



Participant Journal



Fresh Start is a program that pairs individuals under court-ordered supervision with volunteer mentors from local churches in Pinellas County. The purpose of the program is to reduce recidivism by offering guidance and support to clients to help them successfully meet the requirements of probation and, more importantly, have a fresh start.

Completing your journal each week will help you identify topics that your mentor can help you work through. You are not required to share any or all of your journal entries with your mentor, but communicating your successes and obstacles will help your mentor focus their attention on your unique strengths and needs. You will get out of this what you put into it. We hope that you find your mentoring experience worth your time and effort.

Meeting #1

The Mentor Agreement & Getting to Know Your Mentor

Mentor: _____

Mentor's Phone Number: _____

Best Time to Call: _____

What do you know about Fresh Start?

What is the best way and time to contact you (call, text, etc.)?

What is the best time and place for you and your mentor to meet?

Sometimes meetings will be rescheduled. How will you and your mentor handle changing appointments?

List key requirements and restrictions of your probation such as fees, restitution, community service, classes, appointments, curfew, travel, etc.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

***“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”
Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)***

Meeting #2

Planning Your Fresh Start

Every time you meet with your mentor, you will set and review your goals. To get started, read through the items below. Put a check next to the things you have under control. Circle the things you need to work on or want to improve. Put a star next to the three things you want to work on first.

Food	Parenting / Custody	Physical Health
Housing	Personal Relationships	Mental Health
Transportation	Restitution & Fines	Spiritual Health
Employment	Budgeting	Alcohol/Substance Abuse
Education/GED	Getting a Bank Account	Anger Management
Family Issues	Debt	Coping Skills
Self-Control	Building Credit	Other:
Grief	Insurance	

Imagine your dream life. If there was nothing in your way, what would your life be like? Make a list or write a letter to yourself describing your dream life. Describe who you are, your family, your home, your job, and how you spend your free time. What makes life meaningful to you? What gives you a sense of purpose?

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Luke 1:37 (KJV)

Meeting #3

Celebrate Success & Identify Obstacles

How do you see yourself? How do others see you? We all have strengths and areas we need to work on. Read through the following personal assets and challenges. Under “Meeting 3,” rate yourself on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “rarely,” and 5 being “almost always.” You will look at this again before meetings 7 and 11.

	MEETING				MEETING		
I would describe myself as...	3	7	11	I would describe myself as...	3	7	11
adventurous				loving			
angry				loyal			
assertive				moody			
calm				open minded			
confident				optimistic			
critical				passive			
cooperative				patient			
creative				pessimistic			
forgiving				a procrastinator			
fun to be around				purposeful			
a gossip				realistic			
grateful				relaxed			
helpful				resentful			
honest with myself				responsible			
honest with others				self-absorbed			
hopeful				self-righteous			
humble				smug			
impatient				suspicious			
impulsive				tense			
intimidating				thoughtful			
intolerant				trusting			
irresponsible				trustworthy			
jealous				a worrier			

What do you like most about yourself?

What do you like least about yourself?

What are some things that you do to overcome obstacles or problems?

We all need help to get through difficult situations. Who can you count on to help you get through hard times?

What personal characteristics tend to cause you problems?

What relationships seem to lead to problems for you?

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord, “...plans to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11 (AMP)

Meeting #4

Getting Real & Staying Motivated

List three consequences of your criminal behavior.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List three reasons you have for wanting to complete probation and not return to jail or go to prison.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List three ways you can avoid getting into trouble.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name at least three people you can spend leisure time with who do not get in trouble.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List three things you like to do that are legal and fit your current budget.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Think about your support system. Who can you trust when you need help or advice?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is currently in the way of you completing supervision?

Ex: I need a job so I can pay restitution.

Ex: I need child care so I can work.

What are some things that would make meeting the requirements of your probation easier for you?

Ex: I would prefer to get a ride to work rather than ride the city bus.

Ex: I would like to move into my own place.

