

LEADING PRISON LANDINGS: A Pocket Guide

Unlocked



About Unlocked Graduates

Unlocked Graduates exists to develop outstanding leaders to break cycles of reoffending. We believe that prison officers are the agents of change in our prisons, and that the relationships they build with those in their care are the foundation for supporting prisoners to desist from crime and flourish.

Since 2017, Unlocked has recruited, trained and supported nearly 1000 prison officers to become high-performing leaders, placing them in 38 different prisons across England and Wales. Our unique approach to training and support on our award-winning, two-year graduate programme enables our participants to drive culture change in their prisons and has helped raise the status of the role in the process. We are frequently recognised in the UK and internationally for the impact our participants and Ambassadors are having on the landings.

Find out more at unlockedgrads.org.uk

LEADING PRISON LANDINGS: A Pocket Guide

A short guide for transformative prison practice

Produced by Frances Steel and George Cristin-Marks.

Based on **Leading Prison Landings: The Unlocked Guide to Jailcraft**
by Harry Fletcher-Wood and Natasha Porter OBE.

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INTRODUCTION

We know that good prison officers can have a significant impact on outcomes for the prisoners they work with. This short guide aims to support you in your day-to-day work, offering a step-by-step breakdown of 24 key strategies for effective prison practice that will give you the tools to build powerful relationships with those in your care.

This Pocket Guide – and the full training manual **Leading Prison Landings: The Unlocked Guide to Jailcraft** – are first-of-their-kind resources to support all those working in prisons, applying learnings from Unlocked's unique model. They allow you to take your development into your own hands and support you to do your job excellently. If all prison officers can apply these techniques in their work, our prisons will provide a much safer and more rehabilitative environment for those in their care, ultimately improving prisoner outcomes and reducing reoffending.

HOW TO USE THIS POCKET GUIDE

This guide is designed to be a practical resource for anybody working on the frontline of our prisons – whether you have just started on the landings or have decades of experience. Each of the 24 strategies comes with a brief description and visual reminders, as well as a step-by-step breakdown to support you to build them into your everyday practice. You can use it as part of your training, in meetings with a mentor or line manager, or on your own when facing a challenging situation or an opportunity in your work with a particular prisoner.

It may also be useful if you are coaching or managing frontline staff. It provides a clear framework and a common language for the behaviours that we see in the best officers, facilitating feedback discussions and helping prison officers to do their job excellently. To find out more about this model and how to use these techniques, as well as the theory behind our approach, see the full training manual, **Leading Prison Landings: The Unlocked Guide to Jailcraft**.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

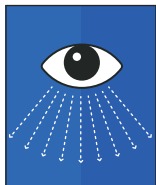
The following principles should guide how you apply all of the strategies contained within these pages.

They will support you to build strong relationships with the prisoners in your care, creating more positive environments on the landings.

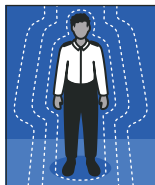
- **Be procedurally just**
Clearly communicating why and how a decision is made leads to a collective sense of fairness.
- **Treat every moment as an opportunity**
Maintain a sense of possibility by using every interaction with a prisoner, however momentary, to create more opportunity for rehabilitation.
- **Be warm whilst maintaining boundaries**
The balance between warmth and firm boundaries is the key to better, more sustainable relationships with prisoners, which are the most effective levers for change.
- **Meet needs with consistency**
Consistency in meeting prisoners' needs creates clear expectations for all.

