

## LESSON 6: MASTERMIND

*Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a mastermind as “A person who supplies the directing or creative intelligence for a project.”*

Where would you turn if you’re looking for a “mastermind”?

I suppose your answer would depend on your current situation.

If you’re a young man who aspires to become a professional athlete, you might consider someone who has proven himself in the athletic arena.

If you’re looking to create wealth, you may search for someone who has succeeded in building businesses and creating a sustainable enterprise that generates cash flow and monthly profits.

If you’re struggling, you may want to learn from someone who has endured similar challenges—but emerged more potent than ever.

Perhaps that person recovered from an illness. Maybe the person overcame an **abusive** relationship. The person may have gone through a lengthy prison term. Yet rather than allowing the prison term to define his life, he responded to the sentence in ways that allowed him to grow. Perhaps he learned lessons that would translate into new opportunities in prison and upon release.

**When searching for guidance from an expert, we may want to follow a multi-step process:**

- » Step 1: Assess the status of our life at a given stage,
- » Step 2: Assess the merits or the qualifications of the person from whom we want to learn, and
- » Step 3: Create a plan that will help us make incremental progress,
- » Step 4: Put priorities in place,
- » Step 5: Built tools, tactics, and resources that will advance our progress,
- » Step 6: Craft an accountability tool to keep us on track, and
- » Step 7: Execute our multi-step process every day.

I learned those lessons at the start of my journey, when Officer Wilson began bringing a series of books that I could read. I was in the Special Housing Unit, facing a life sentence. Since those leaders had gone through challenges much larger than I would face, I knew that I could learn from them.

From their lessons, I learned that I would need to **introspect**—getting real with the predicament I had put myself in



## Who am I?

As described in the earlier sections, I made terrible decisions as a young man. I didn't listen to my parents, teachers, or guidance counselors. After finishing high school with mediocre grades, I got into trouble with the law. The friends I chose were also violating the law.

- » I began selling drugs when I was 20.
- » Authorities arrested me when I was 23.
- » Prosecutors charged me with violating drug laws.
- » Despite knowing that I was guilty, I refused to accept responsibility.
- » After a lengthy trial, a jury convicted me.

While *languishing* in solitary confinement, I read books that helped question the decisions that put me in my predicament. I considered the authors of those books to be masterminds. Had I learned from their valuable lessons earlier, I would have made different decisions. I would have paid more attention to guidance counselors or mentors in school, I likely would have made better decisions. Masterminds could have helped me avoid problems with the criminal justice system.

Fortunately, it's never too early and it's never too late to begin making better decisions.

Masterminds taught lessons that helped me through prison. Those lessons made all the difference in my life. Through this self-directed course, I'd like to share what I learned. Truthfully, I can sum up those lessons in one sentence: The decisions we make today directly influence our prospects for success tomorrow.

- » In what ways does the system bear responsibility for our success upon release?
- » In what ways we bear responsibility for our success upon release?

There isn't any correct answer or wrong answer to such questions. Yet if we meditate on such questions, we can develop better critical thinking. We can develop responses to help guide us to better decisions. Our deliberateness can lead to better discretion when choosing friends and how we spend our time.

When we're living amid struggle, it's sometimes hard to accept the importance of all our decisions. Reflecting on lessons I learned while serving time brings back memories of the many types of pressure I felt.

- » Prison separates people from our families and communities.
- » We live in an environment where other people watch us all the time.
- » Some people want to build or protect reputations.
- » Others want to run away or hide from their past.

Each person adjusts differently. But each person's adjustment influences the life ahead. Sadly, many people leave prison to experience:



- » Further complications with law enforcement,
- » Unemployment or employment in dead-end jobs,
- » Homelessness.

Good preparations can lead to success after prison. And I'm very passionate about sharing the lessons leaders taught me. Since I served more than 26 years inside, I hope to build credibility with my audience. Throughout this self-directed course on Preparing for Success after Prison—and through all the courses I create—I pledge honesty and promise never to pursue any path I did not follow.

