

GUIDELINESS FOR EX-PRISONERS

Skills in everyday life:

I. Basic life skills (funds management, banks)

1. *Open a bank account*

- You can open your bank account directly at a chosen branch, on the Internet or via the hotline. Opening and running an account is usually free of charge and sometimes even bears an additional interest.
- Bank account offers a solution which gives many opportunities regarding various aspects of life. It definitely eases everyday functioning as well as helps with saving. Having a bank account facilitates activity and assists in saving time, e.g. one can make payments via the Internet, do the shopping, pay the bills, pay off the arrears and also perform transactions without leaving home.
- Bank account is a substantial facilitation for employers (usually they require their employees to have one) and the employees (payment can be made by the employer in the form of a bank transfer) without using cash ("cash in hand"). It is both a safe and convenient way of transferring the funds which go directly into the account earlier indicated by the employee.

2. *Make a basic expense schedule*

- At the beginning learn from the employer what sum of the basic salary will be transferred into your bank account every month (the net amount, i.e. "on hand"), next start planning your expenses.
- Make a list of fixed expenses which you will bear every month: the rent and housing fees (the bills for the provided services: phone, the Internet, public transport, water, electricity, etc.); transport costs (fuel or the public transport tickets)), instalment loans/repayment of liabilities (e.g. seizure by a bailiff) etc. The costs of food, clothing and entertainment should also be included.

By creating a list of expenses you will learn what your true costs of living are like and get a possibility to maintain control of your own finances. It will also help you to assess the financial background, i.e. how much money is left once the most important liabilities have been paid. You will be able to verify whether you can afford the next expense without worrying where to get the money from to survive till the end of the month.

- Make a list of irregular expenses, the ones which are incurred once or a few times a year: occasional events (birthdays, name days), holidays, car service/repair, holiday travels, renovations and others. While looking at your financial condition, decide what amount of money you must put aside in order to set up your own fund of irregular expenses. This amount can be assigned to the fixed expenses. Thanks to this kind of a solution you will create “financial backing” which will ensure your financial security for the so called “rainy day”.
- Create a personal saving scheme. Social and discretionary bonuses or other funds obtained from the employer under supplementary remuneration can be used for a clearly defined alternative goal, e.g. buying a new TV set. Thanks to this you will make your objective clear and create a plan of your saving, putting aside, e.g. the funds from the received bonus, which will allow you to, within a few months/years, realize your dreams without bearing losses and running into debts.

3. Don't run into debts

– Do not take credits, loans and payday loans

- If you intend to use them it is worth taking credits or loans provided by banks, not the so called “shadow banks” or the “payday loans”. The services offered by these entities are much more expensive to pay off than the credits or loans obtained at the bank.
- The best option, however, is to avoid making commitments which will burden our household budget every month, especially in the situation when one has no steady job and stable financial position.
- Should anything happen which will make paying off the debts impossible, we may become subject to criminal liability.

– Do not make additional commitments if you already have loans

- Having taken a credit/loan we may be unable to pay off the new debt which might result in a criminal liability.
- When the borrower at the moment of incurring liabilities at the bank already knows that he is unable to comply with the contractual obligations (will be unable to pay off the credit/loan), he will be subject to liability under the criminal law.

- Should we stop paying off the loan instalments due to the circumstances that took place after the conclusion of the credit/loan agreement (e.g. loss of the job, illness, other random events), then the borrower does not become subject to criminal prosecution.

– **Remember that providing false credit information is a crime:**

I. **Self-esteem and building credibility**

1. **Think of yourself well** - what your opinion on a given topic is, translates into your self-confidence, self-esteem, presentation of yourself to a potential employer thereby the expected success in finding and next maintaining a job. Remember that having a criminal record and the mistakes committed in the past do not disqualify you both in a living and professional sense. You have already served your sentence. Do not punish yourself additionally with the “stigma of a condemned man” by refusing yourself the right to a good life. Look at yourself positively and see what a potential employer gains by employing a person like you.
2. **Discover your talents** - make a list of your strong points. Do not limit yourself to the character features only. Recall what you are good at. Create a list of your achievements and consider what other people said about you, e.g. friends, acquaintances, employers (which of your traits or gifts they talked about in a positive way).
3. **Find/recall your objective, ask yourself a question why you are taking up a job** - the answer seems simple: it is probably for financial reasons to gain financial stability. Still, you can consider such reasons as: a willingness to prove yourself and others that you are a good worker, have a talent and can “live differently”. You should realize that with your knowledge and skills you can make yourself and the other people happy, at the same time obtaining satisfactory salary for the work performed.
4. **Fight negative convictions**, such as: “I’m too old”, “I’m not skilled enough to do this job well”, “After prison I won’t be able to win the employer’s and employees’ sympathy”. Instead of nurturing inside yourself negative convictions, make a list of beliefs which will support you, e.g. “in the past I managed in a similar situation, so this time it’s going to be the same”, “I’m capable of”, “I can manage

5. because”, “If not me, then who?”. Believe in yourself, don’t limit yourself and make your dreams come true.