EFFECTIVE PRESENCE AND LANGUAGE

p08



#01
Radar and be
seen looking



#02
Assertive body
language



#03
Strong voice



#04
Clear directions



#05
Purpose not
power



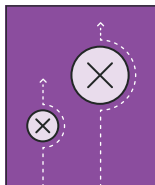
#06
Code switching

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING CONFLICT

p22



#07
Warm / firm



#08
Pre-empting
problems



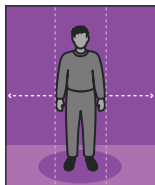
#09
Least invasive
intervention



#10
Emotional
constancy



#11
Giving effective
consequences



#12
Create space to
de-escalate

PROMOTING CHANGE

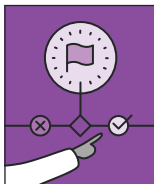
p44



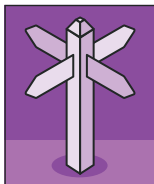
#13 Identify wants p36



#14 Tactical agreement p38



#15 Clarify expectations p40



#16 Give choices p42



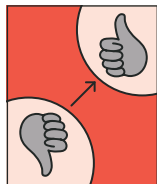
#17 Active listening p46



#18 Socratic questions p48

SUSTAINING YOURSELF

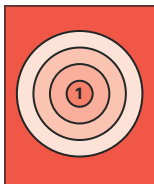
p60



#19 Negative to positive p50



#20 Commitment to change p52



#21 Setting goals and recognising progress p54



#22 Precise praise p56



#23 Rolling with resistance p58



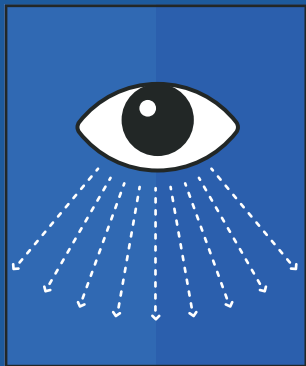
#24 Sustain yourself and build to impact p62

EFFECTIVE PRESENCE AND LANGUAGE

The first six strategies focus on maximising your presence on the wing and ensuring effective communication.

These techniques promote dynamic security and safety, allowing you to build relationships and promote change.

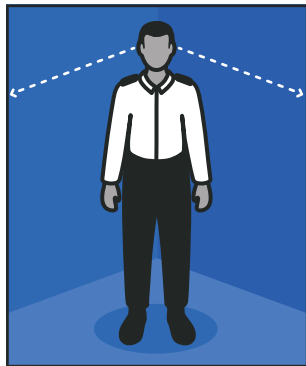
#01 Radar and be seen looking	10
#02 Assertive body language	12
#03 Strong voice	14
#04 Clear directions	16
#05 Purpose not power	18
#06 Code switching	20



#01

RADAR AND BE SEEN LOOKING

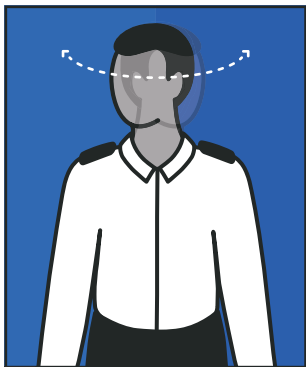
Scan your surroundings often and let prisoners see you doing it.



A

Position yourself appropriately

Be seen and easily see everywhere for maximum awareness.



B

Scan

Look around regularly so you are fully aware at all times.



C

Exaggerate

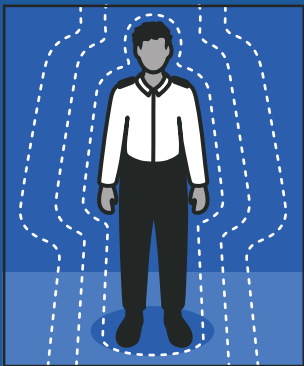
Make it clear you are looking and aware of what is going on.



D

Explain

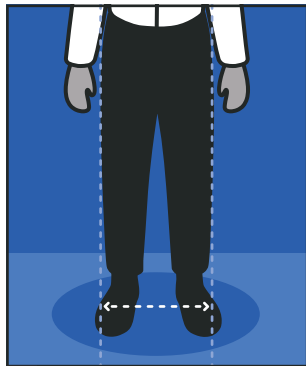
If someone is talking to you, explain you are listening but also need to keep an eye on what else is going on.



#02

ASSERTIVE BODY LANGUAGE

Stand in a confident, balanced and relaxed posture.



A

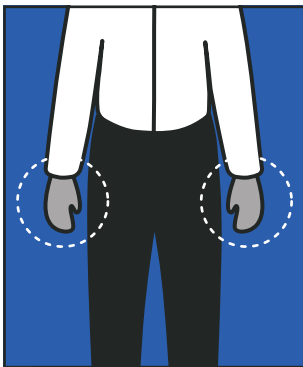
Feet

Keep your feet hip-width apart in a comfortable stance.