In August of 2013, I completed 9,500 days of imprisonment. Since returning to society, I've been committed to sharing strategies that masterminds taught me. I want people to make the connection between better decisions at the start of their journey and a better chance of building lives of meaning and success.

Since my release, I've worked consistently to improve outcomes for all justice-impacted people. To succeed at a higher level, I will need to influence legislators, persuading them why we need **mechanisms** and incentives that encourage more people to work toward earning freedom. Those lawmakers and prison executives will want to see **data**. To persuade them to change laws or policies, our team will need to prove that people who work through the courses we create at Prison Professors have:

- » Lower levels of violence or disruptive activities,
- » Higher levels of participation in educational programs,
- » Fewer disciplinary infractions,
- » Self-directed growth strategies,
- » Better prospects for higher levels of income upon release,
- » Lower levels of recidivism.

I invite participants to collaborate with me in making this case to improve the outcomes of our nation's criminal justice system. To succeed, we will need to work together. I'll share how this concept of building a self-directed, values-based, goal-oriented adjustment strategy influenced my time in prison and led to massive opportunities once I got out.

If participants want family members to follow along, they can always steer people to our websites:

- » [www.PrisonProfessors.org](http://www.PrisonProfessors.org)

Those who choose may open a profile to document their pathway to success by visiting:

- » [www.PrisonProfessors.org](http://www.PrisonProfessors.org) or sending an invite to:
- » [Interns@PrisonProfessors.org](mailto:Interns@PrisonProfessors.org)



We're 100% **transparent** and 100% committed to improving outcomes for all justice-impacted people.

### The Path:

I'm grateful for every **dialogue** I have with leaders who work in corrections. It takes a lot of courage for administrative leaders from a prison system to interact with me. After all, I'm a man that served time in prisons of every security level. When those leaders open opportunities for us to bring educational content into prisons, they're fulfilling a dream that started for me when I was locked inside a solitary cell, facing life without the possibility of parole.

Since I began serving my sentence, I've worked toward reforms that would empower administrators to incentivize excellence. In my book: *Earning Freedom: Conquering a 45-Year Prison Term*, I describe how the multi-step strategy I learned from masterminds guided my path. They helped me persuade legislators understand the power of incentives. In the California prison system, we have milestone credits; in the federal prison system, we have First Step Act credits.

The political climate is far more conducive to meaningful reform than when I served my sentence. Many people in leadership positions believe that we need to teach and inspire people at the start of the journey; **opposing** forces want to take us backwards, and repeal laws that incentivize people to earn freedom through merit.

We need to continue efforts to help more people grasp the importance of motivating people as the days turn into weeks, the weeks turn into months, and the months turn into years.

As participants work the lessons of our course, I'll present what I learned from masterminds. They inspired and motivated me, teaching me to introspect and think about the decisions that brought me to prison. Through those reflections, I learned how to engineer a pathway that would lead me home, with my dignity intact and opportunities to prosper.

We're always making choices. Those choices are like sowing seeds. We can choose to **sow** seeds that produce gardens of **abundance**; we can also sow seeds that lead to thorns of misery. Regardless of where a person may be, I encourage people to think about the seeds they're planting. The seeds we're sowing today will undoubtedly influence the future we create going forward.

While incarcerated, I changed the way I think. Those changes put me on a different path from the one I followed during my reckless youth.

Since being released from prison, I feel obligated to pass along lessons that allowed me to be "the change that I want to see in the world," as Mahatma Gandhi advised. I'll share the strategies that empowered me through prison that I've continued using since I returned to society. In sharing these stories and lessons, I hope to teach and inspire others like leaders taught and inspired me.



Through this course, participants will see that I began working to prepare for success back in 1987—at the very start of my imprisonment. After a jury convicted me of every count in my indictment, I decided to change. I still remember the day that I started looking for lessons from leaders. I wanted to find people that could give me the strength to grow. I found those leaders in a philosophy book.

