When the groups are done, have the person taking notes in each group describe the answers. When every group's answers have been read, ask the students to discuss which approaches to answering the questions seemed most successful.

### Quick Quiz: What It Takes to Succeed

Mark each answer as True or False. Note the correct answers with the explanations that follow after students have finished.

To succeed outside:

1. Wait until you get out to get education about how to succeed.
2. Be humble and try new ideas.
3. Set goals.
4. Avoid contact with family and friends.
5. Don't reconnect with negative people, places, and things.
6. Surround yourself with positive people.
7. Use skills you acquired while you were incarcerated.
8. Don't ask for help—just do it all on your own.
9. Take things slow and be patient.
10. Spend your time figuring out what went wrong in the past and don't think about the future.
11. Expect to work hard.

### Answer Key

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. False. Doing everything you can to prepare for the outside while incarcerated helps your chances of success.</li><li>2. True. You may have to start from scratch, but don't be too proud to do so and try new things.</li></ol> |
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3. True. Setting goals is the first step in attaining them.
4. False. If they are positive and supportive, family and friends can help you succeed.
5. True. Avoiding negative influences helps you avoid past mistakes.
6. True. Positive people help your attitude and can provide opportunities for networking.
7. True. Consider the things you do to survive every day and how those translate into life skills.
8. False. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
9. True. You can't expect everything to come right away; take your time and don't push yourself too hard.
10. False. Focus on the future; you can't get the time you spent inside back.
11. True. Success takes hard work and perseverance. Stick with it!

## Wind Down

Ask students to consider any similarities they have with the people who spoke in the video and ask each which person he or she identified with most and why.

Have each note down the most valuable piece(s) of advice he or she heard in the video or in class on an index card and keep it with them as they prepare for release.