**B**

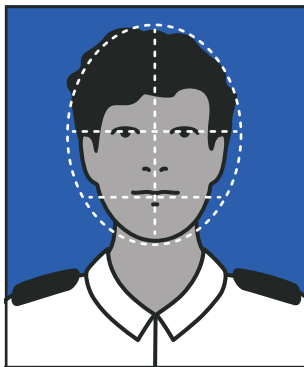
Shoulders

Keep shoulders relaxed.

**C**

Hands

Have your hands free and relaxed.

**D**

Facial expression

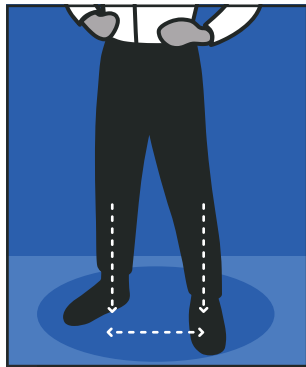
Maintain a calm, relaxed facial expression.



#03

STRONG VOICE

Speak in an authoritative tone at a measured pace.



A

Stance

Keep an open stance and plant your feet.

**B**

Tone

Use a calm and confident manner.

**C**

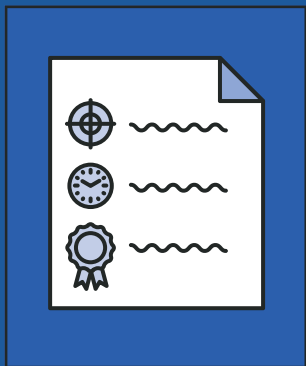
Voice

Speak deeply from the lungs and project your voice.

**D**

Slow down

Pause where appropriate to give thinking time.



#04

CLEAR DIRECTIONS

Provide specific instructions, stating what you would like to see happen, so that prisoners know exactly what to do, and you are able to check.



Be precise

Say exactly what you want to see happen.



Specify timeframe

Say when you want something to happen, or to have been completed by.



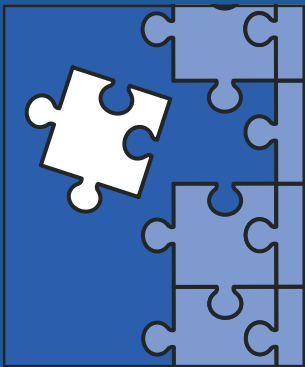
Instructions

Break instructions down into clear and manageable steps.



Acknowledge

Recognise and praise compliance – even partial compliance.



#05

PURPOSE NOT POWER

Explain the reason behind your decisions, actions and requests so that the prisoner understands why something needs to be done.



Avoid 'power' language

Avoid phrases like "you have to" or "we'll make you" to reduce resistance or resentment.



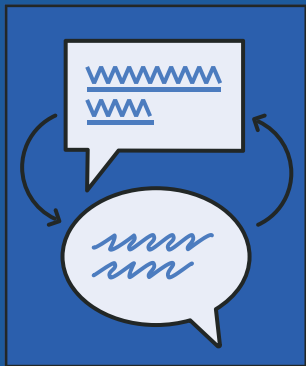
Explain

Share the purpose and reasoning behind requests so they feel clear, fair and just.



Narrate

Talk through your actions in real time to promote transparency and build trust.



#06

CODE SWITCHING

Shift your tone and word choice between casual and formal to match the situation and your intent.



Adapt to the situation

Speak casually for a relaxed conversation; speak formally to emphasise expectations and instructions.



Switch

Change tone when required to fit your message to the need, situation and response.



Highlight the change

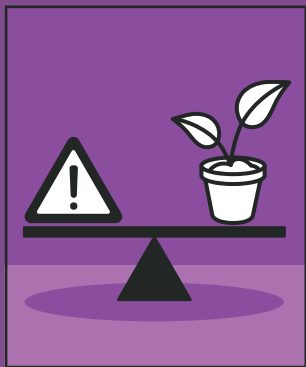
Explain the reason for your change in tone and adapt your posture accordingly.

