

G. E. D you would be saving yourself a lot of headaches by receiving your G. E. D. If you do not do this, no matter what institution you are sent to, you will be enrolled in a classroom until you receive it and the only way to get out of it; other than receiving a write up each time you refuse, which you do not want, is to study, pass the test and get your G. E. D. It does not matter what your age is or how long it's been since the last time you attended school. The state deals with head and body counts, not age. This is something all state institutions require and is a part of their rehabilitative efforts and besides, it can only benefit you.

Self-help is a very crucial and necessary part of turning your life around, learning about yourself, improving and bettering yourself but none of this really matters unless you are serious about changing. You must not do this for the board in hopes that it will better your chances at receiving a parole date, nor will it work on the buddy system because when your buddy gets fed up and quit, you quit and that makes you a follower.

You are not working on your buddy or anyone on the parole board panel, you are working on yourself. Self-help can give you those necessary tools in life that will help you to survive and then you can help other individuals once *you* have the skills.

All crimes included some level of **anger** or **violence**. It is up to you to determine which category you fell in during the commission of your crime. Anger is an emotion and violence is a behavior that can express that action.

While it is normal when you become irritated, annoyed, angry and enraged but when you carry that over to violence those issues are what must be addressed so they will not surface again. This is what self-help will give you, your own lane in life.

When you begin your self-help journey you should begin with **Anger Management**, **Alternative to Violence** and **Alternative to Aggression and Domestic Violence**, etc. You should dive into these groups with both feet, willing to listen, participate and take notes with all hands on deck. **Attend any and all victim's (impact) awareness workshop** you will get a firsthand and in depth understanding of just how much your crime impacted their lives. These workshops consist of volunteers (victims and or their next of kin) who come to the prisons and give their firsthand account and testimony of the crime that took place against them or their relative. After attending these workshops,

you will definitely come out with a better understanding and be a better person because of it and not want to commit another crime. If you do not feel this way, that's how you know you still need more work on yourself.

You must get a full understanding of not only what brought you to prison but also *why*. I'm not just talking about your crime. Things did not begin with your crime. There were issues that took place before the crime took place. You must go over those issues, whether with others, in self-help groups or on your own and really take a hard look at what brought you to prison and how to get a handle on those issues.

Every self-help group you get involved in must specifically involve something that had to do with your crime. The key is to deal with all that matters and fixing it.

If your crime consisted of the use of alcohol or drugs, you must attend AA and or NA. These groups are crucial to your sobriety and you getting a parole date. The parole board wants to know, by you attending groups, that you are serious about your sobriety, committed to remaining sober and that you will not get involved in alcohol or drugs again and commit another crime such as the one you were committed for. This includes staying away from those individuals who do not have your best interest at heart.

These groups require long stints of involvement. You must join and not just six months prior to your appearance before the board, join then have a long period in between where you did not attend any group sessions before rejoining. This shows a lack of respect; that you do not take your sobriety seriously, it is a game and you do not care that under those influences you committed a crime or have a willingness to change.

It is not good enough to just say I won't do it again. You must show that you are committed and one way of doing that is by joining those groups that you need to be in and which will provide you with those tools that will be necessary to assist you on your journey.

Besides, AA and NA groups are only once a week for maybe an hour and a half. How much can that hurt when you think about how many people you affected when you committed your crime?

If you refuse to help yourself in these areas you need help in, the board will not help you either. You do not make the rules; you are to abide by them.

Do not fool yourself into believing that just because you were a drug dealer and did not actually do drugs yourself or you owned a liquor store but was not a drinker excuses you from being liable for attending AA or NA. Address your issues.

When you do not address your issues the board will bring the issue into question when they are deciding whether to grant you a parole date or not and usually, it will not go in your favor until you decide to address those issues that brought you to prison.

When you join self-help groups it not only shows your willingness to change and improve it will also show that you will be an asset to your community in society and that you have the desire and willingness to assist others.

You do not have to over load yourself with group participation. Pick one or two catered to those needs you should address and remain active in them through out your time. This will show structure, stability and your willingness to remain disciplinary free.

Always participate in self-help for yourself and self-improvement and never for the purpose of the board. The commissioners presiding over your hearing will be able to determine if you are utilizing your self-help *every day*, if you are not using it at all or if you are faking it.

Therapy, If you are serious about turning your life around you will participate and utilize the new tools you learn in your every day life, even after prison.

If you are advised at any point to seek **therapy** you must take advantage of it. Why not? On the other hand, it would be real advantageous if you sought out this help on your own. Again, this will show your willingness to change and to be a better person.

If you have specific area's you want to concentrate on, like self-esteem, etc, then you can request to see a psychologist who may be able to assist you. You may want assistance in helping you to locate what prompted you to commit your crime, learn about family issues or any other issues you may have overlooked and only a psych can bring them out of you then, you should voluntarily sign up.

Whatever the results they will be placed in your central file where you can review them through the health department, perhaps receive a chrono for the visit and the parole board will also be able to review your good effort at changing.

To put this visit in motion, which will probably take two to three visits, for about 3-4

hours at a time, depending on where you are housed, fill out a medical form, checking the **mental health** box; briefly explain what your reasons are then submit the request in the regular medical departments box. You will be screened within 24 hours after you submit your request by a nurse who will ask you a bunch of questions to make sure you do not want to harm yourself or anyone else; it's a prerequisite before they sign you up for the actual psych. After this initial screening it will take up to 30 days to see the psych so, be patient.

Prior to going to your board hearing seeing a **Psychologist** is also a requirement and will take up to about 4 hours to get through. This is something you prepare for in the same way you prepare for the board. Again, it's required. The psych will ask you personal questions about yourself, your family and your crime so you must be prepared to answer all questions and a ton of them, about 100-150 questions. These questions will be the very same questions you will be answering in front of your parole board panel so, make sure what you say to the psych you say the same to the board panel.

How you respond when speaking of your victim will be recorded, whether you shed tears, get emotional, etc, you must know your victim by name.

You must get it right the first time because there are no do over's. Say what you mean and mean what you say. This will be conducted by a state appointed psychologist who will record everything from your first appearance (first impression is crucial) how you are groomed, attentive, how you answer questions, your mood, tone, etc, and will be scored (low, medium or high) you want to score at least a low but a medium, which is average, will do.

The psyches report is looked upon favorably by the board and could be a precursor to you getting or not getting a date.

You must do all that you can to ensure you score low. Unfortunately, the psych will not tell you the score because the report has to be tabulated and that is not done for about thirty days because the psych sees several individuals in the same day.

Be well groomed, prepared, good attitude, your own files; certificates, chronos, parole plans, remorse letters, book reports (something the board look at favorably) residence, employment offer(s) transportation, etc.