

MAKING THINGS RIGHT

- » The video that accompanies this lesson offers more insight and commentary that will help you prepare an effective narrative as part of your comprehensive mitigation strategy.
- » <https://youtu.be/d9oPA7sj5SQ>

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- » Explain why reconciliation requires more than words—it requires consistent action.
- » Identify specific steps that demonstrate personal growth: education, sobriety, service, and restitution.
- » Draft a forward-looking plan that shows the judge (and later, the Bureau of Prisons) a credible commitment to reform.
- » Connect their sentencing narrative to a broader mitigation strategy that extends through prison, supervised release, and even clemency.

Lesson Summary

This lesson focuses on one of the most important parts of a sentencing narrative: showing what you are doing to make things right. Judges want more than apologies; they want evidence that you are taking responsibility seriously and transforming your life. As Judge Bennett and Judge Bough have emphasized, they want to see the “person behind the case” and understand how you are responding to your past choices.

The lesson begins with a transition from *Lessons Learned*. Recognizing past failures is important, but it is incomplete without clear action steps. Words without follow-through are meaningless. The “Making Things Right” section demonstrates how you are translating reflection into behavior that proves accountability and growth.

To provide an example, in the video you saw that I focused on some core tactics. I encourage you to do the same. Come up with core tactics showing that you're on a self-directed path. You may use my story as an example. To be effective, you will need your own tactics—even if they're similar to the ones I identified to help me grow. I learned from leaders, and I always acknowledge how they helped me.

Who is helping you?

Education. A central step is embracing education. Reading philosophy, history, faith texts, and works on leadership or responsibility is more than passing time—it reshapes values. By documenting your study, you show the judge (and later the Bureau of Prisons) that you are investing in self-improvement. This documentation should continue throughout your prison term, building a record of consistent growth.

Sobriety. Many people enter custody with a history of alcohol or drug use. Incarceration creates forced sobriety, but reconciliation requires turning that into a conscious commitment. Acknowledging past misuse, admitting its role in poor judgment, and committing to treatment or support programs demonstrates maturity and accountability.

Service. Offenses often cause harm to society, even when no one person can be identified as the victim. One way to repair harm is to contribute positively to others. The narrative can outline plans to mentor peers, share lessons through writing or speaking, and help others avoid similar mistakes. Judges respond well when defendants show they are not only focused on themselves but also on preventing harm in the future.

Restitution. Financial accountability is also part of reconciliation. Even when resources are limited, demonstrating a plan to repay restitution shows sincerity. This may include commitments to employment, disciplined living, and prioritizing restitution over personal comfort after release.

The lesson then emphasizes the need for a forward-looking plan. A three-pillar approach—education and personal growth, sobriety and discipline, and service with restitution—provides a clear framework. Each pillar should be supported with concrete actions, not vague promises.

Finally, the transcript ties reconciliation to the broader mitigation strategy. Judges are not the only audience; this narrative will later influence custody



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classifications, program eligibility, home confinement decisions, supervised release outcomes, and even clemency petitions. The knowledge base you are building through this process can support all those stages.

By the end of this section, you will be able to draft a powerful statement that not only acknowledges the harm you caused but also proves you are committed to repairing it for the rest of your life.

Key Takeaways

- » Reconciliation is proven through consistent actions, not just words.
- » Four pillars of making things right: education, sobriety, service, and restitution.
- » Document your journey—judges, probation officers, and prison officials respond to evidence, not promises.
- » Your narrative should support both sentencing and long-term mitigation (PSR, BOP programs, supervised release, clemency).

Self-Directed Exercise

Write a 600–800 word draft titled “Making Things Right.” In it, describe:

1. What steps you have taken since arrest to grow (e.g., reading, journaling, faith, programs).
2. How you are committing to sobriety and discipline moving forward.
3. How you plan to serve others during custody and after release.
4. Your plan for restitution, including work and repayment after release.
Conclude by stating how these commitments will guide you for the rest of your life.

Assessment Questions

1. Multiple choice: Which of the following is not one of the pillars of reconciliation?



- ◇ a) Education
 - ◇ b) Sobriety
 - ◇ c) Avoiding responsibility
 - ◇ d) Restitution
2. Why is documenting your progress (e.g., journals, book reports, profiles) essential in reconciliation?
 3. True/False: Judges are most persuaded by promises of change rather than evidence of consistent effort.
 4. Short answer: Write one sentence that explains how service to others can be part of reconciliation.
 5. Multiple choice: In addition to sentencing, which stages of the criminal justice process can a strong reconciliation plan influence?
 - ◇ a) Prison programming
 - ◇ b) Home confinement
 - ◇ c) Supervised release and clemency
 - ◇ d) All of the above

Making Things Right—Sample from video lesson

The lessons I learned in solitary confinement gave me clarity about the kind of man I did not want to be. But understanding alone is not enough. If my crime showed anything, it is that words without action are meaningless. Since that turning point, I have tried to live in a way that reflects accountability and growth. My commitment is to continue working toward personal development for the rest of my journey, both inside prison and after release.

The first step I took toward reconciliation was to embrace education. Reading opened my eyes, and I resolved never to stop learning. While in custody, I read dozens of books—on philosophy, history, leadership, and personal accountability. I read the Bible, from the book of Genesis, to the book of Revelation. I did not read simply to pass the time, but to change



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the way I think. Education became the foundation for my reform, teaching me that knowledge must be tied to responsibility. My plan is to continue self-directed studying, writing, and documenting my progress as I move forward.

Another step has been to practice sobriety. Before my arrest, alcohol shaped my choices in destructive ways. In custody, I have lived in forced sobriety, but I view this as more than circumstance—I see it as a gift. I have used this time to reflect on how alcohol clouded my judgment, and I have committed myself to a sober path. Going forward, I will pursue every available program, including treatment opportunities, to strengthen that commitment and hold myself accountable.

I have also begun to reconcile by reflecting on service. My crime harmed not just those directly involved but society at large. I cannot undo that harm, but I can work to contribute positively in the future. My plan is to use what I have learned to help others. Whether through mentoring younger people in prison, sharing lessons about accountability, or writing about the dangers of shortcuts, I want my time to count for something more than punishment. Reconciliation means using my experience to prevent others from repeating my mistakes.

I recognize that restitution is also part of reconciliation. At the time of sentencing, I did not have a plan for financial accountability. But as I look ahead, I know that every effort I make must include working toward repairing the financial and social harm I caused. That will require steady employment, disciplined living, and a willingness to prioritize restitution over personal comfort. I am committed to building a plan for lawful income and repayment once I return to society.

My forward-looking plan rests on three pillars:

1. Education and Personal Growth — I will continue studying, reading, and writing. My goal is to document my journey, not for self-promotion but as a way to hold myself accountable and to demonstrate consistent effort toward change.
2. Sobriety and Discipline — I will remain committed to sobriety, participate in treatment programs, and live by the discipline I once resisted.



3. Service and Restitution — I will look for every opportunity to serve others and to meet my obligations, both moral and financial, to those harmed by my crime.

These steps are not short-term promises. They represent the course I intend to follow for the rest of my life. I know that I cannot undo my past. But through reconciliation, I hope to build a future defined not by the damage I caused, but by the effort I make to repair it.

I share these commitments with the Court not as empty words, but as a pledge. Just as solitary confinement forced me to see the flaws in my character, this journey forces me to prove that I can change through action. I accept that this is a lifelong responsibility. Reconciliation is not a single step, but a path I will continue to walk every day.



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