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING CONFLICT

The first five strategies in this section support you to pre-empt conflict and address issues authoritatively, effectively and warmly. This helps maintain a safe environment and lays the foundations to help prisoners change.

The following five strategies should be used to de-escalate conflict, resolve incidents and promote positive choices. They can be treated as steps followed in order or individually, as appropriate.

#07 Warm / firm	24
#08 Pre-empting problems	26
#09 Least invasive intervention	28
#10 Emotional constancy	30
#11 Giving effective consequences	32
#12 Create space to de-escalate	34
#13 Identify wants	36
#14 Tactical agreement	38
#15 Clarify expectations	40
#16 Give choices	42



#07

WARM / FIRM

Be warm and firm to maintain high expectations and build strong relationships whilst holding prisoners accountable.



Hold prisoners to high standards

Always challenge where appropriate; don't overlook undesirable behaviour; maintain consistency and high expectations.



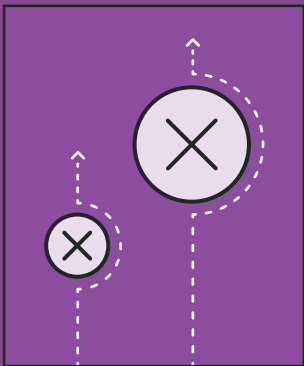
Articulate standards gently

Be warm, be kind, be friendly (where appropriate).



Shift and adapt

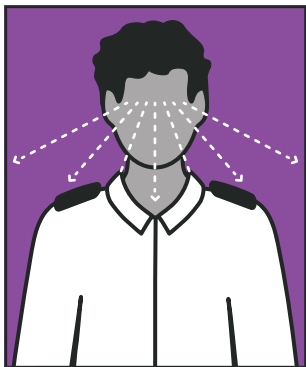
Move between warmth and firmness as required to set the right tone for the interaction based on expectations and wanting the best for the prisoner.



#08

PRE-EMPTING PROBLEMS

Spot potential issues before they emerge, then remind or redirect prisoners in order to prevent them.

**A**

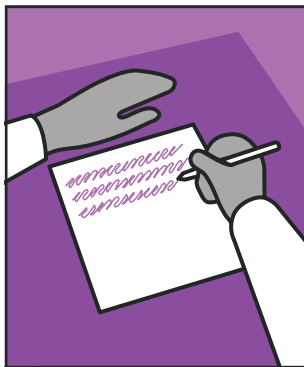
Look for issues

Find potential problems before they emerge using your knowledge and radar.

**B**

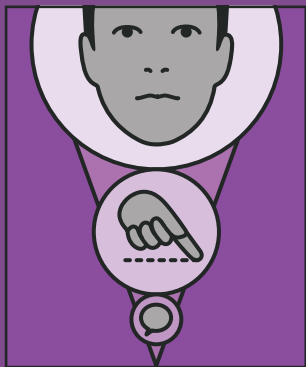
Redirect

Remind prisoners of expectations, plans and previous agreements.

**C**

Follow up

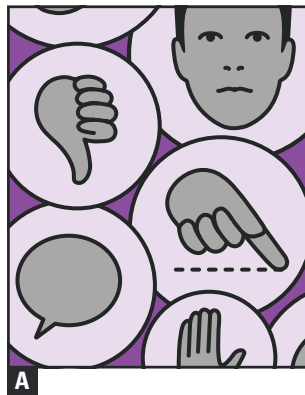
Pass information to colleagues and take further action as needed.



#09

LEAST INVASIVE INTERVENTION

Address poor behaviour using the least public, confrontational or controlling approach to minimise disruption or drawing attention to issues.



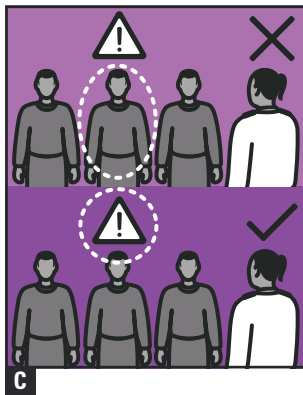
Signal what you want

Use non-verbal communication where possible, such as gestures, facial expressions and modelling expected behaviours.