6. **Trust yourself and you will believe the others (make use of others’ support** - reflect on who in your environment has a good influence on you. Who supports you in difficult situations? If there are such persons, appreciate and cultivate this friendship. If you cannot count on your family’s/acquaintances’ support, then get in touch with the specialists/organizations that are established to help/assist. If you work with people, establish contacts with them because good and supporting relations with others make our life more interesting, satisfying and happy.

THE KEY SKILLS IN DEVELOPING RELATIONS WITH OTHER PEOPLE ARE:

- **Open and comprehensible communication** – speak clearly (use the language which will be understandable for both parties), don’t use vulgar language or the words that might offend/attack somebody. Never use the words/expressions derived from prison. Be open to people, i.e. don’t be afraid of establishing new relationships, don’t close up on new experiences/acquaintanceships, widen your knowledge/tolerance, enjoy life and give your best.
- **Active listening** – focus your attention on your interlocutor so as to understand what he wants to tell/convey to you: don’t interrupt, refrain from judging and offering good advice. At the end of each conversation you can check if you have understood your interlocutor, asking him a question: “If I understood you well, then”, “Do I have to understand that?” This will allow avoiding misunderstandings, confirm your convictions or their lack; it will also show the other person that you are interested in the conversation.
- **Sincerity and being natural (being yourself)** - be yourself at all times. Do not pretend to be someone you are not. Speak honestly what you think and feel as this is the only way you can establish genuine and mature relations with other people.
- **Empathy** – this is the ability to put oneself in somebody else’s position (also emotional). It is an important feature thanks to which the person we establish a closer relation with feels understood, needed and safe.
- **Taking care of one’s own/common welfare** – when the relation with another person is strong enough that you want to care about it and nurture it, one has to remember that

although we work together, e.g. in a team or there is something more than just friendship that binds us together, we still are separate entities. We have different temperaments, views and needs and so we have to respect, i.e. revere them for the common good.

II. Work culture and effective communication

Work culture is nothing else but the internal rules of functioning in the company (team of workers). When going for an interview, it is worth considering which rules operating at work we will be able to accept and which ones definitely not. Already during the interview the interviewee should ask about the important for him issues. The everyday work culture is a significant element, if not the most important one. It can be learned and adapted to, however one may not accept it, what leads to lack of acceptance within the group. Good manners apply everywhere, also at the workplace, hence one has to obey them and show respect to the other co-workers:

- take care of personal hygiene,
- do not answer private phone calls; work is not the place to solve personal problems,
- avoid or best give up using vulgar language and losing your temper,
- keep the toilet and the social room clean, clean after yourself!
- respect your co-workers,
- be punctual, never come late for work!
- respect yours and somebody else's property,
- if you become sick, stay at home so as not to infect other workers.

Skills in professional life:

1. How to present oneself well

Positive self-presentation during an interview embraces a number of factors which influence the way we are perceived during the recruitment meeting.

- **Punctuality**

It is best to arrive at the interview 5-10 minutes earlier before the planned time. This will allow you to calm down, control possible stress before the conversation. Arriving late may be considered as showing no respect towards the interlocutor, indicate the candidate's lack of conscientiousness.

- **The 4 x20 rule**

- **20 seconds** (the first seconds of the meeting decide about the impression which we project on our interlocutor);



- **20 steps** (our body movements and posture are observed):
 - take a calm but firm step towards the interlocutor,
 - stand steady (feet slightly apart from each other, not wide apart or at attention), without shuffling the feet,
 - the host is the first one to offer the hand – remember about a bold and firm handshake,
 - an upright posture signals self-confidence, openness and good mood,
 - take an open body posture (do not cover the torso, arms freely on both sides of the body),
 - tilt your head towards the other person, which suggests interest.
- **20 cm of the face** (mimicry and facial expression):
 - maintain eye contact with the interlocutor (by this you show interest in the conversation as well as your openness and engagement),
 - smile naturally so that you can create a friendly atmosphere and let receive you as a nice and open person,
 - do not touch your face while talking and do not cover your mouth as this can be seen as a sign of insincerity and nervousness and can make communication difficult.
- **20 words** (apart from what we want to say, it is important as we do it):
 - prepare the formula of greeting in advance,
 - speak calmly, do not raise your voice,
 - speak your words accurately and clearly,
 - focus on the pace of the speech (when we are stressed we tend to speak fast so try to slow down),
 - use short intervals between parts of your speech (this will allow you to gather thoughts, calm down and control the tremor of your voice),
 - avoid language errors, swearwords and jargon.