At that time, I didn't even know how to spell philosophy. I didn't know what the word meant. In flipping through the pages of a book I came across in the jail's book cart, I found true masterminds. Reading their stories taught me lessons. Those lessons helped me adjust in high-security penitentiaries, medium, low, and minimum-security prisons. I finished 26 years with the Bureau of Prisons in August of 2013. The adjustment in prison opened opportunities to succeed upon release.

Lessons from leaders helped me to understand how and why I should use time effectively and deliberately. To grasp the influence of every decision, we need to connect the dots from struggle to success.

Let me provide a brief background.

If you're holding this workbook in your hand, you have tangible proof that a person can build a life of meaning and relevance after release from prison. Administrators expose people inside to many courses and programs. But it takes a lot of courage for them to allow books and courses from an author who served decades inside.

I strive to earn their trust and the trust of participants who work through our self-directed courses.

Let me begin by sharing more details of the story that led me through prison and back to society. I'm not like another course creator that didn't experience what participants are going through. I went through every stage of the journey, including:

- » Initial arrest,
- » Pretrial detention,
- » Criminal trial and conviction by a jury,
- » Presentence investigation,
- » Sentencing,
- » Designation to a high-security United States Penitentiary,
- » Transition to a medium-security Federal Correctional Institution,
- » Transition to a low-security Federal Correctional Institution,
- » Transition to minimum-security camps,
- » Transition to a halfway house and home confinement,
- » Early termination of Supervised Release,
- » Success after prison.



For these reasons, I'm more of a tour guide than a travel agent. I've gone through similar experiences, and I know the pain of confinement. I won't be a travel agent who tells a person where to go or what to do.

Through these self-directed lessons, people will see how adjustment strategies transformed my life while serving decades inside.

### **Decisions that Led me to Prison:**

Despite having every opportunity to build a life of relevance and meaning as a younger man, I made one wrong decision after another. In 1982, Shorecrest High School in North Seattle awarded me my diploma. I wouldn't say that I earned my diploma. Looking back, I freely admit that I was a lousy student.

Following high school, I made undisciplined decisions. When I was 20, I watched the movie *Scarface*. The lead character, Tony Montana, made an impression on me. After seeing the movie, I started inquiring about how much dealers would pay for cocaine. I'd never sold cocaine before, but I wanted to learn.

Once I understood more about the market, I traveled to Miami, searching for a supplier. After finding one, I calculated that I could earn a profit while shielding myself from prosecution. Quickly, I began to recruit others to join a distribution network. Not understanding the criminal justice system, I made more bad decisions. If I didn't handle the cocaine directly—I **deluded** myself—I'd never get caught. I'd pay people to retrieve the cocaine in Miami, drive it to Seattle, and distribute the cocaine to customers.

For 18 months, trafficking in cocaine became a way of life. I lied to my family and anyone else who asked about what I was doing. On August 11, 1987, the drug-dealing phase of my life ended.

Three men stood close by when I stepped out of an elevator. As I approached, they asked my name. When I responded, the men each drew a handgun. In an instant, I saw the barrels of three different pistols, each pointing at my head. I didn't resist when they ordered me to raise my hands.

The agents frisked me. Then they slammed cuffs around my wrists. That started my institutional routines. The agents locked me in a holding center in Miami, Florida. While being processed inside, I learned that a grand jury indicted me for operating a continuing criminal enterprise and other drug-related charges. The indictment charged that I'd been selling cocaine in Seattle and other cities for about 18 months before the DEA caught me.

The charges carried a possible sentence of life without parole.



At the time of my arrest, I only cared about getting out. Although I knew I was guilty of every charge, my defense attorney told me what I wanted to hear rather than what I needed to hear. He said:

There's a big difference between an indictment and a conviction.

Instead of using good critical thinking, I agreed to let the attorney navigate my way through the judicial process. That strategy didn't work out so well.

My attorney admonished me, telling me not to talk with anyone else in jail. He told me to leave everything in his hands. Foolishly, I held on to a belief that I could win. I would walk out if my attorney could persuade a jury that I wasn't guilty. He coached me on how I should present myself. By lying when I took the witness stand, denying my criminal behavior, I committed the crime of perjury.

