

# TYRO TIMES

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EPISODE 16: TRUST



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# WELCOME TO TYRO TIMES

**About this Magazine.** TYRO times is a quarterly publication created by TYRO Support Services. The vision is to share testimonials, events, inspirational stories, and to share family and relationship coaching. Discover featured content from the world of TYRO. You will be sure to find each edition packed with testimonials from both those serving the TYRO program and real people who are experiencing the life changing TYRO's around the world. Check out a variety of activities, from tips to plan a family night, cookbook recipes, and even a date for you and your partner.

**WHAT IS TYRO?** TYRO is a latin word, meaning novice, apprentice, someone learning something new. We are an international organization dedicated to empowering individuals and organizations through programs and content that produces life-changing outcomes.



A message from TYRO Founders, Ron & Catherine Tijerina

# THE FIRST WORD



**Greetings! Just when we thought the world was on the verge of returning to “normal,” a new threat to our health emerged, the Delta Variant.** If you have not heard about this new variant of COVID19, you have not watched any news recently because it is making headlines worldwide. This variant is threatening to shut down events and cause institutions to close their doors to visitors once again. While many families are affected by these restrictions, those families who have a loved one in prison will be affected most by prolonged seasons like this. This frustrating moment offers yet another opportunity for all of us to learn valuable life lessons.

**We are always looking for the more important lesson we can learn and apply in our lives from every challenge we encounter.** This situation is no different. If you are like us, you have faced many challenges in your life. Often, just as it appears you are about to overcome a significant obstacle, you have a setback. Suddenly, you find that issue you almost resolved has become far more complex. You feel defeated, discouraged, and deflated. It appears that you will never move beyond your circumstance no matter how hard you try. Facing a mountain that you thought was a molehill is the moment of truth. Are you ready to battle for your new legacy?

**Setbacks are going to happen.** The lessons you learned

along the way to reach your goals will equip you to face everything and recover. Facing your challenges head on is one of the great struggles you face. For many, it seems far easier to avoid the challenge in front of you. This only results in more problems the next day and can create more problems along the way. **When you choose to instead live in the moment and confront your challenge, you take back your freedom and position yourself and your family to overcome great adversity.** You must recognize the power you hold to create your story and build your legacy.

**“ When you know what you are capable of, the setbacks do not cause you to fall back into your old habits. Instead, those same setbacks offer a platform for an even more remarkable comeback. ”**

Think of the greatest struggles you have faced in life. Regardless of the pain and trauma in your life, there is always a lesson to be learned. You will face the same problems over and over again in your life. You must learn from each encounter the strength to win the battle and use the challenge to unlock your potential. Each battle should build strength and resiliency in you, so you are equipped for the next one. That

is how you will win the war for your legacy.

This season may feel like its too much for you to handle. Many have felt the same as you. This is not the first challenge you have faced. Know that you will overcome this challenge just as you have overcome the last challenge in front of you. You are stronger than you realize and you are about to prove it to yourself. Use the variants that arise in your life as opportunities to put into practice the lessons you learned along your journey. How you respond to each variable in your life is determined by whether your potential lives or dies.

Do not let the obstacles stop you from progress. Be encouraged that you are up for the battle! You have more knowledge than you had before. You have access to support and information that will help you find a way through any roadblock you encounter. You are ready to win. It is our hope that you will be encouraged by this magazine and be more equipped to become the leader, parent, world-changer you were created to be. As you read these stories, make an effort to put your best foot forward and be willing to implement some of these principles and life-changing resources.

We are rooting for you!

*- Ron and Cathy*

A man with a beard and short hair is shown in profile, looking upwards and to the right. He is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and a gold chain. The background is a solid dark red color.

# re **BUILDING YOUR** REPUTATION

*"As someone who is returning home from prison you will need to prepare yourself to overcome many hurdles. One of these hurdles is rebuilding your reputation."*

Article by Team TYRO

**Anyone with a felony has experienced the painful reality of social stigmas that come with a prison sentence.** Although a returning citizen may have paid their debt to society, they may still find it difficult in some ways to move past their time in prison for one reason, your reputation is tarnished. Regardless of your character, many people hear the word “felony” and pre-judge you. This prejudice may come in the form of a rejected job offer, a refusal to live in a certain place or the ability to join certain social groups. As someone who is returning home from prison you will need to prepare yourself to overcome many hurdles. One of these hurdles is rebuilding your reputation.

**Whatever the reason for prejudice you receive, you must learn to not take it personal.** In order to build trust with others, it will require something from you, humility. This means that when others assume things about you or say things to you, instead of rising up in anger, choose to take the high road. In TYRO, there is mantra; Don't Take It Personal (DTIP). Practicing DTIP is a daily action that may require all that is within you to keep from reacting

negatively when others reject you. It may be a simple acknowledgment that they don't understand you, and if they knew the real you, they would not feel this way. Practicing DTIP is the beginning of rebuilding your reputation because once you do this, you are able to humble yourself and grow into the person you want to be.

**Your reputation is like your credit score. If it is damaged, it may require work to restore it.** This may mean that you will need to make an extra effort in relationships that may have been damaged when you went to prison. For your family, oftentimes they are subject to the same prejudice as you. It may take patience and perseverance to mend those ties if relationships have been damaged. Be willing to listen to them and be quick to apologize. This will go a long way in mending the relationship and rebuilding your reputation. Building your reputation can mean a great many things.

**Whatever your past, you have potential and the capacity to grow.** Remember this when you face rejection because rebuilding your reputation means that you will need to prove you are better than people think you are. You may need to go the extra mile at work to show them your work ethic. You might have to agree to work on an interim basis or underneath supervision. There are even some returning citizens that have offered to work for no pay for a short time in order to prove themselves to their employer. Take these moments as opportunities to prove what you are made of.

**There may be ways to alleviate the pressures of your past legally.** But this will require you to show that you are different than you were when you went to prison. For some, there may be legal opportunities to expunge some of your record or work towards removal. Be sure to reach out to legal counsel you trust to learn more about this.

Some may read this and find themselves discouraged, what good does that do? **The far greater thing to do is to work everyday to prove to others you can be trusted.** It may take time, and it will surely take effort, but the investment to repair your reputation is always worth it.





Article by Team TYRO

# BUILDING **TRUST**

WITH YOUR PAROLE OFFICER



## “ When a person goes on parole, their parole officer becomes one of the most important people in their life. ”

From mandatory meetings and checkups, to assisting with employment, job and housing referrals and sentences. As your parole officer has a significant amount of influence in your future., it's critical you have a good working relationship with them. Here's how you can do it.

**Don't break the conditions:** When you go on parole, it may seem overwhelming to obey the unending list of conditions your PO asks of you. If you have questions, don't hesitate to ask them, just make sure you don't break these conditions. Breaking the terms of your parole is an easy way to find yourself back in the system. Know the terms of your parole by heart and follow them. No exceptions.



