



A Reentry Program of Rehabilitation Through the Arts

**Reimagining Myself®
A Reentry Program of Rehabilitation Through the Arts®**

“I’ve been given a roadmap for how to succeed in society.” Participant, spring 2023

Reimagining Myself (RM)® is a reentry program designed to fill a gap left by traditional pre-release programs by focusing on preparing individuals for the social and emotional struggles they may encounter.

RM launched in spring 2023 in two New York State medium-security prisons. It successfully promoted social and emotional literacy for men due to be released from prison after a lengthy incarceration. Through arts-based experiential teaching, RM addresses topics such as reconnecting with family, leaving behind the prison mindset, dealing with the stigma of being formerly incarcerated and adjusting to life on the outside. By the end of the program, participants:

- Gained confidence about managing job interviews.
- Gained confidence in their ability to manage conflict in a healthy way.
- Felt better able to identify and deal with their negative emotions and problematic habits.
- Developed more ways to process their thoughts and feelings
- Felt better able to creatively problem solve

At the same time, program participants reported feeling challenged, realizing that they were only at the start of a lengthy process, and that reentry preparation will continue for months and even years beyond the workshop.

We believe that being realistic about what may lie ahead is the foundation of success. Recognizing that life outside can be overwhelming, anticipating anxiety about parole and acknowledging the difficulties of reconnecting with family and friends will motivate these men to take reentry preparation seriously.

What is RTA?

Rehabilitation Through the Arts® (RTA) is a well-established nationally recognized nonprofit organization whose mission is to help people in prison develop critical life skills through the arts, modeling an approach to the justice system based on human dignity rather than punishment.



Rehabilitation Through the Arts

735 Anderson Hill Road Purchase, NY 10577 914.251.7540 reimagine@rta-arts.org rta-arts.org

With close to three decades of experience working with the incarcerated and the formerly incarcerated, RTA's successful record, broad experience and extensive firsthand research enabled the organization to create *Reimagining Myself*, its new reentry program.

Program Description

The curriculum was created by experts from RTA with over twenty-five years of combined carceral experience, delivered by trained facilitators guided by a comprehensive facilitator manual and training videos. Each participant received a corresponding workbook with artwork and quotes contributed by formerly incarcerated people.

The workshop component of the program consists of twenty sessions, delivered twice a week over ten weeks. Participants engaged in scaffolded lessons, meant to build trust, and interactive classroom activities based on narrative films and short videos. The workshop offers a safe space to express and discuss opinions outside the scope of their experiences, a rarity in prison.

A unique component of the program is the professionally produced narrative films that allow participants to observe an individual facing situations many will encounter upon release before turning that lens upon themselves. Another key component is the "lived experience" videos, featuring formerly incarcerated individuals speaking openly and honestly about issues they faced on reentry. While the entire program was created with the input of formerly incarcerated individuals, these videos bring those voices into the room.

Participants

Thirty-three men in total volunteered to be in the program. Seventeen out of eighteen at Wallkill and fourteen out of fifteen at Woodbourne completed the program. The average incarceration time was 17.6 years and the time left until release averaged 1.1 years.

Methodology

Questionnaires were administered three times: at the start of the first session, mid-workshop (10th or 11th session), and again at the end of the final session.

Participant Feedback

"From this course, I have learned so much stuff that we in prison do not think about. It has helped open my mind and eyes to the stuff I have to approach and work with and find the healthiest manner to approach it."

"The job application speech was really helpful. I never gave it much thought. I thought the narrative films and testimonials from the videos were great. You have to be aware of old habits you picked up in prison. The videos hammered that home."

“I learned I have a lot to learn. I have learned to talk with other guys in the group. I realized things I thought would be so easy but were really hard.”

“I learned I had many flaws. The life skills taken from this course are a way to deal with them when those issues come knocking at my door.”

Click [here](#) to hear firsthand from a participant at Wallkill Correctional Facility.

We look forward to talking with you about the **Reimagining Myself Reentry Program** and how it can benefit the populations you serve.

For more information and/or to request the full Program Evaluation Report, click here: reimagine@rta-arts.org

Reimagining Myself ®Team
September 2023