Review the list from Meeting 2. What are your top three priorities now?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

Meeting #5

Stress Reduction

Stress is caused by good and bad events in our lives. Marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, the death of a family member, getting fired, getting an award, going to jail, and getting a new job are among the top 25 things that cause stress in our lives. Stress can affect our health, our outlook on life, and how we interact with others. Although we can't avoid everything that may cause us stress, we can manage our stress by making sure we get enough sleep, eat well, exercise regularly, and take time to relax every day.

What is currently causing you stress?

Some physical signs of stress are rapid heartbeat, tense muscles, nervousness, sweaty hands and feet, difficulty sleeping, low energy, headaches, upset stomach, dry mouth, clenched teeth, and even frequent colds or infections. How do you know when you are stressed? What are your physical signs?

Stress can motivate us to improve our situation (like when a car is coming and we quickly get out of the way), but when we are under stress for a long period of time, it can affect our mental and physical health. We may notice we are irritable, moody, feel overwhelmed, have difficulty concentrating or relaxing, and prefer to be alone. How do you react to stress? What are your emotional signs?

Read through the following list of activities that help people prevent and manage stress. What do you already do? What are you willing to try?

Stress Management	I do this	I'll try it
Sleep 7-8 hours a night		
Eat a balanced diet		
Limit caffeine		
Do something to relax each day		

Circle activities you already do or would consider trying from the lists below.

walking	listening to music	yoga
jogging	watching television	counseling
biking	drawing	deep breathing
swimming	working on your car	reading
playing sports	building models	getting a massage
visiting with friends	taking a nap	journaling
prayer or meditation	Other:	Other:
playing an instrument		
video games		

Put a reminder on your calendar this week to do something that will help you manage stress.

What would you like to talk to your mentor about at your next meeting?

“Instead of worrying, pray.” Philippians 4:6 (MSG)

Meeting #6

Decision Making

Every decision we make has consequences, whether big or small, positive, negative or neutral. When we have a big decision to make, or a small one that may have big consequences, it is important to take some time to think about our options first.

Describe a decision you need to make.

Step 1: Check your gut. Our gut feelings are based on experience and values, which is important, but not always the best way to go. What does your gut say about the situation?

Step 2: Gather the information you need to consider before you make a decision. What are the facts?

Step 3: Brainstorm your options. What are the possible short-term and long-term consequences? What is the risk?

Step 4: Check with someone you trust. Review the situation with someone who uses good judgment, and will help you think about the good, the bad and the neutral consequences.

Step 5: Make a decision & monitor the outcome.

What did you decide to do? Why? How did it go?

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)

Meeting #7

Recovery

When people say they are, “in recovery,” they often are referring to alcoholism or drug addiction. It can also mean overcoming a habit, learning to live with a chronic medical condition or mental illness, or healing from a past hurt or trauma. To be in recovery means to decide to face a personal challenge with the goal of minimizing the impact the challenge has on one’s life and well-being.

Is there something you would like to overcome?

Do you think that things that have happened in your life affect you today? Explain.

What would your life be like if you could live free from the effects these events have had on you?

What expectations do you have for yourself and others that are unrealistic?

Flip back to Meeting 3 & rate your personal assets and challenges under Meeting 7. What positive changes do you notice about your personal assets and challenges?

***“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”
John 16:33 (NIV)***

Meeting #8 Balance

One important part of managing stress is taking care of the physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual parts of ourselves. If all we do is work, it may help our finances, but we will feel stressed because we are neglecting other important aspects of our selves.

Review the list from Meeting 2. What are your top three priorities now?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

On the chart below, you will see things that help your physical health. You are going to add things you can do this week to keep things in balance. Include something social, something relaxing, and something that will get you closer to your goals. As you go through your week, check off your accomplishments.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sleep 7-8 hours							
Nutrition							
Exercise							

“Behold, I am making all things new...” Revelation 21:5 (AMP)

Meeting #9

Relationships Part 1

People in healthy relationships respect each other, treat each other with patience, admit when they are wrong, and practice forgiveness. Healthy relationships do not just happen; they take work.

