

## Instructor Resources

# The Road to Reentry Companion Guide

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# Overview

Each year, more than 650,000 people are released from U.S. state and federal prisons and tasked with making a successful reentry. For many formerly incarcerated individuals, life after release can be at least as challenging as being incarcerated. They must deal with stressors and struggles that make reentry a difficult process and learn to meet many basic needs that may have been met for them while they were incarcerated. They will have to reconnect with family and friends, find housing and employment, and seek out medical care. Some will have mental health or substance use disorders to take care of. All formerly incarcerated people will need to build and rely on support systems to help them build a better future after release.

***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*** is designed to help formerly incarcerated individuals navigate the complex reentry process. ***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*** provides information, resources, worksheets, and activities to help users make a successful transition from incarceration to their community. It helps them develop a plan for the future and develop the skills to use a range of tools and techniques to decrease their risk of reincarceration and increase their chances of success.

This guide is ideal for use alongside the corresponding ***Road to Reentry Video Series***. While ***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*** is its own valuable resource for reentry, it is designed to enhance and expand on the video series. For ease of use, the five sections in the booklet follow the five videos in that series.

# Using *The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*

***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*** has five sections:

1. Reconnecting with Family and Community
2. Meeting Basic Needs
3. Making Healthy Choices
4. Finding Employment
5. Succeeding on the Job

There are some aspects of ***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*** that are common across all sections:

## Discussion Questions

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***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*** provides self-exploration activities that can be used to enhance self-reflection, develop critical thinking skills, and promote self-understanding. The discussion questions ask readers to reflect on a question or statement and journal their responses. They are designed to accommodate all learning styles, and to promote introspection, pro-social behaviors, life skills, and coping skills. The discussion questions aim to help readers make discoveries that will lead to increased social and emotional competencies, as well as to serve as an energizing way to help readers grow personally and professionally. These brief, easy-to-use self-reflection tools can be completed individually to foster self-knowledge, and can be shared with others in a group setting.

## Activities and Worksheets

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There are a total of 10 activities and 17 worksheets contained in the Companion Guide. The activities and worksheets are quick, easy, and rewarding. They are designed to be an efficient, appealing method for motivating readers to absorb new information and explore their needs, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It is suggested that readers complete all activities and worksheets.

## Tips

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Tips are included to provide readers with additional information or lead them to resources they may find valuable.

## Additional Videos

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***The Road to Reentry Video Series*** is a five-part program that guide individuals through the essential steps to overcome challenges and pursue long-term success and fulfillment after incarceration. Viewers gain valuable tips and insight from experienced professionals working in reentry programs and formerly incarcerated individuals who describe their experiences in candid, honest interviews that will resonate with viewers. These videos come with their own administrator’s guide full of tips, quiz questions, and discussion topics. We recommend incorporating the corresponding video section while using ***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide***. Contact your Paradigm representative or visit [ParadigmEducation.com](http://ParadigmEducation.com) to learn more.

# Components of the Instructor Resources

Each section of the instructor resources will provide an introduction to the topic covered in the corresponding section of *The Road to Reentry Companion Guide*, learning objectives for readers, descriptions of how to conduct the activities that appear in each section, additional classroom activities, and journaling questions that you can use in class or have readers use as prompts for individual writing.

## Activities

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For ease of administration, the instructions for using the 10 activities in *The Road to Reentry Companion Guide* are provided in the instructor resources. The activities can be completed individually, but are best completed in small groups. Classroom suggestions for using the activities in a group setting are included in this resource. Suggestions for additional classroom activities have also been provided for each section. These small group activities will provide another opportunity for self-assessment and reinforce positive behaviors and attitudes.

## Journaling Questions

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Journaling questions are intended to build on the information and discussion questions in *The Road to Reentry Companion Guide* in order to help users synthesize the information in each section and apply it to their own individual situations. Assure users that they can be honest and open in their responses, and that they do not need to share their journals.

When using the materials include in the instructor resources, keep in mind that the self-exploration activities:

- should help readers to focus their attention quickly, aid them in the self-reflection process, and guide them in learning new and more effective ways of reintegrating into their communities
- are designed to be an energizing way for readers to engage in self-reflection about their incarceration, think ahead to their reintegration into their communities, and learn more about themselves
- are less threatening than formal assessments and structured exercises
- can be used with many different populations and can be tailored to meet the needs of the individuals with whom you work

These activities and journaling questions are not a substitute for professional assistance. If you feel any of your participants need more assistance than you can provide, refer them to an appropriate professional.

Please remember that all of the activities are flexible and can be used independently or to supplement other types of activities you believe will help your students be successful in reconnecting with family and the community, meeting their basic needs, making healthy choices, finding a job that fits them, and succeeding in that job.

## Working in a Group?

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Although talking about personal problems and concerns in front of other people can be daunting, working in groups can be an incredibly valuable experience. A group of people processing similar experiences can make for a strong support system. It is also often helpful to hear how other people have responded in comparable situations. Talking in a group can also lessen feelings of isolation and help keep challenges in perspective.

A facilitator's role is to help guide healthy group conversations.