Emphasise success

Use positive statements for what is going well so that others can understand what is expected.



Prefer anonymity to naming prisoners

In a group scenario, challenge the undesirable behaviour, rather than naming an individual.



Prefer private to public challenge

Speak to prisoners individually to challenge their behaviour, where possible having a quiet word.



#10

EMOTIONAL CONSTANCY

Keep your emotional display measured in order to project calm, maturity and authority.



Slow down and plan

Use time to think: What am I feeling right now? What might I be projecting? What do I want to project?



Monitor your emotions

When possible, metaphorically take a step back and assess how things are going in order to consider your options.



Avoid emotive words

Don't use emotional or personal words about a prisoner or your own feelings.



Reflect

Plan what you might do differently next time.



#11

GIVING EFFECTIVE CONSEQUENCES

Narrate the situation and outcome to a prisoner, assume positive intent, and choose words that de-escalate.



Narrate the situation

Explain the reason for the consequence; explain how to change; be positive, clear and concise.



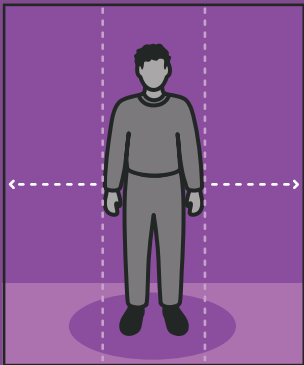
Assume positive intent

Avoid assuming a prisoner has chosen poor behaviour, instead use questions and check understanding.



Be factual

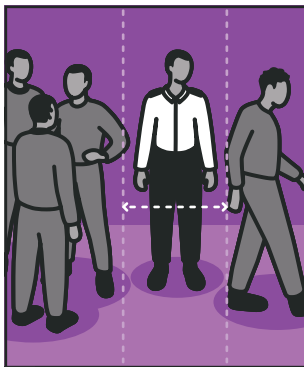
Describe exactly what happened in a depersonalised way so a prisoner cannot argue with it; state a possible learning or change opportunity.



#12

CREATE SPACE TO DE-ESCALATE

Separate a prisoner from the incident, so they can calm down before you discuss what happened.



A

Create space

Get the prisoner away from the situation.



B

Give time

Allow the prisoner to reflect on the situation and calm down. Use that time to plan the conversation.



C

Choose distance

Talk to them away from other prisoners, allowing them to talk more freely. Make space between you and the prisoner if needed.



#13

IDENTIFY WANTS

Find out what is driving behaviour by asking the prisoner and reading non-verbal cues.



Ask questions

Encourage the prisoner to share; listen to the responses; try to identify the causes of the issue.



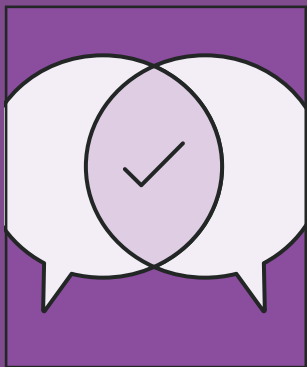
Keep asking questions

Seek more and better information.



Look for cues and clues

Use other clues that may add to what the prisoners says.



#14 TACTICAL AGREEMENT

Where you can, agree with a point or concern a prisoner raises to help de-escalate before deciding next steps.



Listen carefully

Work out why the prisoner is upset, and what they want.



Identify something you can agree with

Find a shared agreement: the truth, the principle, the possibility, their reality, or simply agree to disagree.



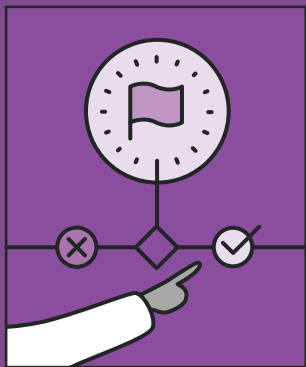
State your agreement

Express this agreement with sincerity.