**Track your meetings:** You will have many meetings with your parole officer; be sure to keep track of when your meetings are. To do this: dedicate a calendar or notebook solely to keeping track of these meetings. If you are meeting at a parole office, arrive early. Punctuality shows your parole officer (PO) you care about their time and are taking this opportunity to re-enter society seriously. Additionally, dressing up can go a long way in showing your PO you respect them.

**Take notes:** When you are at meetings with your PO or other important meetings related to your re-entry, take notes. To that effect, be sure to take notes of questions you want to ask them. Don't be afraid to come with lots of questions. Your PO's job is to help you successfully start a new life on the outside of the four prison walls.

**Avoid negative influences:** When you were incarcerated, you probably had negative influences around you. At times, those closest to us, those we may even call friends can lead you down the wrong path. Remember, your time on parole is your opportunity to make sure you are whole. This means you need to evaluate the people you're spending your time with. The less negative influences you have in your life the easier it will be to avoid falling into negative patterns. Your parole is about moving forward, not going back.

**Be honest and kind:** Some parole officers can be tough characters. Your own parole officer may be hard on you. If so, know that they're doing it to help you stay out of prison. At times, your parole officer may get fired up - remain calm and avoid the urge to respond out of anger. Throughout this time, it is crucial to building and maintaining a strong relationship with your parole officer. Additionally, don't lie to your parole officer. If you lie and get caught, you will be in more trouble than if you had told the truth. Tell your parole officer the truth and always be honest when they ask you questions.

**Keep them updated:** Last but not least, always keep your parole officer updated on your life. If you've started a new job, are planning to move, or have made changes in your personal life. all of these things are important for your parole officer to know. Be punctual and timely with your updates, and respect their time. If you receive a phone call, email, text, or any other form of communication from your parole officer, be sure to respond as quickly as you are able. Part of your parole will be checking in. Don't put off responding to them.

# creating a **BOND**

Article By **Team TYRO**



with your  
**CHILD**

*from prison*

“Though they may not be able to express it, **your children need you now more than ever.** As you go through the journey of incarceration together, don’t let up.”

**It has been said that children serve time along with their parent in prison.** This is the reality of almost 3 million children. From facing social prejudice to overcoming the hardships of having a parent who is away from them, it can be easy to see why a child might easily have a strained relationship with their parent who is serving time. Anger, sadness, abandonment, shame and loneliness are just a few of the complex emotions children of incarcerated parents face. Sometimes, you will need to address some deep wounds that need to be mended before the paternal bond can be re-formed.

**How can the bond between you and your child be restored?** First, you need to assure your child they are not responsible for you being in prison. Sometimes, children will make assumptions or place undue burdens on themselves, resulting in bitterness and resentment. Having an open conversation with your child about how they feel about you being in prison and how it has affected them can give your child permission to express how they feel and talk about any of those feelings. When you have that real conversation, it is a good idea to do it in person or on the phone. Then, you will be able to connect with your child better and allow them to hear the sincerity in your voice.

**As you work to mend the bond with your child or children, it is important that you be transparent with them.** Transparency means you need to be honest with your child about mistakes you made. If you think of specific events that traumatized them, apologize to them for your part in creating that trauma in their life. When it comes to restoring the bond with your child, honesty and humility will open doors other things cannot. It might be helpful to write down some of the things you want to say to them and practice reciting it. However you choose to have this conversation, be sure to speak from your heart.

**Investing in their lives is another way you can show them you care about them.** Ask your children about their personal lives, how they are doing in sports, who their friends are, etc. Be specific and intentional to let them lead the pace of the conversation. Not everything needs to be solved in one day. As time goes on, even if they are hesitant at first, they should begin to open up and trust you more. Whenever you have the opportunity to write to them, do it. If you have more than one child, write them their own letters. If you are going about your day and think of them, give them a call or write them a letter. Make every effort to show them that you care about their life and refuse to allow prison to break apart your family.

**Despite the barriers that prison can create in a relationship, know that you can have a great relationship with your children.**

Though it may take time, and certainly effort, you can create a lasting bond with your children despite being incarcerated. Being honest and humble is the first step to healing the relationship. Giving your child permission to say whatever is on their heart, and not judging them for it, can be the best thing for them.

**They may not be able to express it, but your children need you now more than ever.** As you go through the journey of incarceration together, don’t let up. Be there for them. Celebrate their highs and lows. Call them after a ball game or check in on them when they get home from school. The more you invest in their lives, the greater the outcome you will reap in the relationship.

**Throughout your time in prison, don’t stop being the parent they need you to be.** This includes all the things you would do as a parent who is not incarcerated. Remember, just because you are in prison doesn’t mean you are no longer a parent. Now more than ever, your children need you. If you are able, communicate with your child’s (or children’s) other parent or caretaker to setup consistent phone call times or visits. Choose times that are convenient for their lives. Remember to do what you can to adjust your life to fit into their lives. You can raise your child from the other side, so don’t allow shame, culture or discouragement to stop you from being the best parent you can be for them. Don’t allow the four walls of prison to separate or divide your family.



# TYRO TIMES FALL WORD PUZZLE



L A T L T P R U F L  
 O R P J T Y R O A R  
 V T R U T H X U L I  
 E D Y A F A M I L Y  
 C O M P A S S I O N  
 D P A S S I O N W P  
 C H A R A C T E R A  
 P H T R E S P E C T  
 I N T E G R I T Y J  
 T Q V R B L U K F D

Compassion

Character

Integrity

Family

Truth

TYRO

Passion

Respect

Love

Fall



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# EMBRACING YOUR TIME

ARTICLE BY RON TIJERINA

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**As I stand, hands cuffed, anxiously waiting to be told to step forward. The room echoed with the screeching sound of the gate slowly closing behind me.**

*I begin to hyperventilate as the fear of hopelessness filled the room. I tell myself don't let them see fear.*

*I began to straighten myself up, but the terrifying fear overwhelmed my senses. The sound of the gate closing behind me, the unforgiving sound of the latch on the prison door locking into place will forever be etched in my soul. I can't believe this is happening to me, I can't believe I'm here. What is going to happen to me. What is going to happen to my family. How can I survive this place? What do I do?*

## Do you remember your first experience of incarceration?

Your first visit in the county jail forever marked you. I remember this moment like it was yesterday. The smell of cold steel forever fills my senses. Going back to that moment, I recall the guards whisper behind the guard's desk and imagined they were talking about me. In that moment, the deputy sheriff moves towards me, uncuffs me, and hands me over to a guard. The guard then tells me to get up against the wall and spread them. He begins to pat me down. And then afterwards instructs me to follow him. As I join my first roll call, I glance to see the overcrowded holding facilities, knowing I was going to go to one of them. I felt as though everyone was staring at me. I have never been so scared in all my life.