My lies didn't fool the jury. The **foreman** read the jury's verdict that convicted me on every count. After hearing the guilty **verdict**, I began to understand the depths of my trouble. Later, I realized much more.

The guilty verdict would change my life forever. United States Marshals locked me in chains and led me out of the courtroom. They returned me to the Pierce County Jail. Suddenly, I was a convicted felon rather than a pretrial detainee. Jailers locked me in solitary. The pressure weighed on me, crushing my spirit, extinguishing hope.

I didn't know what type of sentence my judge would impose, but the conviction exposed me to a life sentence without the possibility of parole. Since I'd never been in prison, the prospects of such a sentence didn't make sense.

Confined to a solitary cell, I remember lying on the rack. Although I wasn't religious, I started to pray, asking God for strength. It didn't make sense to pray for release. By then, I accepted that prison would become a big part of my life. Since I couldn't change the past, I had to deal with reality. Instead of asking for release, I prayed for strength and guidance. Challenges would come as I made the switch from jail to prison. I felt determined to prevail.

### **Philosophy:**

While locked in confinement, I prayed for guidance. In response to those prayers, I got a philosophy book. Lessons in that book helped me to think differently, and by learning to think differently, I started to restore confidence. By restoring confidence, I began to feel better.

Some readers who live in challenge circumstances may find it strange that I would turn to philosophy, and I understand.

Until authorities locked me in jail, I hardly read at all. I hadn't read a single book since finishing high school five years earlier, in 1982. In a jail cell, I didn't have anything besides read-



ing to occupy my mind, and I wanted to change. I remember looking through the stacks of books on a book cart. I saw an abundance of Westerns and romance novels.

Fiction and storybooks would pass the time, but ignoring the problems created by my earlier decisions would not help me. Instead, I needed to solve problems. I needed guidance.

With proper guidance, I believed that I would grow stronger. I would need that strength to cross through years or decades of prison. I'm grateful to an officer who brought me a two-volume book called *A Treasury of Philosophy*. The books were part of an "anthology," which included submissions from many authors who wrote about their "philosophy."

The more I read, the more I understood that I had lived by bad philosophy.

Holding the book of masters in my hand made me feel as if I had the key to begin building a better life.

### **Socrates:**

When I flipped through the pages, I found a story about Socrates. I knew that other people considered Socrates, a man of great wisdom. He lived more than 2,000 years ago, but I didn't know much about him.

As I read the first paragraphs of that chapter, I wholly identified with Socrates because Socrates was locked in a prison cell. His imprisonment caught my attention. I learned that judges sentenced Socrates to death. He waited in that jail cell for his execution date.

Socrates received a visit from his friend Crito. During the visit, Crito told Socrates that others had arranged for him to escape. With the foolproof plot, the jailer agreed to unlock the gate. Socrates could walk out, escaping his execution. Besides that, friends would support Socrates in exile. He could live the rest of his life in peace.

In my mind, Socrates should have **seized** the initiative. I remember lying on that rack and fantasizing that someone would come and open my cell. If I could escape my punishment, I would leave in an instant. More than anything, I wanted to get out of jail or avoid the long-term that the judge ordered.

Socrates responded differently, declining the offer from Crito. He said he would remain in his cell and let the system kill him. When Crito asked why he would make such a choice, Socrates responded.

He said that he lived in a democracy. As a citizen, he had to accept the good with the bad. He had accepted the good of society. He disagreed with the laws that resulted in his conviction and punishment. But Socrates wanted to be a man of principle. He considered himself a citizen of a democracy. As such, he said that he had the right to work toward changing laws he disagreed with, but not to break laws.



**Influence on my Adjustment:**

Socrates' message influenced my time in solitary. I remember setting the book on my chest while I stared at the ceiling. Although the judge hadn't sentenced me yet, I had more clarity. I knew that I wanted to change. Regardless of how many years my judge would impose, I wanted to grow. I wanted to come out of prison differently from how I went in.