You can do this by:

- helping to create a safe, inclusive environment in which people feel comfortable talking
- keeping the communication positive so that you can be sure the conversation is constructive and helpful to everyone involved
- keeping in mind that it may be difficult for people to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- having a plan of what you would like the outcome of the conversation to be
- acknowledging opinions and feelings
- acknowledging when someone has an emotional stake in an issue

# Reconnecting with Family and Community

Approximately 1,700 people are released from U.S. state and federal prisons each day. One of the best ways to avoid reincarceration is to secure the emotional support of family members, positive friends, and people in the community. Formerly incarcerated individuals need to find ways to reconnect with people who can help them after being released. They will need to communicate well, make amends, and rebuild trust with important people in their lives. Follow the learning objectives below to make sure that your readers are getting the most from the section.

## Learning Objectives

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- Help participants identify their needs when they are released.
- Help participants meet the need to reconnect with the people they care about, who supported them in their absence, and whose lives their actions have affected.
- Help participants learn to regain the trust of their families and be caring partners and parents, great employees, vital members of their household, and leaders in their community.
- Help participants understand the difficulties that family and friends faced while they were gone.
- Help participants develop and rely on their support networks to pave the way for a better future.
- Help participants learn effective ways of communicating, listening, managing emotions, and dealing with stress.

## Activities

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### Activity 1: Release Goals

Format: Individual to Large Group

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. Participants need to have both short- and long-term goals upon release, and to maintain a habit of setting and meeting those goals. Some goals are immediate (finding a place to live); some are lifelong (staying clean and sober). Some goals may come in stages. For example, starting a career may require a person to take a job they aren't as interested in to afford additional schooling. It is important for participants to write these goals down and to keep them handy as a reminder of what they hope to accomplish. For this exercise, have each person come up with three short-term and three long-term goals and list them, along with the steps they will need to take to reach those goals. The short-term goals can lead to the long-term goals.

2. Come back together as a whole class and discuss these lists. What goals might participants have in common? Are there steps to meeting those goals some participants hadn't thought of? Encourage users to amend their goals and to add to their steps. You can also have participants share the difficulties or barriers they expect to face or have faced in trying to meet goals. Emphasize the importance of persistence and of relying on outside support for resources and encouragement.

## Activity 2: Give and Take

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

3. Ask participants to turn to Activity 2 in the Companion Guide. One section of the worksheet will be labeled "Responsibilities" and the other section "Requests."
4. Have participants think of a member of their support network. Ideally this would be a family member (a spouse or a parent, for example), but it could also be a friend, or someone in the wider community. In the "Responsibilities" section, have participants make a list of everything they should do for that individual—the responsibilities they have towards that person. For example, if it is a family member they could write "Help with the bills" or "Be open and honest." In the "Requests" section, have participants make a list of everything they would like to request from that individual. For example, they could write, "short-term financial support" or "forgiveness." There will likely be some overlap between the two sections.
5. Encourage participants to share this list with the person they identified on the page, discussing both the support that they would like to see that person provide as well as the effort that they, the participant, will make to earn it.

## Class Activities

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### Class Activity: Set and Achieve Goals

An important aspect of reentry is goal setting. When formerly incarcerated individuals are setting goals, they often set goals that are unrealistic and unachievable. Being unable to attain their goals may lead to frustration and the temptation to return to criminal behavior.

Goal setting is vital to staying inspired. Help participants work through the process below to learn how to set goals in their lives. Their goals should be **SMART**:

**S** (Specific) – Is the goal clearly defined?

**M** (Measured) – How will you know when you have achieved the goal?

**A** (Attainable) – Can you achieve the goal?

**R** (Realistic) – Is the goal realistic for you to achieve?

**T** (Time-Oriented) – When is the deadline for reaching the goal?

For this activity:

1. Ask participants to describe one long-term goal. Ask them to make it a SMART goal using the criteria above.
2. Ask participants to break this long-term goal into sub-goals that will allow them to remain motivated toward the long-term goal.
3. Ask participants to define several activities that will move them closer to their goal.
4. Ask participants to discuss any hurdles they will face.
5. Ask participants to share their goal with others.

### **Class Activity: Sending Messages to Each Other**

Remind participants that there are many ways they can make sure that their messages will be understood by others and that sending good messages is a skill that can be learned.

1. Write the bold statements below on the board, and discuss what each means as a group. Some discussion points are included after each statement.

**Think before you speak.** You should try to organize your thoughts in advance. While you cannot always do this in advance, you should still take a minute to arrange your thoughts in your mind before you speak.

**Be clear and brief.** The most effective way to get your point across is to make it clear and brief. Before speaking, ask yourself, “What is the clearest way I can make my point?”

**Speak with poise.** Speaking with poise helps you build trust with others. Display poise through your choice of words, the tone of your voice, and body language.

**Pay attention.** Look at others directly and maintain eye contact.

2. Ask participants to pair up with another person in the group and practice using the four points above to communicate with each other.
3. Return to the bigger group and ask participants how it felt to communicate using those instructions. Allow readers to share their experiences.

### **Class Activity: Let Your Body Talk**

Tell participants that more communication can be done through body language than through what is said.

1. Ask them to provide examples of how their body language, or the body language of others, conveyed a message while they were incarcerated. Allow them time to explore the various stories their classmates tell.
2. Brainstorm examples of positive body language and negative body language.

A few examples are below.

#### **Distance**

Positive: Find proper spacing when talking to others. The better you know someone, the closer you can stand when talking.

Negative: Avoid being too close or too far away. Be aware not to make unwanted physical contact and be mindful of when it is okay to hug, kiss, and touch other people.

Ask participants to demonstrate how they would stand when talking with a family member or close friend. Then, ask them to demonstrate how they would stand when talking with their parole officer (PO).