## I was 25 years old when my journey of incarceration began,

without a clue what was in front of me. I had no idea how to carry myself; no idea what it was I was about to face. The only thing I knew was that I had to survive. I had to make it out alive.

## How does someone truly prepare for Prison?

How does one prepare mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically? Do TV shows help to prepare yourself? Could you binge-watch prison break? Or do we ask other people that we may know or other family members that have been incarcerated for advice? Whatever the case, you must become mentally prepared to build fortitude for what you are about to face. This is what every person who finds himself in this situation must do. The great-

est tool you will need to make it through prison by taking hold of your mental faculties.

In my experience, there are three key principles you will need to embrace to be successful during your incarceration.

### #1. The very first thing you will have to come to terms with is this question: *Are you a man of your word?*

It does not matter why you are there or how much is on your books or where you come from. All that matters is that people can take you at your word. This is the key ingredient to success. Being a person of your word is what separates the men from the boys. This is a matter of life and death if people in this environment believe they cannot trust you.



### #2. Minding your own business.

Staying to yourself means just that. You don't have to make a lot of friends. You don't have to be popular. Do not get caught up in gossip. There are a lot of hurting people and hurting people hurt people. Not everybody who

smiles in your face is a friend. Use discernment. Use wisdom. Do not be in a hurry to win people over. Watch and wait for a true friend or mentor to enter your life.

**#3. Invest in yourself.** If you do not have a GED, then your goal should be to get one. If you don't know how to read, your goal is to find someone who will teach you how to read. If you don't know how to write, then find somebody who can teach you how to write. You have a great opportunity in front of you. Do not waste it. You can see this place as your mausoleum, a place where they bury the dead or you can see this place as your monastery a place where you will grow and become better for not only yourself but for all those around you.

There are many people counting on you to change and no longer be a liability but become an asset.

### It is time to create a great reputation for yourself.

Embrace this experience. Do not run from it. You are in the best place you can be right now. Take advantage of it. The quicker you can learn from all the lessons in front of you, the quicker you can excel to the next level in life.

This is not going to be easy. Remember "pain and suffering are our greatest teachers; I will not use them as an excuse to fail".

I am rooting for you.

- Ron Tijerina

# Taking your child on a prison visit

Article by **Team TYRO**





**Prison visits can be intimidating.** If you've never visited a loved one in prison before it can seem intimidating, maybe even a little scary. Obeying the visiting rules, regulations and procedures specific to the prison can be daunting to say the least. But making the effort to foster the relationship between the child and loved one in prison is worth all the inconvenience. Knowing in advance what to expect alleviates some of the pressure.

Here are some things to know before taking your child on a prison visit:

### **Get on the Approved List**

Make sure you comply with the specific institutions rules to get on the approved list. Its not nearly as scary as it sounds, its just important to make sure you don't travel all that way for nothing. Most institutions have a simple form that can be submitted by an inmate or sent from an inmate's prison to the loved one. Immediate family and relatives are the easiest to get on the list, so

// **Despite some of the difficult things it takes to get to the visiting room, investing into your loved ones relationship is well worth it.** //

keep that in mind. Relatives include grandparents, uncles, aunts, in-laws, and cousins. Other types of approved visitors are friends (usually an approved list of fewer than 10 individuals), attorneys, employers, and more.

### **Follow the Dress Codes**

Unfortunately, not following the dress code for the institution you visit may mean you will not be able to get into the visiting room that day. It's important to find out, whether by the state's dress code visiting rules or that specific location. Everyone who wishes to get into the prison visiting room will need to abide by the visiting rules. Common clothes that are not allowed are revealing clothes, hats or clothing that resembles inmates' attire.

### **Arrive on Time**

Check your loved one's facility for visitation hours, typically weekends and holidays. There may be additional days depending on the security level of the facility. For a list of federal prisons, visit the Federal Bureau of Prisons' website; for state or private prisons, do a quick internet search for your institution's visiting hours.

### **Prepare your Child for a Visit**

Most prisons allow for a high five, hug, handshake or kiss at the beginning and end of the visit. But, for security reasons, that will only be a brief moment. It will be helpful for your child to prepare for that emotionally. Also, help your child think of questions to ask, or have them write a thoughtful note or keepsake for your loved one in prison. Be sure to check with your institution to see what is allowed to be brought into the visiting room.

### **Prepare Yourself Emotionally**

Preparing for a visit gives you peace of mind and will prepare you emotionally to have a fun and safe visit. Investing in your child's life is crucial to their future, and making prison visits a priority is one of the best ways to help your child stay connect with their loved one in prison. Despite some of the difficult things it takes to get to the visiting room, investing into your loved ones relationship is well worth it.

# how to

# LEAD

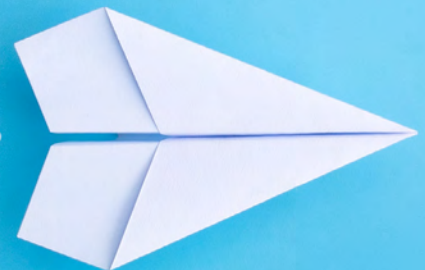
# your team

Article By **Team TYRO**

Leadership is more than charisma and administrative skills. But what defines a true leader? The fine line that many straddle when being in charge of a team does not always allow for strong leadership. While being a boss is not necessarily always a bad thing, the goal should be to lead your team, not to be the boss of it. There is a distinct difference between these two. Bosses are merely the figurehead of a team; the person in charge who tells people the team goals and deadlines. However, a leader is much more than that. A leader inspires others to do their best. Leaders don't tell others what to do; they show them how to do it.

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.” - John C. Maxwell

**Get to know your team:**  
Above all else, get to know your team. This is the first step in becoming an effective leader. This



should be both on a professional and personal level. Getting to know your team shows your team members you respect them. Learn about their family, friends, hobbies, and other interests. Taking a genuine interest in their lives builds a level of synergy in a workplace that you cannot teach.

Additionally, get to know your team on a professional level too. Find out what their positions are on the team, learn what makes them the most productive, what causes them to be distracted, etc. Ask them what their strengths and weaknesses are. The more you know about your team, the better you will understand how they operate. As you learn how your teammates operate, the better you can lead them.

### Listen to your team:

Listening to your team. Failure to listen to them can result in issues arising later. An organization can have the best policies in place, but if they are not listening to



their team, they can put their entire operation at risk. Management may bear the responsibility of outcomes, but the day-to-day team will be able to spot issues, identify problems and communicate things that may otherwise be missed. You need them, so listen to them. Encourage feedback, open communication, critical thinking, and the sharing of innovative ideas. Don't let your team feel like their voice doesn't matter. A team will respond positively when you listen to what they have to say.

