

HOW CAN I BEST HELP MY FRIEND?

(Note: Male pronouns are generic.)

Careful! If your emotions are running high (Fear! Anger! Shame!), this might be a bad time to be making major decisions. Slow down. Cool down. Think. Hold your tongue. Seek out trusted advice.

Be there for him! Communicate to him that your love and care for him are NOT in jeopardy because he's in jail.

Be stable! Be dependable! Don't make promises you maybe can't keep. Don't allow yourself to be manipulated into doing things uncomfortable for you.

Listen to him. Don't debate or express doubt or disbelief. Accept what you're told and give yourself time to think it over before committing to any action.

A "rule of thumb": Don't make it a practice to do for others what they can do for themselves. Inmates have access to phonebooks, writing materials, stamps, food and basic hygiene needs. Jail inmates need to NOT have everyone else "go to bat" for them. As much as possible, they need to act on their own initiative!

Don't believe everything you see & hear on TV. Jail & Prison officials are very concerned for the safety of their inmates. If your friend truly believes he's in danger AND he gives you permission to do so, call the Jail or Prison officials. Be calm & polite.

If you might think that some lifestyle changes would be in order for your friend, don't be afraid to talk about them. Better yet, maybe it would help your relationship if you'd take the lead in making those lifestyle changes. (Suggestion: Consult your Pastor or the Jail Chaplain.)

SHOULD I BAIL HIM OUT?

Some questions to ask yourself:

1. Can I really afford it? Am I "robbing" my own family of needed money?
2. What was he doing before he went to jail? Working every day? Getting high? (When you bail him out, he will most likely pick up right where he left off.)
3. Is getting out really a desperate need? (Suggestion: Call the Jail Chaplain.)
4. How will his getting out affect others for whom you're responsible?
5. Is this a pattern? Did it help the last time? Did he change?

Note: If the person is the family's main bread-winner, or their presence is somehow essential for the family to function, or there's a medical issue, there may be good reasons for bailing someone out of jail.

On the other hand, very often jail is "just what the Doctor ordered." Many in jail have been living "out-of-control" and going to jail really may be the best thing that could happen to them.

HOW DO I COMMUNICATE WITH MY FRIEND IN JAIL?

1. Write a letter! Mail is welcomed by inmates! Most never get any mail! If your friend is in a County Jail, just his name and the address of the jail will work. If he's in a State or Federal Prison, get his prisoner number and address from a family member or search on-line for the information.

2. You cannot telephone your friend but you can accept collect calls. Beware! These collect calls are VERY EXPENSIVE! I encourage you to set limits and guidelines.
3. You can visit your friend, IF you're on his visiting list. Of course, you may only visit within pre-set times.

Note: Communicating on the phone may expose you to much frantic manipulation. (Especially if this is his first time in jail.) Inmates want out! You'll need to be perceptive and insightful to determine the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

On the other hand, communicating by letters allows you to control your side of the conversation and have the time to seek advice before committing yourself to action. It also gives both you and the inmate an opportunity to invest some time and work into your relationship and develop some patience as well as reading and writing skills. It will also save on your phone bill.

SOME VISITING TIPS

(from a lady who's visited her husband for 14 years)

- * Call the facility to verify the ID's required to visit.
- * Call facility before leaving (and while on the road) to make sure there are visits (I have been turned away after driving 6 hours because of lockdown).
- * Make sure inmate is not in segregation as visitors may be required to check in sooner and/or length & frequency may change.
- * Make sure there are visits left for the week/month.
- * Don't wear clothes with metal on them, especially underwire bras for women, as they may set off the metal detector.
- * Don't wear hair accessories as some

- staff may make you remove it before visit (plastic headband, etc.)
- * Don't wear thick Kotex pads as you may be required to have a strip search if it is felt during shakedown.
 - * Ask ahead-of-time what you can bring in to visiting room for infants.
 - * Get approval for any medications the visitor needs to bring in with them (and bring copy of approval letter).
 - * Bring quarters for lockers.
 - * Bring small bills to refill vending machine card (in case machine doesn't register your money--this way you won't lose \$20.00 at one shot).
 - * Bring jacket in visiting room as they can be very cold at times.
 - * Keep all receipts of money orders sent until verified by inmate that it has been received.
 - * If very important documents are mailed to facility (to administration OR inmate), send them certified, return receipt
 - * Be wary if a "worker inmate" strikes up a conversation frequently or asks for help when released.
 - * Don't start doing favors for other inmates or you'll end up with very many inmates contacting you.

This information has been put together to answer some of the most frequently asked questions I've received as I've ministered in Corrections for over 20 years. Some of the above comes from my own experience of being an inmate. Please allow me to tell you a bit of my story.

In 1979, at the age of 30, I was in jail again. In fact, I'd been in-and-out so many times I'd lost count. I was a drug-addict, a drunk, and in the process of ruining my second marriage. I'd tried many times to make changes in my life but without any lasting success.

I was miserable. My life was indeed out-of-

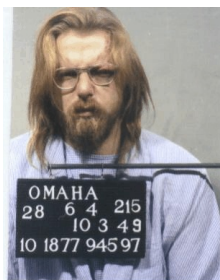
control. Going to jail probably rescued me from a drug overdose or a fatal motorcycle wreck. My "cellie" was reading a Bible. Although I had no respect for the phony "jailhouse religion" I'd seen over the years, I was so miserable that for the first time in my life I began to read the Bible.

To make a long story short, I put my faith & trust in Jesus Christ. Jesus did something for me that I'd been unable to do for myself: He changed my life!

I was released in March of 1980 and immediately got involved in a church. The men there modeled for me what it was like to be a real man, husband and father. I also immediately got a job - temporary labor at first until God supplied me with a full-time job.

A few years later, I got the opportunity to go to Bible College and in 1986 began working in Jail Ministry.

If you'd like more information on how to best help your friend in jail or prison, or would like additional material that has been effective in promoting life-changes in jail & prison inmates, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thanks!



Before



After

Chaplain Tom Beatty
Office: 630-723-3406 Cell: 331-465-4018
tbeatty@waysidecross.org

MY FRIEND'S IN JAIL! HOW CAN I HELP?



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

New Life Corrections Ministry
A Division of
Wayside Cross Ministries
215 East New York Street
Aurora IL 60505
630-723-3406