Like Socrates, I wanted to serve my sentence with dignity. I created my problems and would be responsible for creating my solutions.

Yet I didn't know how to define "serving a sentence with dignity." The jail didn't provide much in the way of guidance that I could see. Instead, I felt the walls and ceiling closing in, suffocating my spirit and hope.

What, if anything, could I do to live a life of meaning and relevance?

This course shows what I learned from masterminds like Socrates and how I came to answer that question. As participants work through the course, I encourage them to consider the same types of questions. Mediating on such questions changed my life.

**Take 30 Minutes**

Use this time to begin building your story. Take time to write your story on a separate page. To prime your story, consider writing your biography in a way that responds to the following four questions:

» 6-1: Intro: What's your name and what's your background?

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» 6-2: Supporting Body 1: In what ways did your background influence the decisions that led you to prison?

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» 6-3: Supporting body 2: In what ways did your behavior influence the broader community?

» 6-5: Supporting body 3: In what ways are you working to reconcile, or make amends?

» 6-6: Conclusion: In what ways will stakeholders consider your adjustment as being extraordinary and compelling?

With hopes that course participants find me a worthy guide, I'll share strategies that anyone can use time inside to prepare for success outside. Each lesson offers strategies that leaders taught me, and I used them while crossing through 9,500 days in prison.



I'm convinced that anyone can use time in prison to prepare for success. If participants are willing to learn from the same masterminds who taught me, I believe they can open new opportunities.

Our country incarcerates millions of people. By learning how to think differently and applying what they know, participants in this self-directed course may create opportunities that allow them to return to society strong, with their dignity intact. They will learn how to seize opportunities and how to create opportunities.

The decisions we make influence our prospects for success.

Toward the end of my time in prison, I wrote *Earning Freedom: Conquering a 45-Year Prison Term*. In that book, I provide much more detail about my journey through prison. If a participant doesn't have access to *Earning Freedom* in the prison's library, consider requesting it from a friend. If you don't have a friend to send the book, consider writing to the following address to request a copy:

Prison Professors  
1205 BMC Drive / Suite #706  
Cedar Park, TX 78613

Email: [Interns@PrisonProfessors.org](mailto:Interns@PrisonProfessors.org)

If we have resources available, we will send the book without charge. It's one way of showing our commitment to helping people in prison prepare for success.

Those who read *Earning Freedom* may follow along the entire journey, starting with the day of my arrest, on August 11, 1987. The story takes readers through jails and prisons. It shows the relationship between decisions in prison and opportunities after release.

As a companion to *Earning Freedom*, I wrote *Prison: My 8,344th Day*. This self-directed workbook shows how to maintain discipline and the importance of daily decisions.

On August 13, 2012, after 25 years inside, I transferred from the federal prison camp in Atwater to a halfway house in San Francisco. Then I served the final six months of my sentence in home confinement—in a newly constructed house I purchased during my first weeks in the halfway house.

After getting some traction in the career I was building, I wrote another self-directed workbook, *Success After Prison*. I wrote that workbook with hopes of providing pathways people in prison could use to prepare for success. I wanted them to see the relationship between a person's decisions in prison and prospects for success upon release.

Masterminds taught me those lessons, and I intend to pass them along through the courses we create through Prison Professors. Make a commitment to lifelong learning.



Regardless of where we may be, we always have opportunities to change. When we change how we think, we may alter how we act. If we start sowing seeds for a better future, we simultaneously begin to restore our confidence and build self-esteem—even if we're locked in prison. Remember, today's decisions directly influence our prospects for success in the months, years, and decades ahead.

If we build a stronger mindset, we can adjust to prison in ways that put us on a pathway for more opportunities. A strong mindset helped me commit to positive programs while I served my sentence. It influenced the friends I chose, and my attitude influenced every step I took along my journey.

In my 16th year of the sentence, I got married. I nurtured that marriage through the final decade that I served. When my wife would visit me, I'd tell her about the career I wanted to build when I got out. Besides becoming successful in business, I pledged to pay tribute to the master-minds that influenced my adjustment. I intended to:

- » Create resources that people could use to adjust well as they went into prison.
- » Build bridges that would connect people who served time with employers.
- » Help more Americans understand steps we could take to improve prison systems across America.