### Fight with them:

Fighting with them doesn't mean to engage in conflict against your team. Fight alongside them; take up battles with them. Go and do the hard work with them. Stop thinking of you and them, think of teamwork as a

king fighting alongside his men in battle. There is no better morale booster than seeing you work alongside them. Never ask or command your team to do something you haven't or wouldn't do yourself and avoid any direct conflict with your team. In a team, it's you and your team vs. the problem. If something goes wrong, work to find a solution. Listen to their ideas and value their input. Your team will go to war with you if you show them you have their back. Be approachable and, most important, be with them. You're the leader of the team, but you're also a member of that team.

### Reward hard work:

Never let your team's accomplishments go unnoticed. When your team meets a goal, goes above and beyond expectations or wins an award, REWARD THEM. Show your team their hard work is worth more than a paycheck. Give them an extra day off, provide a holiday bonus, order in lunch; whatever you think the team deserves. Your team will always be inspired to work harder if they know their work will be rewarded. Don't expect your team to "just do their jobs." That's not how the human mind works and it isn't how a true leader leads.

### Lead by example:

If you have read any leadership literature, then you are familiar with the phrase: "Show them the way" or "lead by example". Don't just tell your team what to do, show them how to do it. When you lead a team, think of how you would respond if you were taking orders from you. Would you work hard for you? Would you give your 100% every day? Would you feel wanted and respected? Do you feel like your voice is being heard? Undoubtedly, these are questions that run through the heads of your team. Anyone can micromanage, but it takes a true leader to be better. Just remember, it's not all about how you want to do things. If your team offers a new approach, consider it. If one person knew everything, our world would look much different. Learn to be adaptive; not everyone or every team will look and respond the same way. Success on a team is accomplished by listening, collaboration and leadership by example.

If you follow this guide on effectively leading a team, you will see results. Your team will flourish and your days off being a boss will be gone. But your days of becoming a great leader will begin.

# Pandemic

## impact on prisoners and their families

Article by **Team TYRO**



“ Since the pandemic first hit the world in the beginning of 2020, no one could anticipate the countless ways it would profoundly impact our families, especially prison families. ”

Families have been disconnected and torn apart from the aftershock of covid-19. When it comes to prison families, according to Oxford University, telephone phone calls have been restricted for families and prisoners, limiting an inmate's ability to connect to the outside world. In many cases, children have not been able to call or talk to their parents, due to their parents/parent being imprisoned. Further impacting the pain, because of the pandemic, in some states family members cannot visit their loved one in prison. These, and many other reasons, are causing many families being torn apart due to the restrictions of the pandemic. There are some facilities that have lifted these restrictions, but not all have. These restrictions have caused a profound impact on the mental health of the family, especially children.

When a child cannot connect with their parents, they experience grief and sadness for the lost connection. At their young age, the separation of the covid-19 restrictions can be particularly damaging. For some, the parent will become a stranger. With these new challenges, many do not even know how to support their loved ones in prison without being able to visit or call. With the pandemic, many family members are worried about their loved ones in prison and if they would be treated properly if they were to get sick with Covid-19. Due to no communication, many families do not even know if their loved one in prison is ill.

According to The Conversation, many families are worried about the toll that Covid-19 is having on their families. Some are worried so much that they themselves are becoming physically sick due to the toll it is taking on their mental health. The stress that a loved one in prison might have Covid-19, adds to the stress that they might be mistreated in prison as well. Many prisoners are struggling with the disconnection of having their loved ones and family. In some cases, the isolation and loneliness have even lead to suicidal thoughts. These men and women are some of the most

vulnerable to being impacted by pandemic restrictions.

Although it may seem discouraging to hear this, it can give one cause to despair. If you are in this situation, you

must not give up hope! If you ability to have in-person visits, talk to your loved one about the possibility of virtual or phone calls. Make an effort to write letters to your loved one each week, and encourage others to do so as well. If you are able, give a thoughtful gift and make the effort to show you care about them. Do not let the virus steal anything else from your family.



There should be a plan to help the disconnection of this and Prison facilities are in the process of reforming rules regarding visits. But in the meantime, if you have a loved one in Prison, or know of someone who does, encourage them to try and keep connecting as much as possible. If the facility allows it, write a letter to them, letting them know that you care. If your prison allows visits or phone calls, FaceTime them. Being able to see them even if it is through a computer or phone screen, will bring so much comfort.

We are unaware of how long the global pandemic may last, but if there is one thing that it has taught us, it is that the power of connections is so important. Hold onto the hope that everything is going to be okay. We can get through this together.



## Romance Letters to an Inmate

*A blog by TYRO Co-Founder Catherine Tijerina*

***Romance provides the medicine your relationship needs to get off life-support and become vibrant again***

Keeping a relationship strong and thriving is hard work under any circumstances. In your relationship, managing life's opportunities and concerns while also trying to keep the romance alive is a top priority. Keeping the flame lit is no small feat in the best of times. However, it is even more important to dedicate time, energy, and effort during the worst of times — such as while your man is in prison. One of the best ways to keep the flame of romance going is to write letters to each other.

**Over the years, I have watched many families fall apart because the relationship became too much work.**

As time progressed, the initial attraction was lost among the urgent situations they faced. A once refreshing romance, became stale and sour as life dealt them blow after blow. Eventually, all the romance died, and they were left with only a long list of expectations to fulfill. Yuck! Nobody wants to be in a relationship when their time together revolves around problem-solving and managing the next crisis. Get off that ride of chaos.

While your man is in prison, it is a challenge to keep the romantic feelings alive. So, you must be intentional, imaginative, and consistent in focusing on your relationship. Romance provides the medicine your relationship needs to get off life-support and become vibrant again. It is not a question of IF you need to write romance letters to your partner, but HOW MANY you need to write to keep your love alive.

First, I need to dispel the myth that your man is the one responsible for keeping the romance alive.

The burden to invest in your marriage/partnership is meant to be a shared responsibility. If you want to make it through this chapter of your lives, you must both invest in keeping your passion for each other a priority. Writing letters is just one way to keep your attachment strong—but it is, in my opinion, the most important thing you can do. When you write a love letter to your partner, he can return to it whenever he feels down or in need of affirmation of your love. It is a gift that continues to encourage with time.

There are a few things to keep in mind as you write love letters to your incarcerated partner. Before I share some tips on writing romance letters to your man, I need to remind you that other people will read them. A staff person from the DOC oversees and monitors all incoming mail. This knowledge should not deter you from being steamy and passionate in your letters. Only keep the knowledge that someone else will see your words in the back of your mind as you decide how much you want to share with strangers. A good rule of thumb: keep it PG-13 — your partner will get the message loud and clear, but you will be stopping others from peeping into your personal life. Your private life deserves to be protected.

As you prepare to write romantic letters to your incarcerated partner, here are some tips I gathered from writing to Ron for 15 years while he was in prison:

**1. Love letters do not need to be sexual.** There is so much more to romance than sex. Share romantic fantasies that do not involve sex — for example- hiking together, watching the sunset, snuggling in front of a fireplace, playing in the snow, or relaxing on a beach together. Remember to flirt, and share all the things you love about him without once mentioning sex.

