

Michael Santos



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Federal Prison Advice

Knowledge - not fear

Top-Ten Checklist Before Surrendering to Prison

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We recognize that a level of anxiety is inevitable prior to surrendering to prison. We created our Blueprint with lesson plans, webinars, and podcasts specifically to prepare individuals so they don't surrender to prison blindly. Those about to surrender will find value in the checklist that follows. If you have further questions, please contact Justin at 818-424-2220 or schedule an appointment on his calendar: [Justin's Calendar Scheduler](http://www.scheduleyou.in/V2cLbrq) (<http://www.scheduleyou.in/V2cLbrq>)

1. Surrender Details:

- If you're surrendering to prison, you'd better make sure that you're ready. What do you need? First and foremost, ask your attorney to confirm that the receiving institution has all of your paperwork in order.
- Following your sentencing hearing, a process unfolds. The Judge will present a Judgment Order to the U.S. Marshal Service. The Probation Officer will forward the PSI to the U.S. Marshal Service. The U.S. Marshal Service will then forward the Judgment Order and the PSI to the Bureau of Prisons in Grand Prairie, Texas.
- BOP administrators in Grand Prairie Texas will then classify and designate the defendant to serve his or her sentence in a specific institution. They will issue a time for surrender.
- The defendant's attorney should work to ensure that the BOP in Grand Prairie has forwarded the appropriate paperwork to the receiving institution. If the receiving institution does not have the appropriate paperwork, administrators at the receiving institution will lock the prisoner in a solitary cell. The defendant may remain in that solitary cell for several weeks. In anticipation of this obstacle, the defendant should have a plan in place.

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- First step in the plan is to ensure the defense attorney takes measureable steps to confirm the BOP in Grand Prairie, Texas has forwarded the appropriate documentation. If the defendant's attorney is unresponsive, let us know and we can assist.
- Second step in the plan is to have a point-of-contact on the outside who should expect a phone call from the defendant within 24 hours of the surrender date. If the point-of-contact does not receive that phone call, then the point-of-contact should be prepared to launch a campaign to learn what happened. Either the defense attorney will call the BOP in Grand Prairie, or we will intervene on your behalf.
- The above steps are an insurance policy. Perhaps all goes according to plan in seven out of 10 cases. The process above provides an action in the event that things do not go well on the day of surrender. We can respond if the BOP makes an administrative error. The well-prepared individual should anticipate that every interaction with the BOP is like an interaction with the DMV—only 10x.

2. Finances POA

- The individual who prepares himself well will ensure that his finances are in order.
- Finances include the resources his family or loved ones will need at home, as well as the finances that he will live on while incarcerated.
- Individuals who have not created a finance plan prior to surrender endure incomprehensible stress inside. That stress can lead to problems because the individual may say the wrong things over the phone or through correspondence. Individuals who do not understand the nuances of conducting business while incarcerated can find themselves facing disciplinary infractions that can result in their loss of communication privileges for an extended period of time.
- An individual can live in prison without any financial resources. Those who lack financial resources will not be able to access amenities that include telephone, correspondence, or

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commissary. As with anywhere else in America, money makes life easier.

- An individual should live with a budget in mind. During our imprisonment, we spent approximately \$600 per month. But we were extremely active, writing books and lesson plans and running our businesses. Accordingly, our expenditures were on the high end. Our lesson plans explain the steps we took to contribute to businesses we created from inside of prison. The low end of expenditures would be around \$100 per month. An individual who wants to maximize use of telephone time, email time, and commissary should anticipate needing an average of between \$300 and \$400 per month.
- Understand the commissary and spending limits prior to surrendering to prison.
- If an individual can afford to start his prison journey with money, he should have a plan to ensure those resources are deposited into his account on the day that he surrenders. If at all possible, we advise our clients to bring \$400 in US Currency with them on the day of surrender. They may add more through Western Union. This service offers the fastest way to add money to a prisoner's commissary account. Initial resources will help the individual settle in with purchases that will ease his stay.
- Information on how to send funds is available at BOP.gov. Obviously, we help with specific insight as well.
- Finally, another issue to consider prior to surrendering to prison concerns outside bank accounts. Many financial institutions may provide quite surprising notice that they no longer want to do business with a convicted felon. Banks and brokerage houses may close accounts. In anticipation of this possibility, let's discuss your financial plan prior to your surrender. In some cases, it may be wise to remove your name from an account. In others, you may want to have a candid discussion with your representative at each institution. Do not underestimate the importance of preparing. Justin's brokerage house sold his stocks and closed his account while he was in prison and he was helpless to reverse the institution's decision.