Move on

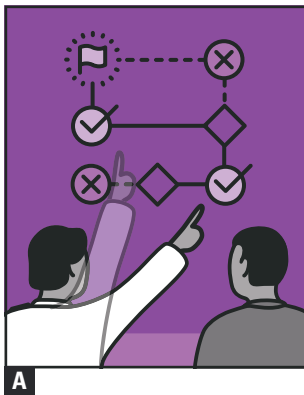
Start discussing next steps and how to move forward.



#15

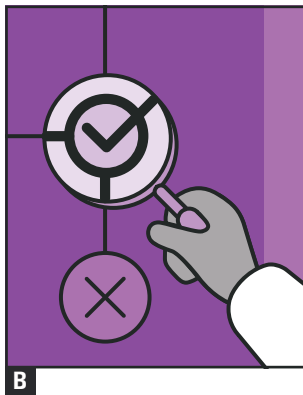
CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

State exactly what you expect from a prisoner, using clear language and explaining the purpose.



State clearly

Explain what needs to happen and not happen.



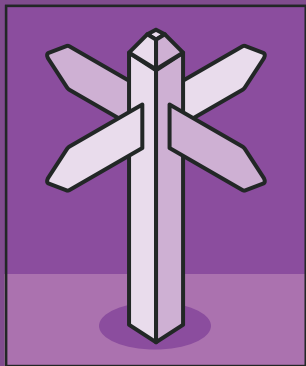
Say exactly what you want to see

Give clear instructions for actions that you can see and check.



Offer purpose, empathy or both

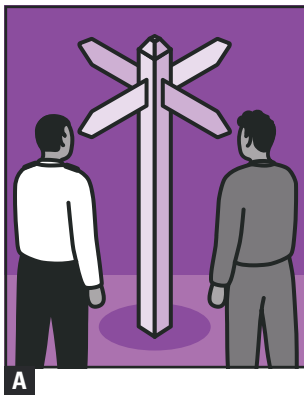
Explain the purpose and show empathy to gain buy-in.



#16

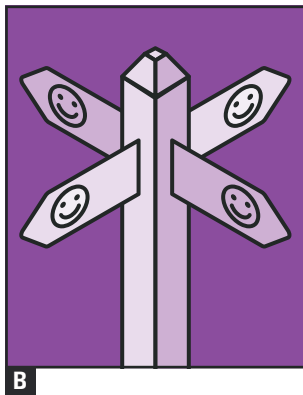
GIVE CHOICES

Offer a range of options and invite a prisoner to act appropriately by committing to one.



Give options

Look for opportunities for prisoners to make choices.



Offer genuine choices

Ensure every option you offer is a good one.



Follow through

Once a prisoner has made a choice, ensure it happens.

PROMOTING CHANGE

The strategies in this section support you to encourage prisoners to change. They aim to give you the tools to build relationships, understand prisoners' goals, and support them to make lasting change.

#17 Active listening	46
#18 Socratic questions	48
#19 Negative to positive	50
#20 Commitment to change	52
#21 Setting goals and recognising progress	54
#22 Precise praise	56
#23 Rolling with resistance	58



#17

ACTIVE LISTENING

Focus on understanding what a prisoner is saying and thinking, not just on your own response.



A

Listen actively

Consciously decide to listen, not speak.



Show you are listening

Maintain eye contact, nod, say "yes", "mmm" etc.



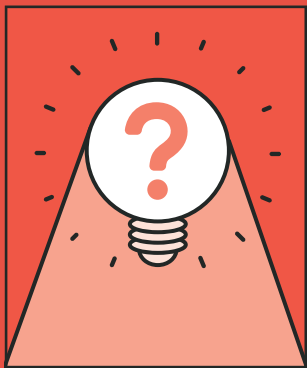
Encourage the prisoner to keep talking

Stay silent; when needed, ask open and clarifying questions.



Repeat back what you are hearing

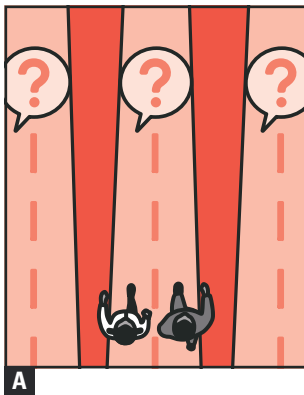
Show you are truly listening and are engaged with the prisoner's circumstances by repeating their words back to them.