**2. Love letters can be sexual.** It is also essential to

include some love letters that connect to your attraction to each other. Keep that spark alive by sharing your favorite memories with him or sharing what you are looking forward to once he is released. Remember to leave room for his imagination, so you won't be allowing others to be in your bedroom with you.

**3. Include a poem that describes your love for him.** It can be a poem you write – but it doesn't have to be original. You can include a copy of a verse from someone else that resonates with you or quote lines from it. Just be sure to give credit to the original author when sharing.

**4. Describe your perfect date night to your partner.** Share everything from what you will each wear, where you will go, what you will eat for dinner, and all the details to make it the perfect date together.

**5. Set up expectations for a continued romantic conversation on your visits.** Ask questions about what your partner is most looking forward to or misses the most about being able to go on dates together. Then, try to incorporate some of that fun into your next visit. Be sure that whatever you plan is allowable in prison. Examples of ways you can be romantic on your visit are:

Dressing up (following the institution's dress code), Pretending you are on a beautiful date, or taking a make-believe trip as you each share what you imagine with each other.

**6. Ensure that you are writing a love letter at least once a week.** Think of this as your "date night." The benefits of making this a priority in your relationship will set new habits for both of you. Then, you will be prepared to continue this habit of a weekly date night when he does come home.

These tips will help you keep the flame burning in your relationship while navigating through the prison time in front of you. Do not hold back. Love like there is no tomorrow, and invest in your relationship like it is the only one you will ever have!

I am rooting for you!

*-Cathy*

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# LEAD YOUR FAMILY

Article by **Team TYRO**



When we hear the word leader, most people think of an athlete, politician or successful business person. In reality, there are many places to lead.

**“One of the most important places to lead is in your own home. Being the leader of your family is more than just being the oldest in your family or the paternal figure of the house. Being a leader at home means your family looks to you for guidance and help.”**

A leader does not simply boss everyone around. On the contrary, a true leader acts as the role model for their family: children, siblings, etc. If you are looking for ways to lead your home, look no further.

#### **Be the model:**

Show your spouse and your children what a leader in the household looks like. Being the model for your family means leading by example. This looks like showing your family how things should be done at home and in life. As a mother, show your daughter what a strong woman looks like and your son how to treat women with respect. As a father, show your son how to be an honest man and how to be a good partner. Show your family how to take responsibility for actions, how to clean up after themselves, how to run a household, and how to be a leader at home.

#### **Be a partner:**

Show your family how to work in unison. Be intentional to not go against what your spouse has to say. Being a good partner is one of the best ways to establish healthy leadership in your home. Communicate with your spouse house rules, guidelines, chores and routines. As you lead your family, work together to solve issues and to complete tasks at home. This could look like helping cook, clean, get the groceries, take the kids places, etc. A leader doesn't tell everyone what to do, they help them do it the right way.

#### **Acknowledge mistakes:**

Be the first to apologize. No one in this world is perfect. Acknowledging mistakes made shows your

family that mistakes happen and that it's okay to have them. More importantly, it's important to show your family that we are all imperfect, it's how we respond to our mistakes that defines us. You don't want your children growing up thinking that they have to be perfect or that they're always right. If you, the leader of your household, can't admit when you've made a mistake, then why should anyone else? Many children grow up believing this because their siblings or parents never acknowledged their mistakes. Show your children how to learn and grow from mistakes.

#### **Establish family values:**

One of the biggest ways to lead your family is by establishing family values. Leading your family doesn't look like pushing your beliefs and personal values onto your family. Rather by establishing core values of your family to help them be the best versions of themselves. These values: honesty, kindness, empathy, respect, responsibility, accountability, integrity, etc. will guide your family's future. **The family values will introduce your family to core values everyone should have, things that can teach your family what leadership looks like.**

#### **Be there:**

We need leaders. We need leaders who are healthy and will be present in their home. This means making time for your family. You cannot lead your family if you are never with them. Just like you can't be a leader in the workplace if you don't work alongside your team. Your family needs you at home. Your spouse and children need to spend time with you. Learn to be present. Prioritize your time to be there with your family for dinner. Be there for the big moments in your family's lives.

Making money is important; providing for your family is important. There is always money to be made, and you can't get back memories you missed. Your family will have unique challenges they face in order to lead your family, but know that every challenge you face on the way to lead your family is worth it.



finding  
a job after  
**PRISON**

Article by Team TYRO

“Trying to find a job after prison can seem impossible. For the 650,000 Americans who come home from prison each year, this challenge can seem insurmountable.”

Overcoming social stigmas and prejudice that often come with a former prison number can be the fastest way to miss a job opportunity. But there is good news.

Due to social-awareness, workforce programs, re-entry opportunities, supporting transition programs and the like, it is becoming less difficult to find employment and career opportunities in the workforce for returning citizens.

### LET'S GET STARTED

Approach your job search as if it is your current job. Work at it every day. Make an outline of your day-to-day life and stick to it, as if you would for any other job. Each day, apply to jobs, prepare your resume, reach out to employers, network within your community and let people know you're job searching.

When searching for a job, make sure to use all the resources available. Talk to local employment agencies, state employment agencies, and any other places offering job-seeker support. In addition, search on job finder sites such as Indeed and ZipRecruiter. There are even websites specifically to

assist ex-inmates search for a job. For example, Career One Stop has an excellent job search tool on their website designed to help men and women find jobs. The best thing about most of these job search sites: most of them are free.

### BUILD A RESUME

When applying for jobs, a resume is a critical part. A good resume highlights your skills and experience. It also communicates to potential employers what you can do for them. Your resume should always be truthful, so make sure you are listing your skills in a positive way. When applicable, include training and work you did while in prison. There are many resources available for those who are building a resume. If you are searching for help with your resume, visit [www.resume.com](http://www.resume.com) or [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com).

### BE PREPARED

Most employers will ask about your criminal record; you will need to be honest. Preparing yourself to address your record is a good way to be ready. In the interview, you can mention a few things your time in prison has taught you, how it changed your life, etc. Also, plan to bring up your record at the right point in the interview. Bringing it up first will show you are not embarrassed by it or are trying to hide anything. Be sure to stay positive throughout the interview.

Once you find a few places you would like to work, you will need

to prepare for the interview. This may seem intimidating, but you don't need to worry. The more you know you are confident, the easier your interview will go. When you believe in yourself, others will believe in you too.

### DRESS APPROPRIATELY

When you are preparing for a job, it's a good idea to dress yourself as though you already have the job. Another way to prepare for a job interview is to answer common questions such as “tell me more about yourself” and “what are your strengths and weaknesses?” It might help to find someone to help you interview. This can help you get rid of the jitters and give you an idea of what it will feel like to sit in an interview. Research the company you will be interviewing for a position. Come prepared with questions to ask. Make sure to stay upbeat and stay engaged during the interview. You want to make a good impression and being prepared is the first step into your new career after prison.

