

## The Components To Peaceful Coexistence In Prison

The prisons in California differ one to the next. Various accommodations are made available to meet the requirements of the individual inmate. Security risks, custody levels, medical, and mental health needs are taken into consideration for housing assignments. Prisoners are placed in one or two man cells, in pods of at least six, or in open dorms of a hundred or more. Conditions are unique in each institution. In over a decade-and-a-half of incarceration I found that, no matter the housing situation, there are three points to getting along with others. The keys to a peaceful coexistence in prison are to be courteous, considerate, and kind.

The first key to a peaceful coexistence in prison is to be courteous. Inmates in California live in close quarters. The best way to deal with it is for everyone to have exaggerated manners. Expressions like please, thank you, and excuse me need to be used liberally. People who are rude or argumentative usually get hurt. Men who interrupt, speak loudly, or force issues often find themselves isolated and vulnerable. No one lives well in prison without learning to incorporate some etiquette into their life.

The second key to a peaceful coexistence in prison is to be considerate. Inmates demand a

measure of respect from each other. Lack of it will often cause violence. When someone disregards another's needs, or even their desire for comfort, strife soon follows. Prisoners try to make the best of a stressful environment. Everyone longs for freedom, privacy, and security. Accommodating each other so that each member of the collective can have a small portion of these privileges helps to soothe the pain we all feel.

The third key to a peaceful coexistence in prison is to be kind. Many inmates are used to being abused. When the men behind bars are treated with a caring hand they often respond in like manner. Gentle words, small acts of thoughtfulness, and the ability to listen will thaw the hearts of some of the meanest convicts. People who are locked up are especially sensitive to a con job; it makes them distrustful of each other. Yet, when these damaged individuals see genuine concern for their well-being they will overlook <sup>the</sup> deficiencies in the one with the love for them. The result is a calm interaction that results in unity.

In closing, prison is an unpleasant place to be. Yet, in the midst of this strange environment some truths manifest themselves. The best way to exist at peace is to demonstrate the capacity to be courteous, considerate, and kind. The practices

improve life in the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. I am sure they will do so anywhere. We all need to coexist in peace if our society is to survive.

Next time you feel slighted try responding in a courteous, considerate, and kind way; it may change the outcome. No one ends up in a place like this one for practicing the three components of peaceful interaction. Practice the mores out there or join me here for a lesson in them. It is your choice.

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