### **Posture and Eye Contact**

Positive: Relax your body when listening and speaking to others. Lean your body forward slightly to show interest. Be aware of your gestures and maintain natural eye contact.

Negative: Avoid staring or glaring as well as looking away or off into space. Do not close your eyes, yawn, or look at your watch. Crossing your arms over your chest is a closed stance that says you are not open to what others are saying.

Break participants into pairs. Ask them to practice using positive body language techniques described above, then share with the group about their experience.

## **Journaling Questions**

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The following questions are provided for you to use as group discussion questions or prompts for individual journaling. Keep in mind that many of these questions are personal in nature, and that participants may be reluctant to discuss these issues with others. You can also ask users to answer these questions as part of a journal.

1. If you will return home once you are released, what are the most important things you need to do to reconnect with your family?
2. How can you ensure that you achieve your release goals?
3. Who are the people currently in your support network? Who do you want to add to this support network and why?
4. What emotions do you have the hardest time managing? Why is that and what will you do to manage them better?
5. What are your communication strengths? Weaknesses?

# Meeting Basic Needs

Many people who are released from incarceration will be rearrested within three years. Formerly incarcerated individuals who do succeed in making the transition back to their communities do so by finding ways to meet their basic daily needs and prepare for better future.

## Learning Objectives

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- Help participants develop a housing plan.
- Help participants understand that living with family can be their best option, but sometimes they may be unable to stay with family.
- Help participants understand the differences between short-term and long-term housing options.
- Help participants identify their other basic needs.
- Help participants understand the importance of having adequate transportation and identification.
- Help participants understand the importance of money management.
- Help participants begin to think about their credit and how to develop credit upon release.

## Activities

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### Activity 3: Housing Pros and Cons

Format: Individual to Large Group

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. Have each participant review Activity 3 and Worksheet 3: Basic Needs as they appear in this section of ***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide***. First for housing, and then for the full list of basic needs, they should identify which needs they still need to meet and brainstorm possible solutions/alternatives to meeting those needs.
2. Come back together as a group and discuss each basic need in turn. What solutions did participants come up with? What barriers will they need to overcome in order to meet each need? What specific strategies can participants share for meeting those needs (e.g., inexpensive places to get food or clothing, housing authorities that are willing to rent to individuals with criminal records) Make a master list of the best suggestions for meeting each need.

## Activity 4: A Basic Budget

Format: Individual

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Pen and Paper

Procedure:

1. Ask participants to fill in Activity 4 in the **Companion Guide**, making sure that they consider all sources of income (including help from friends and family) and all of their potential expenses (rent, gas, utility bills, entertainment expenses, and so on).
2. As a group, discuss the need for trying to save some money each paycheck, even if it is only \$5. Since income is often not easily adjusted, discuss ways to cut expenses to allow for more money to be saved. Identify money-saving strategies and resources participants can use to help balance their budget.

## Class Activities

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### Class Activity: What Kind of Money Manager Are You?

Give participants the following money-management descriptions:

**Squirrels:** They stash money in savings accounts so that they always have it available. **Over-Spenders:** They spend all of their money before they can save it.

**Risk-Takers:** They put their money in potentially risky investments or schemes.

**Ostriches:** They stick their head in the sand and let others handle their money for them.

**Squeakers:** They only make enough to cover their basic expenses, spend the rest, and just squeak by from paycheck to paycheck.

1. Ask participants to break into smaller groups.
2. Have them further define these money management types and list the advantages and disadvantages of each, then return to the larger group and share their ideas.
3. Have each user pick the type of money manager that describes them the most. Ask if they are the type of money manager they want to be, what kind they aspire to be, and how they can get there.

### Class Activity: Housing Options

1. Ask participants to brainstorm possible housing options for which they may be eligible when they are released. These options could include buying a house, living with family or friends, low-income housing programs, transitional housing options, and shelters in the community.
2. After they have developed an extensive list, ask participants to rank (from the most realistic to the least realistic) the options that are best for each of them.
3. Ask participants to commit to researching more options on their own time. Return to these

options at a later date, if possible.

### **Class Activity: Do You Have Grit?**

Discuss with participants how succeeding at meeting basic needs after release will require grit.

1. Describe grit to the class. For example, you could say, “Grit is the ability to persist in pursuing long-term, meaningful goals and to persevere when you face obstacles.”
2. Ask participants to rate their level of grit from 0 (none) to 10 (wonderful). Have them explain why they rated themselves as they did.
3. Ask participants to brainstorm ways to change their level of grit. For example:

Change thinking about goals that might seem difficult or overwhelming. Stop negative thoughts such as “I can’t do this” or “This is too hard.” Replace defeatist thoughts with positive thoughts such as “I have achieved more difficult goals before, so these will be easier.”

Remain optimistic; remember how you were able to overcome setbacks and mistakes in the past.

## **Journaling Questions**

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The following questions are provided for you to use as group discussion questions or prompts for individual journaling. Keep in mind that many of these questions are personal in nature, and that participants may be reluctant to discuss these issues with others. You can also ask users to answer these questions as part of a journal.

1. Where will you live when you are released?
2. What does your transportation situation look like? How will you get groceries, get to appointments, and get to work?
3. What forms of identification do you have? What forms of identification do you need to get?
4. How will you manage your money when you begin working and earning an income?
5. Why is credit important? What will you do to improve your credit when you are released?

