

## What It's Like for a First Time Offender

What it's like for a first time offender who is doing some time, and I'm not someone doing short time but who is a lifer. At first I was scared, I mean who wouldn't be right? As I was in the back of the cop car riding 6 hours away going to ORW (Ohio Reformatory for Women) I couldn't sleep. I was trying to figure out where I was. Then as we got closer the female officer said, "Don't worry, it's like a big college campus."

We turned onto the road, and looking at barbed wire and steel I see big buildings, and was like, *Yep just like a college campus*. But I was still scared.

I had just lost everything: my freedom, my children, my parents, even my best friend. My step-dad had died from a heart attack 3 days earlier from me leaving county.

But now as I look back 4 years ago, I have accomplished so much. He would be so proud of me. I have over 100 certificates from groups. I just completed the APS (Administrative Professional Support) year long vocational class; it's using Microsoft. I have completed a very long year

program called Power Net. It's a G.E.D. leadership development program. It teaches about how we can better ourselves and even has opportunity for a job when released.

Yeah there have been times where I wanted to give up, but then I look at my family that are supporting me. I am on a schedule that I put myself on, because I feel as though if you don't have a schedule then you don't have structure. I have been told that my writing is good and it's clear. I don't want to believe it, but then again what do I know? Lol.

I stay busy with working at the chow hall, and when I'm not working, I am reading self-help books and studying for this program called In2Work. We learn about the do's and don'ts of a "restaurant," of a restaurant setting, or any food service industry, and I will test for my ServSafe (certification).

Before COVID-19 had the prison locked down we would have volunteers come in, and I was taking 2 classes through 2 different colleges. One was Antioch College, and that was an intensive writing class. We would read different books and write essays about them. My next class was through Wilmington College, and that was an anthropology class. We read books and discussed about the

books. Now that the prison is slowly opening back up I can't wait for us to go back to it.

In reality, even though I am early in my bid people ask me all the time how long do I have, and then when I tell them they are like "you don't even act like some of these other lifers." I never knew what they meant, but now I do. I don't walk around all miserable. I always find positive things to do. And I'm okay with them wondering how long I have because it doesn't faze me any.

I know I will get out one day. So, whoever is reading this if, you know someone who is a first time offender who has some time to do, I recommend you tell them to get into every program they can get into, and stay on the positive side because there is one. I recommend that they do the following groups:

- Anger Management, Nonviolent Communication, Healing Hearts (if available)
- Any inmate led groups
- Any schooling
- Victims Awareness
- (Even if you're not spiritual) do Kairos
- Any program that allows volunteers to come in to teach

---I.O.P. If you have an addiction this is a great program

Thank you for reading this post.

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