

# Secrets of Success for Inmates Facing Release

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Success demands being adaptable, able to adjust quickly and effectively to new ways of thinking and acting. Of the many tips useful for success, here are some at the top of the list:

1. Stop and consider the nature of CHANGE. Do not fear it or feel the world has passed you by. Accept the fact that upon release you cannot "catch up" on or change the past...*so let it go!* Instead, collect your energy and live in the NOW!
2. A key to survival is the quality and speed of *your ability to adapt*. So prepare yourself to be flexible, to "bend with the wind," adjusting to the rapid changes that are a natural part of daily life in the free world.
3. Do internal housecleaning: look into every corner of your mind and heart. Whatever is broken, *fix it!* Whatever is trash, *discard it!* Self-honesty and courage are absolutely essential or you will set yourself up for endless agony.
4. *Watch your thoughts and feelings as they arise*. Observe who and what you are "weak for." Refuse to surrender: pursue a means to retain your freedom, self-control and dignity---to own your very soul!
5. In terms of addictions: *get clean and stay clean!* Our dependencies are always our weakest links, so refuse to continue to yield control of yourself to people, places or things! Expect to carry this effort forward into the free world and be prepared to "confront your demons." With each victory, you grow stronger.
6. Constantly re-think and re-examine your plans; test their practicality, including the elements and length of time required to achieve them. Do ongoing reality checks, seeking objective input. Don't be hard-headed; adjust to what IS, not what you want things to be!
7. *Use every day*, during and following captivity, for positive, consistent preparation and growth! Constantly monitor your stress levels, always striving to improve your self-control. Keeping control over your emotions is critical to both survival and success. If you catch yourself "going nuclear" on friends or strangers, get help *immediately!*
8. Remind yourself that your goal in the world is to be trusted, accepted and respected, not feared, avoided and rejected. Realize that mad-dog attitudes and acts of rage are contrary to your best interest, so strive to shed prison values like a snake sheds its skin!
9. *Focus on positive relationship building*: credibility is everything! Remember that the things you most need and want from others can only come through trust and respect built over time. Make a commitment within yourself to do whatever is needed to build solid relationships in the streets and be worthy of people's good faith. In every case, *your word must be your bond!*

10. *Get your heart right!* Fully expect daily life after prison to be a great challenge and, at times, to be radically demanding! But realize that by doing battle with the fear, stress and hardship that naturally come with heavy-duty changes, you become ever stronger and capable of increased advancement. With this progress comes confidence, security and pride, which makes it all worthwhile.
11. Ask yourself what the world "owes you" and then reflect on the truth: "NOTHING!" Then accept the reality that there are NO magical programs or resources awaiting you as an "ex-con." Redefine yourself as a "person of worth seeking opportunities to grow" --- *you must be your own best friend and support!!*
12. Short pains (anticipation of release) will not kill you but CAN drive you to do something self-destructive. When you get down to 120 days, find a hole to hide in, keep your mouth shut, collect your life force and stay very, very cool! The joint and everyone in it will "test you" and try to pull you down ... *resist by refusing to surrender control of your mind and emotions!*
13. Get and stay right with your people; do not let the natural stress that collects as you approach the door make you so crazy that you turn on the few who really love and support you. This can happen before you even see it coming, *so stay alert!* If it does sneak up on you and problems result, take action to *mend things immediately.*
14. Upon release, the best way to relate to your people is by way of "true friendship"...that is, quality relationships built on honesty, sincerity and deep respect. Let everything begin there and then flow as it should: *never force anything to occur!*
15. Organize your mind to allow for *two sets of goals.* First is *short-term*, which deals with survival over the first five years after release. And *long-term*, which deals with quality of life, picking up at five years out and becoming the focus of the rest of your life. Understand this: the reason to deal with the first is to get to the second!
16. Now is the time to prepare yourself for the influence of your "criminal history" on the rest of your life. It is never truly "over" so it is essential to learn how to best "manage" the wide range of results from having been found guilty of one or more crimes. Acknowledge the "reality" of the past but refuse to be its slave: **GROW!**
17. Build on a foundation of truth and fact, not falsehood and illusion. Above all, be patient because there are no instant solutions, only small but important steps toward gradual completion. The good news is that each rewarding new day of freedom replaces one day of the sorrow and isolation of captivity. Thus one day the present will outweigh the past ... *and you will be truly FREE.*
18. Fully expect daily life after prison to be a great challenge and at times radically demanding! Focus on the most immediate problem first, deal with it and then move on to the next. Be encouraged by any and all progress because small steps add up, they are the true building blocks of your expanding success!
19. Most of what you want from life after prison requires five years of intense determination and hard work. Not just five years of freedom, but five years of arrest-free living! This means 60 full moons of accumulated insight, growth and progress. So your goal is to

celebrate five years free and clear of the criminal justice system and now is a perfect time to expand your will and ability to get there.

20. The game cannot be beat --- *everything must be earned!!* The secret is to put one foot in front of the next and never stop. To do this requires, before all else, *faith and determination!!* Faith in yourself, in the promise of a better day, and in your ability to create a rewarding path. And then the determination to pay whatever price is required to achieve progress and its rewards. Know this: it is worth the effort!
21. So, as you face the quest for success after prison and through the rest of your life, remind yourself of three things: ***"It CAN be done, it is worth doing and I can do it!"***

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