



Preparing to Go Home

Going home is likely one of the best days you've had in a long time. You are happy but maybe a little scared, too. You know you don't ever want to go back. But you may worry about how you will do that. After seeing your loved ones and enjoying the things you missed, you may think the most important things are to find a place to live, get some money, and see your friends. But you should first focus on you! Becoming the woman you want to be. That alone will drive everything else you do. If you are already out and haven't taken the time to figure yourself out, now is the time to think about who you are and where you are in life.

What does this mean? How can I do that? Why is that so important?

Becoming the woman you want to be means having self-esteem. Some may call it confidence. It is about knowing that you are a good person. Believing in your own worth. You are a valued human being who made a wrong turn in life. That turn resulted in you going to prison. Now that you have served your time and paid your debt, it's time to

move on. This may be hard to believe since you've probably heard a lot of negatives about yourself. But, you can do it! The way we feel about ourselves doesn't just depend on our looks or skills. It doesn't depend on the cards we were dealt in life. It depends on whether we feel good enough or not, lovable or unloved, valuable or worthless. Right now, what are you feeling?

“ Have you ever thought, felt or said to yourself: ”

“I don't like myself.”

“I don't belong here. These people are better than me.”

“There's something wrong with me.”

“I don't have what it takes.”

“Nobody likes or wants me.”

“I want to hide.”

Some women who are just released from prison or jail often feel these things. They feel they are not good enough or needed. They have low self-esteem and feel helpless. They beat up on themselves without giving themselves a chance to succeed.

Good self-esteem gives you power and confidence. When you have healthy self-esteem you know that you have something to offer others. You feel that you can make a positive difference in others' lives. When you think well of yourself you give yourself power. You will have a better chance to succeed in the things you want to do with your life. Will you face challenges? Of course. Will you win at everything? That job interview? The relationship with your loved ones? Your financial goals? Maybe not. But you will have a greater chance of success than if your self-esteem is low and you feel powerless. And you will handle problems better when they come.

As someone leaving jail, your bad self-image may have come from different places. Maybe it was rejection by your parents. Maybe it was neglect. Maybe drugs or alcohol played a role. Maybe you suffered physical and emotional abuse. Perhaps parents or siblings ignored you. Maybe teachers treated you different from others. You may have been bullied. All of these things in your life would have hurt your self-esteem. These very things might have led you to illegal activities. But now you are out or will be out soon. How can you turn your life around? How can you change the way you look at life? How can you take back your power and increase your chance for a happy, healthy life?

Let's improve the image you have of yourself. Then you can go out and feel the power to conquer the world.

How do I get started on building self-esteem? How do I gain more power over my life?

1. **Think:** Find a quiet place where you can think about your life. Get a journal or a notebook. Make a list of what you want from life. Close your eyes and picture the life you want in the future. Graduate college? Have a career? Get married? Get in better shape? Whatever you want from life. Write all of these things down. This will become your roadmap to a new future.
2. **Be honest:** What are the reasons for the things on your list? Why are they so important? Are you doing these things for you? Or are you trying to prove someone wrong? Are you trying to make someone else happy? If your goal is really for someone else, you will be doing it for the wrong reason. In that case, you may not succeed in reaching your goal. Pick the things you want for yourself.
3. **Start small:** Don't try to change everything at once. Focus on one goal at a time. Break it into small steps. Take one step at a time. If you want to graduate college, start learning about it. What school offers the subject you want to study? Find out how much it costs. Figure out if are you are able to attend. (See the *Education* and *Financial Literacy Tipsheets* to learn more.) Don't be scared if there is too much information. Colleges have counselors who will walk you through it. Many reentry programs can help you make a personal career and education plan. There is help for any goal you want to reach.
4. **Create a plan:** Once you decide what you want to achieve, make a plan to get there. This will be your map to success. List the things that you need to do. Give yourself a date to finish each step. Celebrate every step along the way. Check off each item that you complete. That way you can see how well you are doing in meeting your goal.
5. **Don't give up:** It takes a lot of determination to be successful. Try to find a mentor or friend who believes in you - someone who will be there to help you stay on track. (See the *Mentoring Tipsheet* to learn more.) Stay away from negative people. Avoid those who say, "You can't do that." You CAN do it!! Believe it and you can do it.
6. **Go for it:** There is no better time than now to start this change in your life. You are being let out and getting a second chance. You can do this with reflection, patience, determination, and focus. It may be hard. There may be setbacks. But once you have this positive self-esteem you will be empowered for life. Each goal you reach will give you another boost. There will be nothing you can't do. Go for it and don't look back. You deserve a new you.



7 Positive Sayings to Empower You

Below are 7 positive sayings you can repeat to yourself each day. Pick a favorite and say it at the start of each day. Or you can say one each day. Make sure you say one before you go to bed. You can repeat them at any time during the day and in any place. By repeating them daily, you will boost your self-esteem and confidence. It is like re-wiring your brain in a good way!

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1. I am somebody.
 2. I can do anything if I just focus on it.
 3. I am a better person today than I was yesterday.
 4. I am strong and can face any challenge.
 5. I believe in me.
 6. I am not defined by my setting or situation.
 7. No one can take my dreams.
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