As intimidating as it seems to find a new job, it's important to know that tomorrow offers new opportunities for all of us. You are capable of starting over so do not allow the burden of finding a job stop you from having a great fresh start. As a returning citizen, there are many resources at your disposal to give you a second chance. Don't be afraid to reach out to someone if you need help getting yourself ready for a job.

~~don't let~~  
~~mistakes~~  
define you



***“Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” - Albert Einstein***

When you make a mistake, it can seem as though the weight of the world is on your shoulders, as though you may never overcome that mistake. That somehow that mistake defines who you are. Though there may be consequences for mistakes, we need to make a distinction between paying the consequences of a mistake and putting undue burdens upon ourselves in order to appease others who may judge us, or worst yet, punish ourselves for past mistakes made.

Far too often, our past failures, disappointments and mistakes have snuffed out our dreams. We may have allowed others opinions of us to keep us from moving on in our lives. When we make a mistake, be it in a relationship, at a workplace, or violating a law or rule, that mistake or the shame others place on us because of that mistake hinders us from moving forward in life. If you are reading this today, thinking to yourself, “there’s no way I can overcome my past,” I have good news for you.

Everyone makes mistakes. It’s inevitable. In fact, many mistakes have become the triumph of famous men and women throughout history. Not only do hardships and mistakes give us a new perspective, they afford us new opportunities. These opportunities don’t mean the consequence of a painful mistake are magically washed away, but as is true with everything, we can take a mistake and create an opportunity.

“We need to learn to be our greatest salespersons”

Have you ever witnessed a convincing salesperson? Maybe it was even a commercial. The product they’re selling is irrelevant, someone who believes in their product can convince others of it. We need to learn to be our greatest salespersons. In order to do so, you must believe that you are valuable. Regardless of how others have treated you in the past, you have purpose. Your purpose is not defined by your past.

A single mistake doesn’t take away who you are and the good you have accomplished. It doesn’t erase all the great things about you. There may indeed be consequences from a mistake but those consequences should not limit your future. At times our mistakes are all that others see, but we are far more than the sum total of our mistakes.

### **Some of your greatest lessons will come from your mistakes.**

It can be difficult to look past your mistakes. But you cannot let a mistake define you, the only way to grow from a mistake is by learning from those mistakes. Some of your greatest lessons will come from overcoming your past.

“Your past doesn’t define you, but it can qualify you for your future if you let it.” - Ron Tijerina

Moving forward from your mistakes means you are learning to discover how to tell others your life story. The highs and lows of life, your mistakes and victories. Learning to

tell your story will empower you to believe in yourself and the potential within you to overcome trials.

We all have a past. Your triumph will be found in overcoming it, getting past the negative labels and discovering who you really are. Take some time to reflect on your past and identify some things you can learn from it. Every day is a new chance to be better than you were before.

Don’t focus on the fallout of a mistake that you made; you are so much more than that. In fact, you are far stronger than you know. Your mistake is your past. Your future is limitless potential. This world of tomorrow is the birthplace of your dreams, and the platform to elevate you into your future. You are more than the sum total of your victories and failures. Do not allow yourself or others hold you back from your full potential because of your past.



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**TYRO TV**

# THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY DURING PRISON

Article by Team TYRO





Family creates bonds that last a lifetime. For loved ones who are incarcerated, these bonds are more important than ever. As time progresses for men and women in prison, keeping those family ties strengthened will become one of the most important things you can do for their mental health.

It's important to realize just how much your time means to someone in prison. For many, their time in prison can feel lonely, and distant from their loved ones outside of prison. There are many reasons that they need their family now more than ever. Men and women battle discouragement from all fronts, working through a world unknown to their loved ones outside of prison.

From letters, to gift boxes & prison visits, there are many ways to stay connected to your family in the midst of incarceration.

## Write Letters

When you think of your loved one, write them a letter. Treat letters like you are sending them a text message. When you have a high moment or a bad day, write up a letter. Encourage others to do so as well. There is no reason you cannot foster the bonds of family in the midst of incarceration.

## Stay Connected

When we think of connecting to our family who live a long distance away, we think of creative ways to connect with them. This is a good way to think of staying connected when a loved one is locked up. Some institutions allow for video conferencing, for those who do not, all prisons allow for family visits and phone calls. All of these opportunities to connect with your loved one will strengthen human connection, and restore the bonds that may have been lost from incarceration.

## Overcome Together

Another reason families need each other during prison is to work through social stigmas. Because of prejudice and social stigmas, it can be difficult for loved ones who have someone in prison. Ron Tijerina, founder of TYRO who served prison time himself, says that the family of an inmate, in a sense, served time as well. Not only does the family need to stick together to navigate these complex social issues but they need each other to

keep their spirits high.

## Celebrate Each Other

For many families, life on the outside of the four walls of the prison block goes on. It is imperative that families be intentional to stay connected throughout the interim of their loved one's prison sentence. Through phone calls, letters, video calls and emails, families who celebrate each other, and talk about their highs and lows in life stand a much greater chance of staying together when their loved one gets out of prison.



## Stick Together

Families who stick together have a far greater chance of seeing their loved one never go back to prison. As returning citizens, a crucial aspect to having a successful re-entry is a support system. It's not always possible for families to have consistent visits, but families should do what they can to normalize communication and empower their loved one in prison to keep going. For the loved one in prison who feels as though they are shut out, keep trying. Keep writing letters, sending emails and making an effort to be involved in their loved one's lives.

## Keep Dreaming

One of the most important reasons families need each other is to keep dreaming. For most men and women who serve time, incarceration is just a small part of their story. Some people are so discouraged that they put their dreams on hold. Families need to communicate to each other how prison makes them feel, but they also need to spend time talking about their future. Families can not only survive, they can thrive in the midst of incarceration.

For more resources, visit [tyro365.com](http://tyro365.com).

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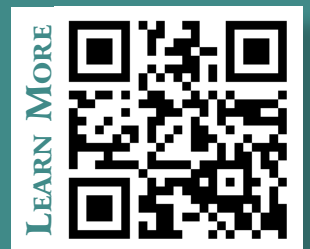
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the importance of family

# after prison



Article by **Team TYRO**

**“The strength of family allows them to uniquely get their feet planted and avoid going back to negative patterns and cycles that may have led them to incarceration in the first place.”**

For the nearly one million Americans going home from prison each year, they will need their families now more than ever. As men and women leave the confines of their cell block, for many, adjusting to the outside world is a big challenge. Not only is it full of social and technological changes, for many their connection to their friends and family have changed too. In order for men and women to have a successful reentry into society, it is crucial for them to have a support system.