# Making Healthy Choices

Reentry is hard, but for many formerly incarcerated individuals staying mentally, physically, and emotionally healthy adds an additional layer of difficulty. Many formerly incarcerated people struggle with mental health disorders and substance use disorders. These issues will follow them through their reentry, providing significant obstacles to overcome.

## Learning Objectives

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- Help participants understand that it is natural to feel overwhelmed when they think about being released.
- Help participants accept that they are responsible for their physical, mental, and emotional health.
- Help participants understand that managing mental health is a critical component of staying healthy and avoiding reincarceration.
- Help participants understand the importance of managing the substance abuse and dependence problems.
- Help participants understand that when they begin to feel overwhelmed, they must trust that they did not get where they are overnight, and returning to a sense of stability will take time.

## Activities

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### Activity 5: Learning to Cope

Format: Individual to Large Group

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. Using Activity 5, give participants one minute to jot down as many positive coping strategies as they can think of for dealing with stress (such as getting exercise or engaging in a relaxing hobby). Then give them one minute to jot down negative coping strategies (such as turning to drugs or alcohol).
2. 2. Come back together as a group and make a collaborative list of positive and negative coping strategies. Try to get a sense of what coping strategies work best in which situations. If possible, practice some of these strategies as a group (such as deep breathing).

## Activity 6: A Matter of Will

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. Discuss how individuals who attend support groups are often asked to repeat mantras or credos as a way of reinforcing the positive behaviors they would like to see in themselves (such as the Serenity Prayer in Alcoholics Anonymous).
2. Have participants use “I will” and “I will not” statements to create their own positive, life-affirming credos to help them deal with the challenges of reentry, particularly with regard to staying clean, sober, and healthy. For example, they might write, “I will forgive myself and those around me.” Or, “I will not turn to alcohol to deal with my problems.” This is a very personal activity and participants should not be forced to share if they don’t want to.

## Class Activities

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### Class Activity: Eating Habits

1. Ask participants to describe their current eating habits. Allow time to discuss.
2. Ask participants what they expect their eating habits to be like when they are released. Allow time to discuss.
3. Ask participants to describe the differences they see in the two eating patterns. Allow time to discuss.

Brainstorm healthy eating tips with the group. Some examples are below.

- Try to eat at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Get rid of binge-worthy food items like potato chips, ice cream, soda.
- Eat as slowly and as mindfully as possible.
- Minimize snacking and concentrate on healthy snacks.
- Drink lots of water each day.
- Eat smaller portions of desserts and treats.

### Class Activity: How I Feel Stress

Ask participants to reflect on how they experience stress. Ask students to raise their hands as you read through the following stress symptoms.

When I begin to feel stressed, I recognize it through these physical changes...

- I tremble and shake
- I have difficulty breathing
- My hands are tingly
- My heart beats fast
- I feel very cold or hot
- My palms are sweaty
- I get dizzy
- My chest feels tight
- I feel sick

When I begin to feel stressed, I recognize it through these emotional changes...

- I cry a lot
  - I don't feel calm when I need to
  - I get tired easily
  - I get nervous easily
  - I have fears that may be foolish
  - I feel down
  - I get worried and can't control it
  - I get angry easily
  - I feel sad
1. Ask readers, "Do you tend to notice stress through your physical symptoms or emotional symptoms?" Discuss the differences between the two.
  2. Tell them that once they begin to feel stress, there are many ways that they can control stress as it occurs. Provide an example, and ask the group to discuss other coping strategies.

### **Class Activity: Making Choices**

Show readers the following four decision-making styles:

**Planner.** You weigh all alternatives, and then make a logical decision based on the evidence.

**Spontaneous.** You make a decision based on what you think feels right in the moment.

**Fearful.** You have trouble making decisions and fear that you will make the wrong decision, so you put it off.

**Compromising.** You let other people help you make decisions. You agree to give up some control of the decision by asking for help.

1. Ask readers which of the styles is the one they usually use in making choices. Discuss the pros and cons of each style. Explore the option of using multiple decision-making styles when approach decisions, especially important ones.
2. Provide a situation such as "You must decide which short-term housing option to use while you look for a permanent place to live." Ask the readers how each of the different styles would approach the situation. Encourage a discussion.

## **Journaling Questions**

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The following questions are provided for you to use as group discussion questions or prompts for individual journaling. Keep in mind that many of these questions are personal in nature, and that participants may be reluctant to discuss these issues with others. You can also ask users to answer these questions as part of a journal.

1. What are some of the important choices that you will be responsible for after being released?
2. Why are choices about eating, exercising, and managing stress important on the outside?
3. How is managing mental illness important to avoiding reincarceration?
4. What are some of the ways to continue taking care of substance use disorder or dependence on the outside? What obstacles will you have to overcome?
5. What are some of the ways you can manage stress when you begin to feel overwhelmed?

# Finding Employment

Formerly incarcerated people need to find and keep a job. A steady paycheck will not solve all of their problems, but it can provide the foundation for a successful reentry. Finding a job will not be easy for the formerly incarcerated. They will need to spend time and energy searching for a job, persevere in the face of rejections, learn how to present themselves on paper and in person, and learn ways to communicate their skills in job interviews.

## Learning Objectives

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- Help participants understand the importance of finding a job.
- Help participants accept that finding a job will be difficult, and require perseverance and optimism.
- Help participants determine the right job for them.
- Help participants identify the skills they can present to prospective employers.
- Help participants think about the industries they have interest in.
- Help participants understand the importance of education in their job search.
- Help participants learn to write job applications, resumes, and cover letters.
- Help participants learn techniques for interviewing effectively.