#18

SOCRATIC QUESTIONS

Ask questions to help a prisoner think through their actions and choices to reach their own conclusions.



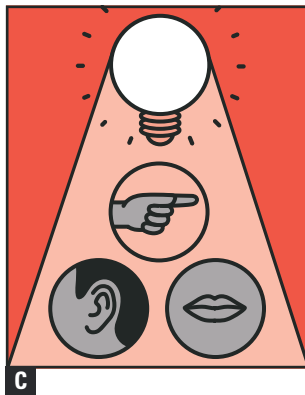
Choose guiding questions

Ensure questions focus on what you want the prisoner to do.



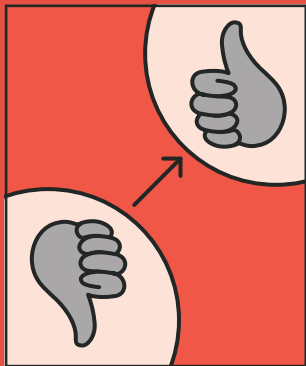
Select questions that provide new insights

Use questions to clarify the issue, seek evidence, challenge assumptions, explore consequences and consider alternatives.



Combine listening, questions and guidance

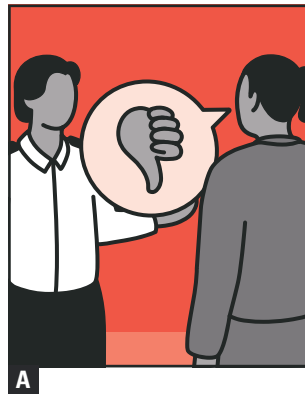
Listen; ask Socratic questions; give explicit guidance.



#19

NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE

Redirect a prisoner's negative thoughts towards realistic optimism and positive action.



Acknowledge

Recognise where the prisoner is coming from (their thoughts or the situation).



Use tactical agreement

Show understanding and find common ground by agreeing with something that is possible to agree with.



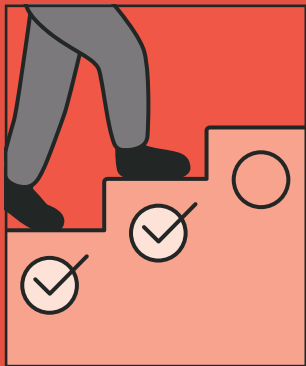
Challenge assumptions

Give evidence of things that have worked, either for the individual or others previously; ask Socratic questions.



Offer alternatives

Give hopeful but realistic alternatives and ensure commitment to action.



#20

COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Work with a prisoner to build motivation and concrete plans for change, supporting them with any setbacks.



Encourage and echo change talk

Repeat back the positive comments the prisoner makes.



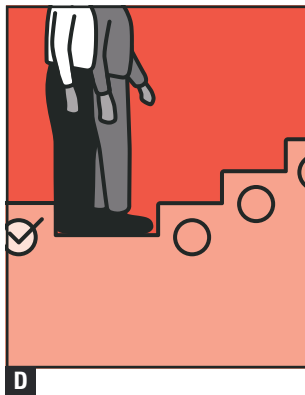
Build on change talk

Listen for hints that a prisoner is ready to change and reinforce these ideas by emphasising what is achievable.



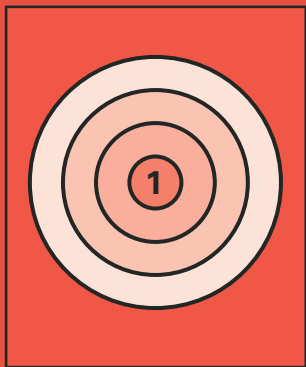
Nudge

Turn wishes into goals, goals into plans, plans into actions.



Support during setbacks

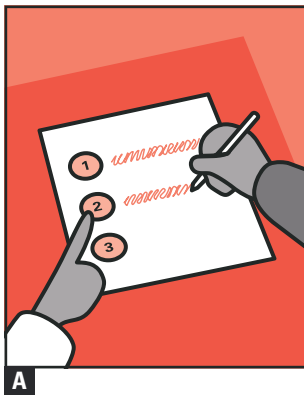
Acknowledge challenges and then focus on getting the prisoner back on the path they want to follow.