Your relationships may have been affected during your criminal behavior, when you were arrested, if you were in jail, and now that you are on probation. People that you love and care about may be angry, scared, disappointed, frustrated or find it hard to trust you. Fixing relationships can be hard to do, but if you want someone in your life, then it's worth the effort. Restoring trust takes time. You will have to be open, honest and patient until trust is restored.

Talking to friends and family and giving them permission to honestly share their feelings is one important step to restoring relationships. This can be very uncomfortable. If you find yourself feeling defensive or angry, try self-talk. Remind yourself that the relationship is worth it, and refocus on what the person is saying. If you can, thank them for their honesty. This may sound strange, but you will find that it is one way to let the person know you are listening and that their feelings are important.

Think about relationships that you have that are healthy. Who are you open and honest with, treat with respect, are consistently caring toward, and trust?

Explain how you contribute to healthy relationships.

“The Lord is near to all who call on Him...” Psalm 145:18 (AMP)

Meeting #10

Relationships Part 2

Last week you listed relationships you want to keep or restore. Keep in mind that actions speak louder than words.

- **Give people time to see that you respect them.**
- **Try to keep a positive attitude.**
- **Do your best to take responsibility for wrongs.**
- **Be open and honest without being hurtful.**
- **Try not to dominate the relationship. Find out what the other person wants so you can share decision making and compromise when you disagree.**
- **Do not manipulate others to get what you want. People don't like being manipulated, and it usually involves lying, which affects trust.**
- **Be an equal partner in your relationships. Playing the victim or being passive is unhealthy.**

Ways to show you care:

- **Help someone and expect nothing in return.**
- **Give someone a compliment or encouragement.**
- **Spend time with someone (talk, play a game, eat, or teach them something).**
- **Listen.**

What relationships are a challenge right now? Why are these relationships important to you? What is it going to take to keep them? Maybe you need to work on your relationships with your children or an unhealthy adult relationship. Clues that a relationship is not healthy include secrets, dishonesty, selfishness, disrespect, and a lack of trust.

"I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." Joel 2:25 (KJV)

Meeting #11

Relationships Part 3

How we communicate makes a difference in our relationships. The words we say and how we say them send a message. You can say the exact same words in many ways depending on the volume and tone of your voice, your facial expressions, and your body language.

Are you a good listener?

- I pay attention when someone is talking.**
- I don't plan what I'm going to say next while someone is talking.**
- I make eye contact, smile and nod when listening.**
- I ask questions when I'm not sure what someone means.**
- I stay on topic.**

Are you a good speaker?

- I clearly state what I mean.**
- I am respectful even if I disagree or need to assert myself.**
- I use a respectful volume, tone and speed.**

What progress have you made in your relationships?

Flip back to Meeting 3 & rate your personal assets and challenges under Meeting 11. What positive changes do you notice about your personal assets and challenges?

Meeting #12 Wrapping Up

You have done a lot of work in the last few months. Assess your progress in the following:

	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Comments
Housing			
Employment			
Transportation			
Education			
Family Relationships			
Other Relationships			
Goal Setting			
Stress Management			
Finances			
Communication			
Coping Skills			
Other:			

Review the list from Meeting 2. What are your top priorities? What steps will you take to reach your goals?

Priorities	Next Steps

If this is your last meeting, take your priorities and next steps and use them to write long-term and short-term goals.

What will your life look like in 5 years? What steps do you need to take to get there?

What will your life look like in 1 year?

What will you accomplish in the next 6 months?

What will you accomplish in the next 12 weeks?

What would you like to talk to your mentor about during your last meeting?

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

John 14:27 (NIV)

Your Opinion Matters

Your feedback is important to us. It will help us improve our service to future clients. We would appreciate your honest, constructive comments.

Would you recommend Fresh Start to others? Explain.

What helped you and what did not help you during your mentoring experience?

What suggestions do you have for this journal?

What suggestions do you have for your mentor?

Thank you & Congratulations!