The bonds of family may have weakened during a loved one's stint in prison, but that does not mean it is broken. Now that your loved one is out of prison, it is important to get to know them, perhaps that means getting to know them all over again. It goes without saying that people change, and at times it takes time to allow the relationship to flow again. This is especially the case for returning citizens who have been away for a long time. Regardless of the time that has elapsed, know that your loved one who is coming home from prison greatly needs you.

Of the many reasons that family is so important for returning citizens, is they mostly need your time, support and accountability. Time is such a valuable resource and no one understands that more than family. From family visits, to video and phone calls, to gift boxes and letters, there are so many ways family and loved ones have stayed connected while in prison. Now is the time to grow that bond. Just as your loved one needed your support while in prison, they will need you when they come out of prison too.

The day someone walks out of those prison doors, they will need a place to stay. One of the biggest fears for those coming home from prison is housing. As many returning citizens will attest to, it is incredibly unnerving to think of finding a safe place to stay until they get their feet on the ground. There are many great temporary housing programs available, but it is even more

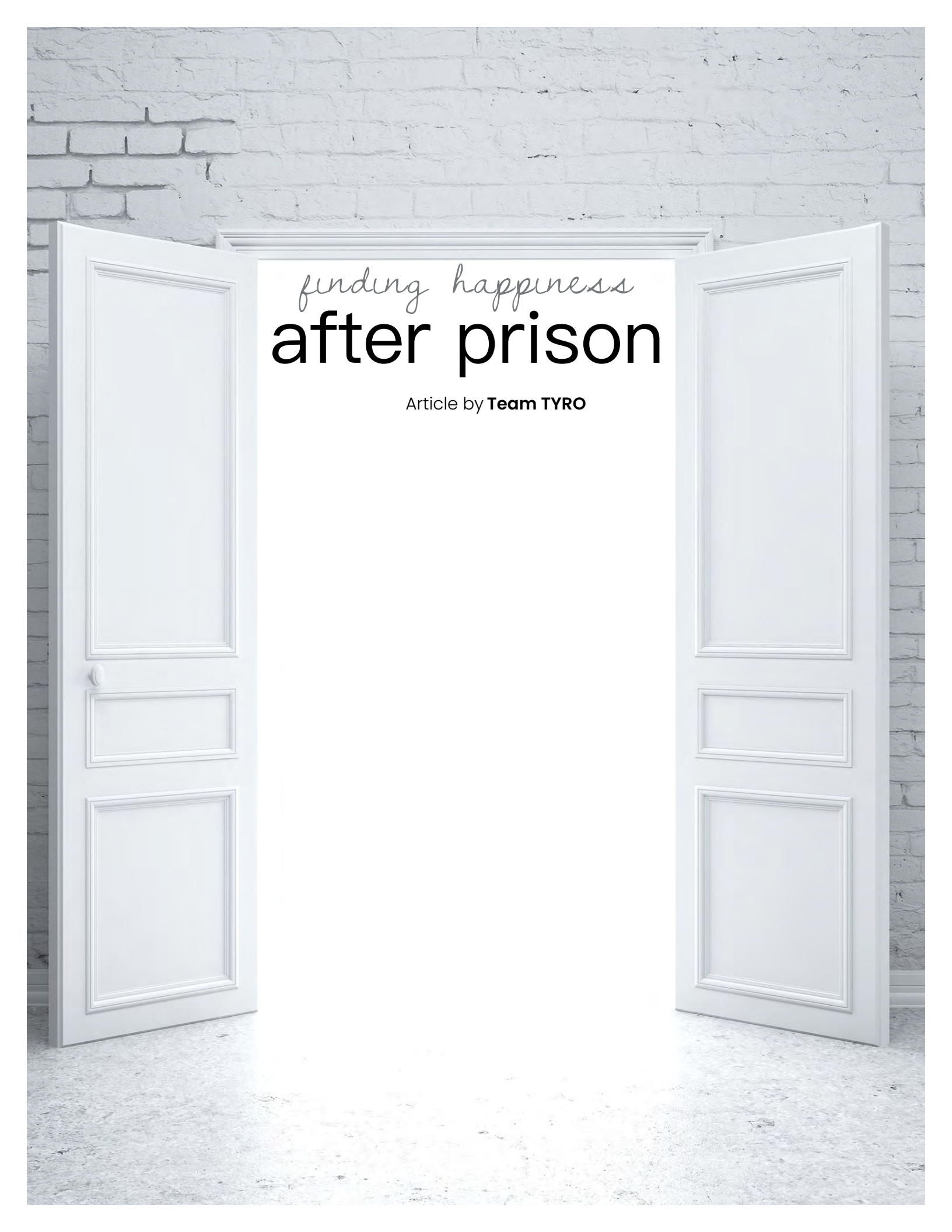
ideal if they are able to stay for a short time at a family member's home. Family will know them best. They will know their vices and their strengths. The strength of family allows them to uniquely get their feet planted and avoid going back to negative patterns and cycles that may have led them to incarceration in the first place.

Upon a loved one's release from prison, though it won't always be a bed of roses, it is important for family to stick together. You have to remember that for someone coming home, it is a new world. Take for instance the advances in technology in the past 10 years alone. It may be an overwhelming situation just to fill out an application online. Transitioning back into society will take time, but taking time to develop a supportive group of family and friends will make coming home from prison all the more easy.



For some, a family support system may not be a feasible option. If that is the case, pursuing accountability groups, or healthy social club or community outreach programs are great places to find a family-like support group. What's important is that, as a returning citizen, you make every effort to put yourself in a position to be healthy and whole in your new world.

For the fathers, mothers, sons and daughters coming home from prison every day, families making the effort to welcome them home will give them the chance for a fresh start in life. It won't be easy, but rest assured, your family is worth the investment.

An open white door in a brick wall. The door is open, revealing a bright white light coming from the other side. The text is overlaid on the white light area.

*finding happiness*  
**after prison**

Article by **Team TYRO**

When someone is first released after incarceration, they will undoubtedly experience culture shock. Finding employment and trying to start fresh is one of the biggest challenges. Being released can bring in many different emotions. Anger, sadness, weakness, embarrassment, and other emotions clutter one's thoughts every day. It's not an easy task, but once you find the courage to find true happiness after prison, it sure is rewarding. Of course, you are happy to be released, however, how does one really truly find happiness after prison?

### LET GO OF YOUR PAST



Yes, you have made mistakes, but that was your past. It is time to move forward. Your past mistakes and failures do not define you. Learn to let go of all of your negative, toxic thoughts. You are allowed to have a life after prison. A new chance to begin again.

### ENJOY THE LITTLE THINGS



Take a moment to stop and enjoy the little things. The nice weather. That first cup of coffee in the morning. A home cooked meal. Sometimes we overlook the simplest things in life and take them for granted.

### FOCUS ON YOU



Remember, this is your chance to begin again. A chance to create the life that you want to create. Focus on your needs and wants. What do you want to do with the rest of your life? What do you want to do with your family? This is your legacy, your chance to start over.