#21

SETTING GOALS AND RECOGNISING PROGRESS

Help a prisoner set manageable, meaningful goals and celebrate their successes.



Set meaningful goals

Support prisoners to set ambitious but achievable goals.



Support progress

Recognise and celebrate progress; give reminders and encouragement; offer help.



Recognise and build on progress

Celebrate successes, no matter how small, and encourage prisoners to keep going. Once one goal is done, look to the next.



#22

PRECISE PRAISE

Look out for praiseworthy behaviour and progress; pinpoint exactly what the prisoner is doing well when giving praise.



A

Personal praise

Where appropriate, praise the actions of individuals, not just a group.



Immediate praise

Give praise as soon as possible after the event so that it is relevant.



Earned praise

Only praise things the prisoner has actually done well so that expectations remain high.



Specific praise

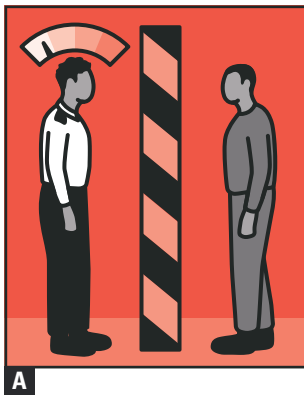
Say exactly what the prisoner has done right to highlight a desirable behaviour they can repeat.



#23

ROLLING WITH RESISTANCE

Meet resistance calmly and curiously, setting your own emotions aside to understand and encourage a prisoner.



Set aside your emotions

Try to stay neutral in tone, posture and choice of words. Focus on systems and principles – not your feelings.



Meet resistance with surprise and curiosity

Use surprise (even feigned) to suggest behaviour is not expected – e.g. “Ah, did you forget to switch out of your sliders?”



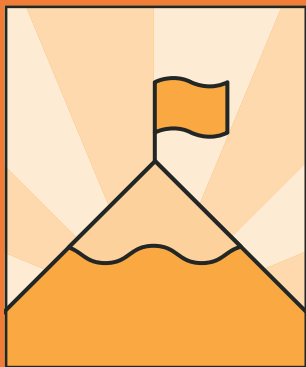
Ask open questions

Find out what the prisoner is thinking and feeling.

SUSTAINING YOURSELF

Being a prison officer is tough. In this section, we focus on the importance of looking after yourself, both for your own sake and for those you work with.

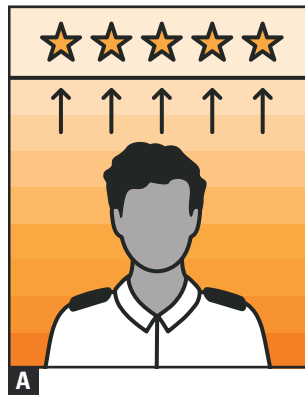
#24 Sustain yourself and build to impact 62



#24

SUSTAIN YOURSELF AND BUILD TO IMPACT

Manage your emotions, stick to your standards, look after yourself and work to increase impact.



Stick to your standards

Enforce the rules with warmth and integrity.



Maintain perspective

Remember your successes: recognise how much is going well, even on a bad day.



Give yourself time to make an impact

Get the basics of your role right; work towards broader impact when you are ready.



Find ways to decompress

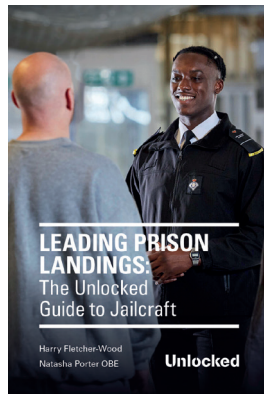
Record small wins; process events with others and maintain relationships; plan what you need for work; leave work at work; use the commute.

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Find out more

The full training manual
**Leading Prison Landings:
The Unlocked Guide to Jailcraft**
by Harry Fletcher-Wood and
Natasha Porter OBE is available
on Amazon.

Unlocked

Leading change
on the inside