To build credibility, I knew that I would need to become successful in society. For that reason, I pledged to my wife that within five years of being released from prison, I would build assets worth \$1,000,000. If I could achieve that goal, I believed others would be more inclined to believe in the lessons I offered.

Experience convinces me that anyone can sow seeds for success, even if that person starts inside a solitary cell. The key would be to help people believe that it's never too early (and never too late) to prepare for a **triumphant** return to society.

Below I offer a summary of what I experienced after leaving the Federal Prison in Atwater, California.

**August 13, 2012:**

- » My wife picked me up from the Atwater prison and drove me to the halfway house in San Francisco.

**August 14, 2012:**

- » My case manager in the halfway house gave me a pass to the DMV to take the driver's license exam.

**August 15, 2012:**

- » I had my first day of work at a job I coordinated before I left prison.



**August 30, 2012**

- » Despite having a 0-0-0 credit score, I persuaded a real estate developer to finance a new house that his company would build for me.

**November 24, 2012**

- » The San Francisco Chronicle published a front-page story about my journey through prison and returned to society.

**February 12, 2013**

- » I transitioned from the halfway house to home confinement.

**June 14, 2013**

- » While still in the halfway house, I traveled to San Diego to speak for a panel of federal judges about the prison experience.

**August 12, 2013**

- » I finished my obligation to the Bureau of Prisons after 9,500 days.

**August 28, 2013**

- » I began teaching as an adjunct professor at San Francisco State University.

**October 17, 2013**

- » NBC news profiled me as I taught in a San Francisco jail, at San Francisco State University, and UC Berkeley.

**February 11, 2014**

- » I gave a TED talk for a Silicon Valley Joint Venture Conference in front of more than 1,500 business leaders.

**April 2, 2014**

- » The PBS NewsHour profiled me on a news segment about efforts to bring positive reforms to the prison system.

**May 29, 2014**

- » I moved from San Francisco Bay to Newport Beach to expand my career with real estate investments.

**July 1, 2014**

- » The Robina Institute invited me to serve as an advisory council member for a panel to assess probation and parole procedures in 50 states.

**August 12, 2014**

- » Federal Judge Susan Illston granted early termination of my Supervised Release with support from the AUSA and my Probation Officer.



**January 15, 2015**

- » I launched PrisonProfessor.com, which became PrisonProfessors.com when I partnered with Shon Hopwood in 2017.

**February 13, 2015**

- » I keynoted a symposium on Federal Sentence reform at UC Hastings Law School.

**March 23, 2015**

- » I launched the Earning Freedom podcast on iTunes and MichaelSantos.com.

**April 30, 2015**

- » I purchased my second rental property.

**September 30, 2015**

- » I purchased my third rental property.

**October 20, 2015**

- » I purchased my fourth rental property.

**January 20, 2016**

- » I purchased my fifth rental property.

**June 20, 2016**

- » I purchased my family residence, then later turned the house into a rental property.

**June 24, 2016**

- » I traveled to Guam and Saipan to deliver Earning Freedom products that I sold to the US Attorney and the Federal Court System.

**January 25, 2017**

- » I launched Earning Freedom, Inc.

**May 2018**

- » I launched PrisonToParadise.com and Alternative Investment Properties, LLC.

**July 31, 2018**

- » My wife and I invested \$1.4 million to become a limited partner in a property development in Costa Rica.

**December 30, 2018**

- » I became entangled in civil litigation that exposed me to more than \$100 million in civil liability, risking all the assets I accumulated after my release from prison.



**January 13, 2019**

- » I settled the civil litigation, agreeing to walk away from \$5 million in assets I'd built since leaving prison in 2013.

**January 15, 2019**

- » I launched Compliance Mitigation, a new company to help small- and medium-sized businesses minimize their exposure to litigation, investigations, or charges for white-collar crime.