## Activities

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### Activity 7: Mad Skills

Format: Individual to Small Group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. To begin, have each participant complete Activity 7 by listing their job-specific skills, transferable skills, and soft skills. Discuss the difference between each, providing specific examples, then have participants brainstorm the skills and attributes they bring to the table.
2. When participants have finished with their lists, break them into groups of three or four and have them read their lists to each other. The other members of the group should help that person brainstorm the kinds of jobs that would match that skill set.
3. Come back together as a class and discuss how this list of skills can be useful in all aspects of the job search process, including writing a resume, filling out applications, and answering interview questions.

## Activity 8: Mock Interview

Format: Pairs

Time: 40 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. Have participants write down three or four questions that they've been asked in an interview before, with special emphasis on questions that have given them difficulty. Then have participants consider one more question if they haven't already: "I see you answered yes to the question about a felony conviction on your application, saying you'd prefer to discuss it in person. Now's your chance."
2. Split participants into pairs and have them engage in mock interviews with each other using the questions they've written down, including the question about past conviction. Be sure they each have a chance to practice being the interviewer and interviewee. After twenty minutes or so, come back together as a group and discuss which questions seemed the most difficult and what answers seemed most effective. If you'd like, you can provide sample answers that you consider effective as well, especially to the question of past conviction. Emphasize the non-verbal aspects of interviewing: posture, mannerisms, facial expressions, etc. Consider ending the activity with one of your participants mock-interviewing you.

## Class Activities

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### Class Activity: Finding a Job

1. Tell participants that they will need to rely on a variety of updated job-search techniques in order to find a job on the outside.
2. Write the following "traditional" job search methods down and ask readers to discuss why these methods are no longer as effective as they used to be:
  - Answering classifieds
  - Blindly sending out resumes
3. Ask students how they will search for a job when released. Write their ideas down. Ideas should include networking, using their support systems, using sites like LinkedIn and online job boards, and using CareerOneStops and other agencies.

### Class Activity: Job Search Feedback

It is important for readers to get involved in providing feedback to each other. This can be done with all aspects of the job search, including resumes, cover letters, and interviews.

1. Have each participant bring in their completed resume (refer to Worksheet 11 in ***The Road to Reentry Companion Guide***).
2. Ask participants to split into groups of three or four and critique each other's resumes. You can act as a resource, going around the room and answering questions. Make a running list of good (and not so good) resume-writing strategies.
3. Get back together in the larger group to discuss the experience.

You can also try this technique with mock interviews:

1. Break your students into smaller groups. Have each of the members of these smaller groups take turns being the interviewer and job seeker.
2. While not in one of these roles, the other members of the group can act as evaluators of the job seeker's performance. Feedback should be given at the end of each mock interview.
3. Get back together in the larger group to discuss the experience.

### **Class Activity: Employment Confidence**

Consider doing this activity as a journaling exercise, which readers can then discuss.

1. Ask participants to choose which of the following they are most concerned about: finding and getting a job, or keeping a job.
2. Have participants write down all of the possible reasons for the problem they chose. Encourage them to list both external forces (e.g., no jobs available, poor economy, corporate downsizing, no computer, kids to take care of at home) and internal forces (e.g., lack of motivation, lack of confidence, lack of skills).
3. Discuss with participants how these reasons represent barriers to be overcome. Have them rank their barriers from most critical (those barriers that need to be overcome now) to least critical (those barriers that aren't much of a hindrance) for their lists. Then have participants share any strategies for overcoming these employment barriers.

## **Journaling Questions**

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The following questions are provided for you to use as group discussion questions or prompts for individual journaling. Keep in mind that many of these questions are personal in nature, and that participants may be reluctant to discuss these issues with others. You can also ask users to answer these questions as part of a journal.

1. How do you think the workplace has changed since you have been incarcerated?
2. What are your most important job-related skills, transferable skills, and soft skills?
3. What are some of the industries for which you would like to work?
4. What is networking and how can it help you find a job?
5. How can a resume and cover letter help you in your search for employment?

# Succeeding on the Job

In order to be successful in transitioning back into the community, formerly incarcerated people must constantly evaluate their current goals and set new goals. They need to stay employed and advance their careers in the hope of building a bright future. They must evaluate their existing skills and develop new skills that are prized by employers if they are to be successful in the workplace.

## Learning Objectives

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- Help participants identify the job-specific, transferable, and soft skills they can use and develop to be more successful in the workplace.
- Help participants recognize the importance of soft skills on a job.
- Help participants think about the traits that employers desire and how they can develop some of these traits.
- Help participants understand the need to communicate well on their job.
- Help participants learn ways to handle conflicts.
- Help participants learn more about the role that education plays in advancing their careers.

## Activities

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### Activity 9: Top Ten Employee Traits

Format: Individual/Whole Group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. 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.
2. 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?

## Activity 10: Making a Personal Investment

Format: Individual

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Pen and paper

Procedure:

1. 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). In Activity 10, participants should make a list of what they are willing to contribute to better themselves in each category and what they hope to achieve as a result.
2. When participants are finished, encourage them to pick one of the four categories and share what they hope to accomplish with the group.

