

Games

On the streets and in the jail/prison, there are games that are essential to survival. You should be aware of them and stay out of them. These are some ways to avoid being part of the game. In other words, these are some ways to avoid being manipulated.

Be yourself all the time!

- Don't try to be someone you are not.
- Don't pretend to be dumber than you are.
- Don't pretend to be smarter than you are.
- Inmates are experts on reading people.
- If they feel that you are not being real, they will not trust you or anything you say.
- Initially, they will be trying to decide whether or not you are worth their time.
- They really don't care how smart you are.
- They want to know that you care about them.

Be firm, fair, and consistent!

- Treat each inmate the same, with respect.
- If you don't know the answer to a question: admit it, tell them you will look it up, write yourself a note, and be sure to follow through.
 - Your failure to follow through on a simple question will allow the inmate to doubt you care about them.
- If you know in advance that you are not going to be there at your regular time, tell them in advance.
 - They depend on you being there.
 - Your failure to show up allows the inmate to doubt you care about them.

Never let them see you sweat!

- If you get nervous, don't let them see it.
 - They will interpret that as weakness and push you further.
- Don't let their stories/language shake you.
 - They may be looking to shake or embarrass you.
 - If their language is inappropriate, ask them to use more appropriate language.
 - If their story is TMI (too much information), let them state it, acknowledge that you heard it (that must have been sad/scary/difficult), and move on!

Know your limitations!

- Don't try to be a hero.
- If you are there to bring the Word, bring the Word.
- Don't volunteer to call or research rehab houses, attorneys, friends, family members, etc.
- Don't feel compelled to write letters of recommendation.