

Johnny Bocce's Re-Entry Guide **Published by Compassion Works for All**

*When you come home from prison, we wish you a rich, productive life.
These tips will help you lead that life. –JB*

Go straight. Malcolm X said "To have been a criminal is no disgrace. To continue to be a criminal, that is the disgrace." How about you? Have you made up your mind to quit crime?

Start now to figure out how you can avoid crime when you get home. Then, at home, find friends who will help you stay crime free – rather than lead you to trouble.

Build ties with your loved ones. By getting into trouble, you hurt your family and closest friends. You strained or broke your relationships with them. Yet, you need their help, and they may need yours. Rebuild your relationships now. Let the healing begin.

Find a place to live. Stable housing makes it easier for you to find and keep a job, to keep on your meds, and to get whatever services you need. Sleeping on the street or in a shelter is tough.

Try to line up better options. Will family or friends take you in, at least for a while? How about staying at a halfway house or other "transitional" program that combines shelter with services?

Learn job skills. Start now to learn the skills you will need to get good

Stay clean. Did some addiction or habit play a part in your crime? Decide to stay clean. Figure out how to do it. Figure out what counseling or programs you need. Find that help, in prison and when you get home.

Get work. Paid work earns money you need. Any work, paid or unpaid, helps you feel good about yourself. Too much time on your hands gets you into trouble; work helps by keeping you busy. Every job gives you chances to learn and build your reputation as a reliable worker.

Ask friends and family to find someone who might hire you. Their recommendations increase your chances of getting work. Also try placement programs run by government, non-profit and for-profit organizations. However, a referral from a friend or family member gives you a big edge.

Your criminal history keeps you from many jobs. Sorry. But don't lie about your history. Instead, explain how you turned your life around and why the employer can trust you.

Another possibility: Hire yourself. Consider starting your own business.

Get spiritual support. Both in prison and when you get home, you

jobs. For just about all the good jobs, you will need a high school diploma or GED as well as training and education beyond high school.

Decide the kind of work you would like to do. (Pick your career field.) Figure out what training and experience you will need to get into that field. Be ready to start at the bottom and work your way up.

Even while you are still in prison, try to get work experience or try to learn things that will be useful in your chosen career. In addition, look for education and training that you can take when you get home.

Get identification cards. When you get home, life will be easier if you have I.D. cards. At least one should be like a driver's license: government issued, with your picture and address. However, anything, even a library card or a Social Security Card, is better than nothing at all.

Keep healthy. Life on the outside can be demanding. You need energy to get through the day and strength for manual labor. Get healthy now. Get any medical and addiction treatment you need – both now and when you get home.

Finally, if you are on any meds, be sure you leave the prison with a 30 day supply -- to carry you over until you can line up medical help on the outside.

can lead a richer, more productive life with spiritual support.

Learn to listen to and follow your conscience. Find religious or spiritual advisors. Join a congregation or some other group who can help you find and stay on your spiritual path.

Line up local resources. Discuss your re-entry plans with family, friends and prison counselors. Ask their help in finding resources like ones mentioned in this guide.

If you need help in finding a particular resource, write to us. Tell us the city or town where you will go when you get home. Let us know what specific resources you need to find.

Write to:

Ask Tim
Compassion Works for All
Post Office Box 7708
Little Rock, AR 72217-7708

*We wish you well,
for the rest of your life.
– Johnny Bocce
(former) Compassion Works for All
volunteer*