## Class Activities

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### Class Activity: Advancing Your Career

One of the best ways for readers to get an idea of the type of education, training, and skills they will need to advance their career is by working backwards. This is referred to as reverse engineering.

1. Ask participants to close their eyes and think ten years into the future.
2. Ask them to think about the type of job they have. Ask them to be very specific about what they are doing and how they are doing it.
3. Now have them work backwards to identify the skills and training they would need to get now in order to do that job in ten years. Ask them to think about the educational requirements of that job.
4. Finally, ask them to use their lists of skills, education, and experience to make a chronological list of steps they will need to take to achieve these long-term goals.

### Class Activity: Managing Conflicts

Remind readers that they will have conflicts with others, and that conflicts are not necessarily bad as long they are managed well and resolved in a calm, respectful way. Use the steps below to discuss dealing with conflicts calmly:

**Step 1:** Describe what you want and how you feel by using phrases like “I think,” “I feel,” and “We should” rather than “I know,” “We must,” or “You’d better.” For example, “I feel mad when you throw mail away before I can read it.”

**Step 2:** Explain the exact reasons for your feelings about the situation. For example, “I am waiting for some papers I need.”

**Step 3:** Try to understand the motive of other people. For example, “I know you are trying to keep the kitchen area clean, and it helps to throw out the mail.”

**Step 5:** Brainstorm compromises. For example, “How about if we agree to throw out the mail together every evening before bed? That way, we can make sure that we don’t throw away anything vital.”

**Step 6:** Choose the agreement that seems the best for both. Ask, “Do you think that will work for you too?” Agree to abide by the conditions of the agreement. For example, “Let’s implement this starting tomorrow!”

1. Give your students an example of a conflict, then have them break into pairs and use the steps above to try to come to a resolution.
2. As a group, discuss each pair’s solutions and any difficulties that they had along the way.

### **Class Activity: Soft Skills Ranking and Debate**

Readers must think critically about the importance of soft skills. One way to do that is through ranking and debate.

1. Put the following words on the board:
  - Communication
  - Emotional intelligence
  - Problem solving
  - Adaptability
  - Leadership
  - Work ethic
  - Teamwork
2. Ask readers to rank order these in order of importance to them. Then ask participants to think about which soft skills employers most desire, and rank them in that order.
3. Have readers share their lists and discuss which soft skills they ranked most highly and why.

## **Journaling Questions**

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The following questions are provided for you to use as group discussion questions or prompts for individual journaling. Keep in mind that many of these questions are personal in nature, and that participants may be reluctant to discuss these issues with others. You can also ask users to answer these questions as part of a journal.

1. How are transferable skills different from job-related skills? Which is more important and why?
2. Why might formerly incarcerated people struggle with soft skills?
3. Why is communication so critical in the workplace?
4. What will you do to make sure that you succeed on your job?
5. What steps will you take to advance in your career? What role does education play?

# Activities

# Activity 1: Release Goals

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## My Short-Term Goals:

Short-term goal #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Time frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps to achieve this goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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Short-term goal #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Time frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps to achieve this goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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Short-term goal #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Time frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps to achieve this goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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## My Long-Term Goals:

Long-term goal #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Time frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps to achieve this goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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Long-term goal #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Time frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps to achieve this goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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Long-term goal #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Time frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps to achieve this goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Activity 2: Give and Take

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### Example

**Support person:** *My brother Daniel*

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#### Responsibilities

*I will need to help with the bills once I find a job and start bringing home a paycheck.*

*I will need to be open and honest about my feelings.*

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#### Requests

*I will need short-term financial support and a place to stay while I get back on my feet.*

*I would like to have Daniel's forgiveness and to know how he feels about my return.*

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**Support person:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Responsibilities

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#### Requests

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## Activity 3: Housing Pros and Cons

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I have family members I can stay with. They are:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My spouse/partner    | <input type="checkbox"/> My grandparents     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My parents           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other family: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My brother or sister | _____  |

My responsibilities in this housing arrangement will be: \_\_\_\_\_

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I will not live with family. The short-term housing option I think will be best for me is:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A recovery house or treatment program | <input type="checkbox"/> A shelter or mission |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A halfway or transitional home        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____         |
|  | _____   |

The period of time I can stay in this short-term housing is: \_\_\_\_\_

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The responsibilities and conditions I will have to meet are: \_\_\_\_\_

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The help I will need to secure short-term housing is: \_\_\_\_\_

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My long-term housing goal is: \_\_\_\_\_

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The steps I will need to take to find long-term housing are: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Activity 4: A Basic Budget

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### Income

Income from work: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total income: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other income: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Expenses

Rent: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total expenses: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Utilities: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Food: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Subtract your total expenses from your total income and write the result: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 5: Learning to Cope

---

Positive coping strategies: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Negative coping strategies: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would happen to your body, mind, and relationships if you used only negative coping strategies to deal with your stress? How would it endanger your successful reentry?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 6: A Matter of Will

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I will. . . \_\_\_\_\_

I will not. . . \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 7: Mad Skills

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**Job-specific skills** are abilities that relate to a particular job or role in a business. What job-specific skills do you have? Do you have experience welding? Are you skilled at food and beverage preparation? Are you a master barber or cosmetologist? Include skills from jobs you have held before or during incarceration, skills you learned in school, and skills from other education, training, or certification programs.

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**Transferable skills**, like experience using different kinds of computer programs or experience with managing other workers, can apply to many different job situations. What transferable skills do you have? You may have to think creatively about this set of skills.