2. Cooperation with others in the team

A team is created by the people of different temperaments, features of character, habits and personal culture, thus it is vital to apply a few principles which will affect both your work and the work of the whole team:

- showing respect to all members of the team,
- assertiveness and awareness that everybody has the right to express their own opinion,

- the ability to separate facts from emotion,
- the ability to separate a professional relationship from a private one,
- the ability to listen actively,
- the ability to communicate with the rest of the team (openness and understanding),
- tolerance towards the people of different sex orientation/religion or skin colour,
- the ability to cooperate with the team and to resign from one's own aims if this is not beneficial for the work of the rest of the group,
- caring for a positive atmosphere within the team, avoiding conflicts, reducing tensions in the group,
- the ability to understand your role in the teamwork, as well as the scope of your work,
- the ability to objectively evaluate the work of others' in the team and the ability to appreciate their efforts.

3. Taking responsibility

Lack of responsibility is nothing else but lack of control. Taking responsibility for your own life is the first step to true personal development. People often give up responsibility for others, for instance, when they do not have a satisfactory job, they say it is the fault of the authorities and employers or when their relationship does not work properly, they regard it as the partner's fault. There are a lot of such situations so one should ask himself a question: Am I ready to take responsibility for my own life? Who will I become? How will I live?

Remember!

- Lack of responsibility means lack of control.
- Without a sense of responsibility you have no influence on your own life. You keep waiting for a miracle to happen and that "something" will change to your advantage.
- Lack of responsibility means that you can not provide yourself and your loved ones with a sense of security. Without a sense of responsibility, we are unable to create a normally functioning family
- Lack of responsibility deprives one of the ability to maintain good work. Employers do not want to hire and work with the people who do not take responsibility for their duties.
- Lack of responsibility makes us and many others suffer from the consequences that may have a significant impact on our lives and that of our loved ones.
- Your own happiness should not be dependent on something outside, because what is outside can disappear at any moment. Happiness is one of the emotions that you have to learn, you

have to find it in yourself. Take responsibility for your own happiness and be happy. Remember that you are responsible for how you feel / how you will feel.

- We create our own future according to an old proverb “as you make your bed so you must lie on it”. Do not count on fate knocking on your door, offering you a rewarding job, a big house or a wonderful family. It is up to you what your next day will look like. Naturally we do not have an influence on everything, yet there many things which depend on us – we have to earn them ourselves. Start thinking now what your future is going to look like, how you would like to start your next day and then another one and start acting.
- Man is a social being who usually demonstrates a strong need of affiliation, which means staying with other people and experiencing social belonging. It is up to us with whom/when and how we are going to establish our relationships. Positive relationships with another person give us a sense of acceptance, security and contentment, hence establish the relations and cultivate the ones with the people who have positive influence on you and your life. However, eliminate those who make you fall into trouble.
- If you haven’t achieved anything in your life so far, you can do it any time. Haven’t you graduated from school? Haven’t you passed your driving licence exam? Haven’t you enrolled in the lifeguard course, yet? Everything is ahead of you. You have a lifetime to gain new skills. It is entirely up to you who you are and who you will be in the future. Man is the master of his own destiny regardless of what has happened in your past.

4. How to prepare for the first day at work

The way we present ourselves, what we wear, how we act, gives more information about us than the spoken words.

- **First impression**, the first moment of the meeting with a given person often has a decisive influence on the next course of the acquaintance. Some studies prove that lack of positive impression on our interlocutor within the first 5 minutes results in reducing our chances for employment even up to 10%. This is connected with a psychological mechanism, the so called, halo effect (Golem’s effect) which means that the first negative impression results in further perceiving the person in a negative way.

Remember, you have only one occasion to make a positive impression!

- Be punctual.

- Prepare for the questions like: where are you from?, what did you do before?, what post do you hold and why did you decide to look for a job here, etc.?
- Listen and observe what is happening around you.
- Find out about the rules operating in the team, observe the relations that function there.
- Smile (project an image of an open and friendly person).
- Avoid the behaviours which are negatively received by other people, that is:
 - don't interrupt and criticize your interlocutor's statements,
 - don't judge anybody and anything too hastily,
 - don't use vulgar language or words / phrases taken from the custodial institution,
 - don't answer the phone during a conversation,
 - don't avoid eye contact,
 - don't hold your hands in the pockets, don't chew gum, don't bite your fingernails, etc.
 - don't bend towards the interlocutor too much as he might feel uncomfortable.
- Your outer image should be neat, toned down and adjusted to the post you hold (dress code).