**January 4, 2021**

- » I signed a contract with the television network CNBC to film a new reality-based television show that profiles how to use time in prison to prepare for success.

**February 1, 2021**

- » I received confirmation from the California Department of Corrections for a new purchase order to bring the Preparing for Success After Prison Program to people serving sentences in California.

**September 1, 2022**

- » I visited the North Central Regional Office of the Bureau of Prisons to present ideas to the Regional Director and the Wardens presiding over 20 federal prisons in 12 states.

**Fall, 2022**

- » I began introducing our Preparing for Success after Prison course in federal prisons across the North Central Region of the federal Bureau of Prisons.

**Summer, 2023**

- » I hired a researcher from UCLA to begin collecting data that would allow us to show more people the value of incentivizing excellence. The research we collect will further our goals of bringing reforms such as:
  - ◇ Broader use of incentives for all,
  - ◇ Reinstatement of parole boards,
  - ◇ Meaningful access to commutations and compassionate release

If I could emerge successfully after 26 years as a federal prisoner, any other participant could do the same.

**Take 10 Minutes**

- » 6-7: What methodical steps can you begin taking today that will influence the career you lead upon release?



**PREPARING FOR SUCCESS AFTER PRISON**  
BE THE CEO OF YOUR LIFE

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue or grey lines across its entire width, typical of notebook paper. The lines are uniform in thickness and spacing, providing a guide for handwriting. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

## AFTERWORD

### Build a Record of Your Progress

On behalf of everyone at Prison Professors Charitable Corporation, thank you for working through this course.

Our nonprofit provides free educational resources to help justice-impacted people prepare for success. We encourage participants to use their time intentionally, develop useful skills, and create a written record of their growth.

During the 26 years I served in federal prison, I learned that personal development becomes more powerful when we document it. I earned academic degrees, wrote books, developed release plans, and preserved evidence of the work I completed. That record helped others understand how I was preparing for success.

You can build a similar record through a free Profile on PrisonProfessors.org.

### What to Include in Your Profile

Use your Profile to document:

- » Biography: Describe your background, the lessons you have learned, and how you are preparing for success.
- » Journal Entries: Record the decisions, habits, and actions that demonstrate continued growth.
- » Book Reports: Explain what you learned from each book and how you will apply those lessons.
- » Release Plan: Describe your plans for housing, employment, education, finances, health, family responsibilities, and community support.
- » Accomplishments: Record courses, work assignments, certificates, commendations, and other evidence of progress.



A Profile does not guarantee any particular outcome. It gives you a way to show the work you are doing and the person you are becoming.

## How to Create Your Profile

Ask a family member or trusted friend to: Visit [PrisonProfessors.org](http://PrisonProfessors.org).

Select Profiles.

Follow the instructions to create your Profile.

Save the login information securely.

Add the written work you send to them.

Your family member or trusted contact may update the Profile on your behalf.

## Points and Leaderboards

Participants may earn points when they add written work to their Profiles. The leaderboards recognize people who consistently document their progress.

Profile participation is optional. Profile points do not determine First Step Act eligibility or the award of First Step Act time credits. Building a Profile is separate from completing Preparing for Success After Prison under the supervision of an authorized facilitator.

## When You Need Assistance

If you do not have a family member or trusted friend who can help, contact our team. Email: [Interns@PrisonProfessors.org](mailto:Interns@PrisonProfessors.org). Or use the US Post office:

Prison Professors Charitable Corporation

1205 BMC Drive, Suite 706

Cedar Park, TX 78613



When writing, include:

- » Your full name
- » Your registration or identification number
- » Your institution
- » Your return mailing address
- » A clear explanation of the assistance you need

You may also send biography updates, journal entries, book reports, release-plan sections, and other written material for your Profile. Keep copies of everything you send whenever possible.

## Continue Building

Your past will always remain part of your story, but it does not have to control your future. The decisions you make today can influence how others perceive you and what opportunities may become available later.

Do not wait for an opportunity before beginning to prepare. Build the record now.

With hope and respect,

*Michael Santos*

Founder

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