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**Soft skills** are personal attributes that can be helpful in a professional setting. Things like creativity, friendliness, or punctuality are considered soft skills. What soft skills do you have?

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## Activity 8: Mock Interview

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Write down three or four questions you have been asked in an interview in the past, especially the ones that you have had trouble answering. (Examples of typical questions include: “Tell me a little bit about yourself.” “What makes you qualified for this job?” “Where do you see yourself in five/ten/twenty years?” or “Describe your strengths and weaknesses.”)

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Be sure to practice your answers to these questions in a mock interview, or even to yourself in a mirror. Pick the two most challenging questions from your list above. What would good responses be?

1. 

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2. 

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Now practice your response to *the* question: “Tell me about your conviction.” Remember to be calm and clear, focus on your progress, and stay positive. Your potential employer will want to know you stay cool under pressure.

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## Activity 9: Top Ten Employee Traits

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Imagine that you are the owner of a small company looking to hire for a new position. Make a list of the top ten qualities you would look for in a new employee when making a hiring decision. The skills should not be job-specific skills. Instead, list the transferable skills and soft skills you would look for. After each skill, explain why it is important.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Activity 10: Making a Personal Investment

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For each area of your life listed below, make a list of what you are willing to do to better yourself and what you hope to get in return.

## My Health

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## My Relationships

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## My Job

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## My Education

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# Worksheets

# Worksheet 1: Family Relationships

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## My Emotions

Positive emotions I might have when I am released: \_\_\_\_\_

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After my release, I am most looking forward to: \_\_\_\_\_

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Negative emotions I might have when I am released: \_\_\_\_\_

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After my release, I am least looking forward to: \_\_\_\_\_

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## My Family's Emotions

Family member: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible positive emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

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Possible negative emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

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Family member: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible positive emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

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Possible negative emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Worksheet 2: Community Resources

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Look at the list of community resources below. Which of these will you need? Place a check mark in front of the ones you will follow up on.

- Housing or rent assistance
- Food donations
- Transportation assistance
- Help getting an ID
- Assistance with utilities
- Clothing donations
- Furniture donations
- Employment resources
- Child care assistance
- Legal assistance
- Education and training resources
- Computer and Internet access
- Medical and dental care
- Mental health counseling
- Substance use counseling

# Worksheet 3: Basic Needs

## Example

Basic Need	My Plan	Barriers I Might Face	Actions I Need to Take
Housing	Apartment	Affording the deposit Finding someone to rent from	Stay with family to save Ask PO for tips on landlords

Basic Need	My Plan	Barriers I Might Face	Actions I Need to Take
Housing			
Transportation			
Food			
Clothing			
Identification			
Medical care			

## Worksheet 4: Transportation

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Is there public transit you can use, like a bus system or subway? Where is it, and how much does it cost? What hours does it run?

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Do you have friends or family that can give you rides to work, appointments, or the grocery store? Who?

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If you will have access to a car, how reliable is it? Can you afford insurance, gas, and maintenance?

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## Worksheet 5: Identification

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Read the sentences below, then circle the response that applies to you for each.

I will need to renew/restore my driver's license, get my first license, or get a state ID card.

YES / NO

I will need to request a replacement Social Security card.

YES / NO

I will need to obtain a new copy of my birth certificate.

YES / NO

## Worksheet 6: Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Read the statements below. If a statement describes you, circle the number in the YES column. If it does not describe you, circle the number in the NO column. Add your scores for each section by counting the numbers you circled. Write that number in the space provided.

### ***When it comes to my eating habits...***

	YES	NO
I eat a healthy, balanced diet.	2	1
I eat three meals a day.	2	1
I do not eat lots of unhealthy snacks.	2	1
I eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.	2	1
I avoid eating too much sugar and drinking too much caffeine.	2	1

Eating Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***When it comes to coping with stress...***

	YES	NO
I know why, when, and with whom I become stressed.	2	1
I cope with stress without relying on unhealthy habits.	2	1
I become a little anxious about changes, but I can handle them.	2	1
I stay in control when I feel stressed out.	2	1
I have coping skills that I use when I am stressed.	2	1

Stress Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Now review your scores for each section.

- If your score is **5 or lower**, you should plan to make some lifestyle changes to stay healthy after your release.
- Scores of **6 or 7** mean that you are doing some of what needs to be done to be healthy. Consider what changes might raise your score.
- Scores from **8 to 10** mean that you are doing a lot of what needs to be done to be healthy —keep it up!

# Worksheet 7: Trust and Awareness

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## Example

I can trust my partner with my concerns about maintaining my sobriety  
because my partner is a good listener, does not abuse drugs or alcohol, and will  
support me while I establish healthy boundaries.

I can trust \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_

I cannot trust \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_

## Worksheet 8: Job Market Assumptions

---

For each question, circle TRUE if you believe the statement is true. If you believe the statement is false, circle FALSE. We will return to the answers to these questions shortly.

1. Employers are allowed to ask you if you have ever been arrested.

TRUE / FALSE

2. Employers do not carry out background checks on job applicants.

TRUE / FALSE

3. You might not be able to apply to some jobs after your conviction.

TRUE / FALSE

4. Only your skills that apply to a specific job are important.

TRUE / FALSE

## Worksheet 9: My Skill Set

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1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## Worksheet 10: Using My Skill Set

---

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheet 11: My Resume

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Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

## Professional Summary

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## Skills

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Education & Training

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# Worksheet 12: My Cover Letter

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Your name, address, and contact information:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Hiring manager's name, title, company,  
and address:

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

(The first paragraph acts as an introduction and specifically states the job you are applying for, your most important skills, and what you will do for the company.)

