

## **How to Adapt to Society After Prison**

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*Reintegrating into society after spending a long time in prison can be challenging and frustrating. With goals, perseverance, a positive attitude and hard work to plan and take action, you can do it. Transition from prison back into society also requires patience. Here are steps you can take to adapt and live your life in the context of society.*

1. Figure out where you're going to live. You may already have a home you can return to. If not, ask a close friend or family member if you can live with them until you are financially able to move into your own place. Make sure the friend or family member does not partake in activities that might cause you to slip back into the former lifestyle that got you into trouble.
2. Take time to think about your goals and aspirations. Then take out a pen and paper and write them down. These might be anything from finding a significant other to starting a career in business.
3. Go through each item on your list one at a time and think about how you can reach your goals. Write a few sentences next to each one about what you plan to do to work toward that goal. Put your list of goals in a place where you can see it every day.
4. Reconnect with friends and family, starting with those who are closest to you. Tell them you would like to reconnect with them, and tell them about your new goals, ambitions and aspirations. These people can support you emotionally and help reconnect you to society.
5. Create a resume if you do not already have one. Search for jobs online and apply for jobs in your local area that suit your experience and skill set.
6. Go to your local bank and open a savings account. Deposit as much money into the account as you can each time you get paid, only keeping as much money as you need for day-to-day living.
7. Search for housing in a neighborhood with minimal crime and violence once you've saved enough money to pay rent. If you cannot afford the rent of an apartment, try getting a roommate that will split the rent with you.
8. Consider going back to school. If it is your goal to obtain a more high-paying job or a job you like, it may require a higher level of education. This may mean going to community college, or pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree. You will need to apply to several schools to increase your chances of being accepted. Research schools carefully before you decide to apply to make sure they offer what you want. You can take out a student loan or seek financial aid, if needed.

9. Take up hobbies and interests you like to do in your spare time. It may be playing basketball with friends, or getting involved in a religious or other type of community group. Having a hobby and doing activities with others will help you live in the present and make new friends.
10. Let go of the past. Do not let a "chip on your shoulder" or anger about your situation impede your progress. Stay positive and move forward. Obtain counseling to discuss emotional issues if possible. If local therapy is unavailable or not an option, try an online site such as Prison Talk to help you with issues.
11. Be honest. Most employers will work with you if you tell them the truth and discuss how you have changed since your experience. Always answer "yes" when a job application asks whether you have ever been convicted of a crime. Practice interviewing honestly with a friend or at the local employment agency.
12. Dress nicely, be polite and avoid slang talk when going to an interview. Do not smoke before an interview, and remain drug free. Make sure you hold identification that isn't affiliated with the corrections facility you were housed in. Do not bring friends or family members to an interview.
13. Take an entry level position if it becomes available to you, even if it's not what you want long-term. Stay with an employer at least six months before looking for another position.
14. Make a list of what agencies offer help in your community and contact each of them to see what potential employment or training is available. Local county job services or job stores can be found in the telephone book under county government listings. Local Goodwill stores are also known for assisting people with criminal backgrounds.
15. Talk to your counselor or parole officer about what types of jobs you should not pursue based on your crime. If you didn't complete high school, work toward your GED now. Look through your local newspaper's classified ads. Use Internet resources for assistance, including Jobs for Felons, the "From Jail to a Job Step-by-Step Guide" or the National H.I.R.E. Network (see Resources).

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