

Purpose Behind this Information on Reentry: For the last 13+ years I (Sue Hutchins) have had the privilege and task of working with incarcerated people and their families. I began this as an already seasoned addiction/substance abuse counselor and family counselor, having had 30+ years of experience with trauma, crisis and numerous forms of abuse. I had dealt with people carrying shame, resentment, pain and hurt in many forms and on many levels, so I thought working with people coming out of Federal prison would be a logical next step in my career. I thought I was equipped and only needed to learn some things so as to tweak my skills a bit to serve this population. I had no idea of the journey ahead of me.

I have learned so much about fairness and injustice, about neglect and lack of compassion, about double talk and follow through, about set-ups for failure and motivation to change. Mostly I have learned about the need for a change in the ways our criminal justice system and our society in general treats its citizens who are involved in the criminal justice system simply because they love someone who is convicted of a crime.

Let me say I sincerely believe that there are some people who belong in prison---there are people who can not be allowed to live among us because they are dangerous to those around them. Let me also say that those people have family members and friends who are guilty of nothing criminal----who had absolutely nothing to do with any crime or criminal intent and who have just as much, if not more, sadness about the crimes committed as the rest of us. Their only transgression is that they love someone who has done something heinous.

Additionally, there are literally thousands of people incarcerated for crimes that are not of this caliber. They are not evil nor are they to be feared as dangerous, terrible people....and they will be getting out of prison to return to society after serving their time. What about their families and their friends who are only "guilty" of caring about/loving them? What does our society expect of and for these people? And how do we treat them while their loved one is incarcerated?

This information is written for those family members and friends who love an incarcerated person in the hope of offering support and understanding. It is also written with the hope of opening the eyes and hearts of all the rest of our society. If we are not part of a solution then we are part of the problem.

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