3. Reading

- Establish a reading plan before you surrender to prison. As with creating a business plan, creating a reading plan should be methodical. Reading will empower you through the journey.
- During our imprisonment, we began the year with a statement of how many books to read during the year. Each book would serve a purpose. After reading each book, we would follow a process of writing a book report. That book report would answer three questions: 1) Why I read the book; 2) What I learned from reading the book; and 3) How the book will contribute to my success upon release. We cover these strategies in our lesson plans and Mastermind programs for making the most of a prison journey.
- Share the reading plan with loved ones and those in the support group. Invite them to follow along with the reading plan and urge them to hold you accountable.
- The reading list you establish will help you climb through the sentence. For example, an individual with a five-year sentence may make a pledge to read three books per month. He may identify 18 of the books that he will read during a given year, and supplement that list with an additional 18 books during the year. He may extend this plan for each year he anticipates serving. With each book he completes, he empowers himself. He also empowers his support group, as they will see progress. This progress allows them to feel a sense of peace in that the loved one isn't simply serving time. He is empowering himself, taking deliberate steps to prepare for success.
- Have a plan for receiving literature while inside. Instruct your family to order books from Amazon on a regular basis. We have found Amazon the surest way to receive books. Never order more than five books at a given time. When you receive magazines, make sure they come directly from the publisher; family members should not send magazines because some BOP staff will reject them. Safest route: prepare reading list in advance and prepare your support group for instructions on ordering books from Amazon, but never more than five at a given time.



4. Journaling

- Begin with a writing plan. Individuals who are capable should document the journey through writing. When a man or woman surrenders to prison, he or she is walking into an unknown environment. The anxiety can feel crippling. Those who document the journey alleviate that crippling anxiety. Instead, they recognize that they are going to emerge from the challenge differently, stronger, more prepared than ever. If they can document every step, they will create a record of how they were able to overcome. That journal will become a source of strength.
- For those who are confident in their writing abilities, prison presents an awesome opportunity to write a memoir. The memoir will help them after they return to society. We live in a world of transparency. Anyone can perform a Google search of anyone else, and the criminal charge will surface. Rather than fear search engine results, we advise our clients to take a proactive approach. Prison offers an outstanding opportunity to begin sowing seeds for a better outcome. We provide a course on journaling / blogging / reputation management / and even ghostwriting memoirs for those who choose to invest in their success upon release. Michael wrote more than 20 books while inside, many of them for others who wanted to prepare for their success; Justin wrote two books. If you would find value in writing your memoir, ask us for guidance on how to avoid interference from the BOP. We're proven experts in this matter and we can guide you through every aspect of publishing.
- The purpose of the biography isn't to sell the book. Rather, the book will sell you. The book will help you launch your new career upon release. When anyone asks about why you went to prison, the memoir will answer that question. Those who choose not to write their narratives will be subject to the prosecutor's version of events forever.
- Prison also offers an outstanding opportunity to write business plans. Interview people. Learn their business models. Write as many business plans as possible. That investment of time will prove invaluable when the individual returns to society. The job market is not always friendly to formerly incarcerated individuals. An individual with a solid plan



may emerge with clear direction, knowing precisely what he or she must accomplish to become a self-sustaining enterprise. Success doesn't materialize by accident, and every decision an individual makes while in custody influences the prospects for success upon release.

- We also suggest regular blogging and journaling. Those who want to learn about our course on journaling / blogging / and reputation management should connect with Justin. He will walk you through the course and show it's value. It's crucial to understand nuances of the BOP before embarking upon a writing career in prison. Nevertheless, those who choose to make the investment in understanding writing will find it enormously beneficial. It is not only therapeutic, but the writing creates a valuable end product that will advance your success upon release.

5. Personal Belongings

- If reading glasses are necessary, bring two pairs of reading glasses on the day of surrender. Choose inexpensive, sturdy glasses. The BOP commissary will also sell reading glasses, but in the standard lens strength rather than prescriptions.
- If the individual wears eyeglasses, bring two pairs. Choose sturdy rather than decorative frames.
- If the individual wants to bring a religious book, religious necklace, or religious item like a necessary prayer rug or garment, keep it simple and only bring what is necessary. An individual may also wear a wedding ring as long as conditions apply. BOP policy holds that the item should not have a valuation of \$100. That policy has been in place for longer than 20 years. Officials are not going to request a receipt to show the value, but don't bring anything that is too flamboyant. In no case can the wedding ring or necklace have any gemstones.