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(The second paragraph provides the "meat" of the letter, focusing on a few specific skills and pieces of work or education history that directly apply to the job in question.)

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(The third paragraph essentially acts as a request for an interview and thanks the employer.)

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Sincerely,

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheet 13: Thank You Note

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

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Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheet 14: Soft Skills

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Read the list of soft skills below and circle the ones you are best at. Having a hard time? Think: "I am good at..." and then fill in a soft skill from the list. Do you agree with the sentence? Be honest with yourself!

- |                     |              |                       |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Brainstorming       | Generosity   | Persistence           |
| Calm under pressure | Humility     | Persuasion            |
| Conflict resolution | Humor        | Public speaking       |
| Cooperation         | Imagination  | Punctuality           |
| Curiosity           | Integrity    | Reading body language |
| Dependability       | Listening    | Resourcefulness       |
| Diplomacy           | Negotiation  | Respectfulness        |
| Empathy             | Optimism     | Scheduling            |
| Enthusiasm          | Organization | Troubleshooting       |
| Friendliness        | Patience     | Willingness to learn  |

Now reread the list and underline any soft skills you think you need to work on to be successful on the job.

The skills listed above are only some of the soft skills you might have. Are any of your skills not on the list? Fill them in here.

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## Worksheet 15: How Well Do You Listen?

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Listening to other people sounds like an easy skill to master, but active listening can be harder than you think. Six simple rules for listening are listed below. Put a checkmark by the ones that you use already.

- Block out any distractions.
- Listen to the words the person is saying.
- Listen to the way things are said, and identify the emotions you hear.
- Observe the body language of the person speaking.
- Consider and move past any cultural differences.
- Respond to both what the speaker is saying and what the speaker is feeling.

How many items did you check? \_\_\_\_\_

## Worksheet 16: Conflict Resolution

---

Pretend that you are working as a salesperson at an electronics store. You sell a customer a television. The next day, the customer returns angry, and says that you deliberately sold them a defective product. The customer starts to shout at you.

Now, think about the best way to resolve this conflict.

Which soft skills are needed most in this situation?

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What listening skills would be important in this situation?

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How would you resolve this conflict?

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Has anything like this happened to you? How did you handle the situation?

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# Worksheet 17: My Educational Options

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Some of the educational options you will have access to are listed below. Put a checkmark by any that you would be interested in learning more about. Be sure to research any scholarships or other financial aid that might be available to assist you with paying for continuing your education.

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs:** ABE programs can include the GED certificate, English as a second language (ESL) instruction, and more. They may also offer some job training or career or education counseling.
- Vocational training:** Focusing on practical applications, vocational training prepares students for a specific skilled craft or trade (e.g., construction, healthcare, or auto repair), largely through hands-on training.
- Short-term training:** Short-term training takes less than a year to complete, and can include seminars, workshops, personal enrichment courses, non-credit courses at colleges or universities, and some shorter certificate programs.
- Associate degree:** Associate degrees are often offered by community colleges, and require at least two years of full-time college work after your high school diploma or GED, but fewer than four.
- Apprenticeship programs:** Apprenticeships offer training based on employers' needs. Apprentices are paid to learn on the job. Your state's Department of Labor may keep a list of apprenticeship programs in your area.
- Certificate programs:** Certificate programs are usually completed in fewer than two years. Like apprenticeships, they offer specialized training that applies to a specific job.
- Bachelor's degree:** Available from colleges and universities, these normally require at least four years of full-time college work. Bachelor's degrees are offered in a huge variety of fields, including things like computer science, psychology, and philosophy.
- Master's degree:** Awarded by a college or university after one or two years of study, and after a student has earned a bachelor's degree, a master's degree focuses on a specific professional or academic area (e.g., business administration, social work, or history).

How will education help you achieve your short-term or long-term goals?

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Which one of these educational opportunities are you most interested in pursuing? Why?

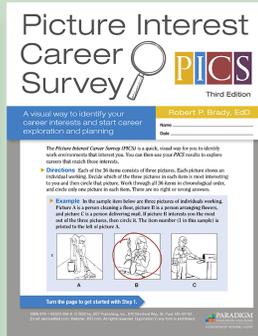
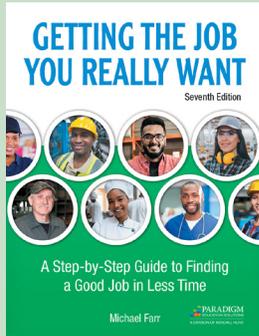
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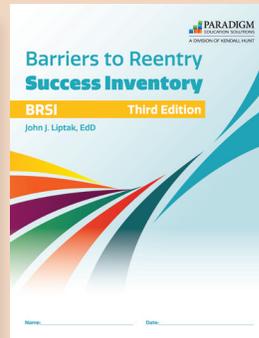
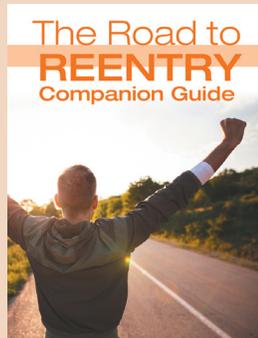
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