### ESTABLISH GOALS



When you are first released, take the time to journal your thoughts and emotions. It is so important for your mental health. Take the time to establish goals. What kind of future do you want to create for yourself or your family? Make a plan and find a loved one or friend to keep you accountable and help you along the way. They do not have to be big goals, you can start small of course. Even if it is just waking up

and going on a walk everyday, establishing goals can keep you focused in the right direction and it can help with your future legacy.

### FAMILY FIRST



Probably one of the most important parts of happiness is family and having loved ones support you. It is so important to spend time with your family. If you have not mended relationships with loved ones, try to repair those relationships before your release. A support group is so important to have when you first get released and being able to spend quality time with loved ones can provide so many different emotions, especially love and happiness.

### FINDING JOY



The day that you are released from prison is a universally overwhelming moment for all who come home from prison. From managing emotions, to navigating next steps, you are faced with the joyous reality that you are about to re-enter the real world. These two worlds are merging together and it may be more than you can process at this moment. Although you may not have the opportunity to stop and appreciate the moment you are in, you need to give yourself permission to appreciate the moments of joy along the way. You have overcome so much to be where you are in this moment. You are an over-comer and are capable of finding happiness. Take a moment to appreciate how far you have come.

**“ There are seasons of joy and seasons of sorrow in life. As you return home from prison, you will be met with new emotions that will be both joyful and sorrowful. Your happiness is not only defined by the season you are in. ”**

You are capable of finding happiness in every season of life, and you deserve to find happiness. Take stock of where you are and where you have been. Everyone needs a helping hand now and then; use these six tools, take the time to spend with your loved ones, and create a legacy for your future.

# Overcoming Fear

Eight Keys to staying strong during incarceration





## The four walls of a prison retain more than men and women.

For many who are serving time, incarceration can become a place that holds back hopes, dreams, relationships and much more. Although there are many resources available to help those serving time, it can be a debilitating time in the lives of those who are incarcerated.

Fear is a natural reaction to the environment around you. Oftentimes, it is your psyche working to protect you. But fear can also stop you from progress. In fact, trauma-based fear is one of the most common reasons people don't accomplish what they want. For those who are locked up, the trauma that comes from seemingly putting life on hold to live in isolation can be debilitating. If you are in this situation, there is good news.

Overcoming fear may seem like overcoming your greatest adversary, but it is something that everyone has to face. And when you conquer that unseen foe, you take authority of your life again. Here are a few ways to overcome fear.

**Take a break.** If you are distracting yourself with things or people so you don't think about your fears, switch it up and take a break. If all you can think of is your fears, you need to take some time for yourself. Go back to things that bring you joy or meditate in quiet.

**Face your fears head on.** Sit down, take a deep breath, and write out your greatest fears. They may be "I will never have a normal life again", or "I will never have a relationship with my children again", each person's fear is unique, so don't judge a person by what they fear. Once you identify your fear, start making a plan to address it.

**Compare your fear to reality.** Sometimes, overcoming your fear requires you to take a step back and see the situation from another perspective. This new perspective, reality, gives you the opportunity to see what is really going on. It may be that you have to take some steps to get past the situation, but, as long

as there is a tomorrow, there is hope to overcome your fear.

**Find a mentor.** Sometimes our fears are based on partial reality. Getting another perspective on the situation will illuminate the situation. When you are able to see all the facts, it is easier to rationalize your fears and overcome them. The more you are honest with them, the easier it will be for them to help you address your fear.



Don't try to be perfect. The fear of being perfect often stems from mistakes made, or wishing that things had turned out differently. Acknowledging that no one, including yourself, is perfect can place that fear squarely in front of you. Once you realize that perfection is not realistic, you can work to be the best version of yourself. When you work on improving yourself, you are defeating this fear at the same time.

**Find a support group.** No one should have to bear any burden on their own. Getting connected to a support group is a place to heal and grow. When you share your fears, frustration and regrets with others, you will be surprised how many others experience the same things as yourself. There are many support groups available in prison. Make time to check out some of them to find what one is the right fit for you.

Overcoming any fear can take time. You might have to stave off those thoughts and emotions for awhile. But applying some of these skills can help you walk in more freedom every day, conquering each fear you face.

# Mental Health Tips

*for men and women in prison*



Article by **Team TYRO**

We all need a break sometimes. Unfortunately, for those who are serving time, it is almost impossible to find time away from others or take a day off from the demands of life.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, roughly 37% of inmates have reported being diagnosed with a mental illness such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc. This alarming amount of current and former inmates suffering from poor mental health reveals a key issue facing re-entry. Incarceration itself takes its toll on one's mental health. While incarcerated, you lose your freedom. When you don't have freedom, it's harder to take care of yourself. But that doesn't mean you have to let mental illness win. Here is how you can take good care of your mental health while you're locked up.

### Keep Contact with Loved Ones

When you get locked up, you may feel like you're all on your own now, but it doesn't have to be this way. You still have family and other loved ones on the outside. You don't have to deal with incarceration alone. Keep regular contact with your people on the outside. Ask them to visit, use your phone calls, and write letters. Even if they don't respond right away, never give up hope. They are missing you every bit as much as you're missing them.

### Make Friends

Like we said above, you don't have to deal with incarceration alone. You're surrounded by other people, many of whom may be in a similar situation as yourself. You may think that prison isn't a place to make friends, but you can make some potentially life-long friends. You can hold each other accountable and become a support system for each other. Making some friends and giving yourself a support group on the inside can reduce the loneliness of incarceration and help improve your mental health.

### Maintain Good Physical Health

When we're struggling with mental health, one of the first things to start falling apart is our physical health. We tend to stop taking care of ourselves when we're suffering from mental illness. It's important not to let this happen and as a matter of fact, working on your physical health can go a long way towards better mental health too. The best way to maintain good physical health while locked up is to make sure you're eating your three meals a day, making sure one of the meals is healthy, drink as much water as possible, and exercise regularly. Most prisons have weights available for inmates; however, you can always try basic body weight exercises (pushups, sit-ups, dips, squats, etc.) from your cell too. Don't forget to keep up with your physical hygiene too. On a down day, it may seem unimportant to care about your hygiene. Though as insignificant as this may seem, it can dramatically help to increase mental health and boost one's self-image.

### Keep Learning

One of the most important things is to keep learning. This can be a variety of things. From taking up new hobbies like drawing, writing, reading (books or magazines) or cooking if you're able to. What's important is to not become complacent. Understand that learning not only more about yourself and how to do better when you get out, but learning new hobbies that can replace your bad ones can also be a key way of improving yourself and staying out of prison in the future.

We are all on a journey of continuous improvement, and no one has reached success without the help of someone else. Your potential is limitless. Do not define your journey by comparing it to someone else. No matter your situation, don't be afraid to talk to someone. Make an effort to get the help you need and make sure you're taking care of yourself too. Stay strong and stay positive.

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