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- You may bring an inexpensive watch, sneakers, or sweats, but understand the staff may or may not allow you to enter the prison with those items. It depends on the institution and on the staff member who is on duty. Do not bring any checks, cellphones, credit cards, or any of the instruments that you take for granted in society. You may bring photographs, but no polaroids--and limit the amount you bring with you. Try to be spartan in your belongings to ease your adjustment. Your family can mail you photos as long as they are not polaroids. We can help you understand, or respond to any personal questions you may have about belongings.
- If the individual has medical needs, bring a one-month prescription. You may choose to bring more, but understand that it's possible a dictatorial prison guard will require you to send excessive prescriptions home. Make sure that you bring a letter from your medical doctor. The letter should indicate your medical condition and your need for the medicine. Work with Justin to consult the BOP Formulary to ensure that the BOP authorizes your medicine. In the event that you require medicine that is not on the Formulary, make sure you consult with your doctor to discuss appropriate alternatives.

6. Communication Preparation

- Before surrendering, type a document with the following headline: **Legal Contacts**.
- That sheet should include names, mailing addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers of all people in your support network. Designate a point person in your support network to manage your visits and phone time. You only have access to 300 minutes per month, so begin with a plan. Most institutions place limitations and restrictions on visiting hours, too. It's best to have a point person managing all of this. We cover this issue in our webinar on visiting / correspondence.
- Upon entering the institution, insert those names and addresses into the BOP computer system. That action will initiate the process of being able to communicate. You will be able to insert 30 names into your contact list, but you can interchange those lists routinely.



- Prior to surrendering, make sure that all people in the support network understand that they will not be receiving traditional email messages. Instead, they must visit either the BOP's proprietary Corrlinks system or the system that is appropriate for the given institution. We explain this process through our webinars and lessons in the Blueprint. Regardless of which process is in place at your institution, you will ease your adjustment by surrendering with the contact information.
- By titling the plain sheet "Legal Contacts," you avoid any complications that dictatorial BOP staff can initiate if you were to bring an address book.

7. Values / Goals

- Prior to surrendering, begin with a clear definition of what success looks like. Try to identify the values by which you professes to live. Write your values out and discuss them with those in your closest circles. Let them know what's important to you and invite them to hold you accountable for how you will use your time productively.
- Establish clearly defined goals within each value category. Create timelines that determine success dates for goals you articulate. This process helps you restore confidence and a sense of self-direction through the journey.
- This process shows your commitment to advance through the prison term in a deliberate, methodical manner. The process also will provide your support group with a workable plan to ensure you never sink into a depression.

8. Accountability Metric

- Establish an accountability metric. That metric should identify clear timelines that reveal when you will achieve specific, clearly defined goals. Share that metric with those in your support group. Invite your support group to hold you accountable. This strategy is con-



sistent with your commitment to make incremental, daily progress. Those without this deliberate plan can easily sink into depression.

- We are available to assist you with developing personal accountability logs that will strengthen you through the prison journey. The logs will also strengthen those in your support group. They will gauge your progress by the accomplishments you make rather than by the turning of calendar pages.
- For more assistance with this process, consider enrolling in our Mastermind program.

9. Quadrant Adjustment

- Walk into the prison system with a clear understanding of the Quadrant theory. Each day will bring new possibilities that can strengthen your resolve or threaten your peace. Prepare yourself to understand strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- The Quadrant theory will provide direction. To the extent possible, pursue activities in a deliberate manner. Understand that you have the power to make decisions from a position of strength. Choose activities that have the potential for high reward and low risk, but understand that at times you may choose activities that come with the potential for high reward, but also bring higher levels of risk.
- The Quadrant theory will assist you in avoiding activities that can derail your progress—activities that may fall into the low possibility for reward, but bring high probabilities for risk. Advance through your prison journey deliberately, and you will position yourself for success.



10. Release Plan

- When you surrender, think about the day that you will emerge. Define success. In so doing, you will have a process to govern your adjustment. Rather than serving time, you will be executing a carefully laid plan that leads to you emerging as you intended to emerge.
- Bring your driver's license and social security card with you. Your case manager in prison will hold those in your central file. It will ease your return.
- Provide a copy of your driver's license and social security card to those in your support group. That way, in the possible event that one of the BOP staff members lose your identification, you will be able to have your family members send in copies of your identification prior to your release. The staff members can then more easily order replacement identification that you will need upon release.

Should you want additional guidance, contact your prison consultant or work through the abundance of lesson plans and videos available on the backend of the Blueprint. If you would like to schedule an episode on the Earning Freedom podcast, do so today by scheduling an appointment with PrisonProfessor Michael Santos at:

Calendar Link:

- [Calendar Link for Michael](#)
- <https://calendly.com/michaelsantos0624>