

Con Games

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Jails are totalitarian communities; places where people are held against their will and forced to live with their controllers. Freedom of speech, choice and movement are restricted. They are communities where one is told when to arise, when to retire, what to eat, what to wear and what is acceptable behavior.



- In society, if a person doesn't like the way he is treated, he can quit, walk away. If an organization doesn't like the way a person behaves, they can fire them. In both situations, a conflict is avoided, but in a detention setting these options are not available. We must learn to manage all persons under our care in a professional manner to avoid conflicts which make our jobs easier, provide a better environment for the staff and inmate and will better serve our community.

KEEP YOUR WORD

Your word is your bond! If you say something, back it up! If you can't back it up, don't say it! If you want to lose respect--if you want to cause more problems--just tell an inmate you will do something and then fail to do it!

- Supervision is a relationship in which one person controls the activities of one or more persons or things.
 - The detention officer's task is primarily to supervise people. This is most often accomplished through written and/or verbal communication.
 - Communication is a training topic in itself. The importance of effective communication cannot be over-emphasized. Effective supervision will break down without it.

When inmates enter the jail community they are preconditioned to animosity, hatred and contempt for authority. They soon learn that by acting out, refusing to cooperate, or disobeying rules and being willing to do these things regardless of the punishment, gives them status among their peers.

Everyone of us are susceptible to manipulation.

Inmates are expert manipulators because they have lots of time on their hands.

You are their favorite target because you are the obstacle between them and what they want.

Employees are directed to be friendly, but not overly familiar; and not to give anything to or accept anything from inmates or the inmate's friends or family.

Inmates are provided with copies of rules and regulations and in most cases are more familiar with them than employees

- When an inmate breaks a rule, he expects the employee to follow the proper procedures for disciplinary action.
- By following the proper procedure, the employee shows the inmate that unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated. Inmates usually have no respect for staff members they can lower to their own level of behavior.

- If the employee fails to follow the rules, he has lost effective control
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- The inmate is calling the shots, not the employee.
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- The inmate will now try to take advantage of the situation to gain contraband or status among his peers.

- The human mind can be manipulated in a variety of ways; fatigue, threat, isolation, hunger, sleep deprivation and fear.
- One reason that people are vulnerable to manipulation is the fact that they readily accept information without question when it appears to be consistent with their hopes or beliefs.

- Some of the traits associated with people who are targets for manipulation are:
 - Naïveté - "Having or displaying a simple or trusting nature; lacking in experience, lacking in careful judgment or analysis and being unsophisticated.
 - Excessive friendliness and over-familiarization - such as discussing personal problems or financial matters.

- Detention Staff should develop an attitude of helpfulness while maintaining the necessary professional barrier.

- Inmate manipulation is subtle.

- It may go on unrecognized for some time. A threat that is unforeseen is harder to neutralize than an obvious threat or danger.

For these reasons, Officers must be alert for signs of manipulation. Letting your guard down can set you up to be a victim.

Everyone is susceptible to inmate manipulation by others.

- Why Inmates Manipulate:
They want money or valuables.
They want information or access to someplace

In the hierarchy of the jail, inmates work hard to win the respect of their peers.... **Respect =Power, Status and Protection.**

Is that motivation or What???

Manipulation comes in many forms.

Techniques depend on what they hope to gain and the officer's vulnerability.

DECEPTION

Most common type:

- Situational Deception – More complex...it is purposeful misleading without lying.
Example: Two inmates that want to mislead you from a third inmate might stage an argument or a fight. (Distraction)

One-on-One Manipulation – Involves little planning and involves only the con and the mark...Used to gain a small favor.

This short-term manipulation isn't for immediate gain, but to see how the officer is willing to violate a minor rule or regulation. (Set Up)

Long term manipulation involves more than one inmate. Can happen over several weeks – the officer can be counted on to comply.

Inmates are scoping for officers:

That are too trusting of inmates.
Become too friendly or familiar with inmates.
Lack professionalism.
Have low self-esteem.
Appear to be divided from their coworkers.

Never trust an inmate -Verify all facts before acting.

Check out every story an inmate tells you before acting on it.

- Never become over friendly with an inmate...be empathetic but not personally involved in the inmate's life.
- Inmates are looking for weaknesses and will use them against you...Are you a priest? What is role?

Never share personal information with an inmate.

- Remain professional with inmates at all times – Carry out your duties with integrity
- Remain *Courteous* and *Firm* – be loyal and reliable to your coworkers.

Act professionally at all times.

- The most vulnerable officer possesses low self-esteem. It's seen by the inmates as insecurity and your inability to make on the spot decisions
- Show your diversity and present a united front with your coworkers.

Never appear unsure in you decision or at odds with your coworkers in the presence of an inmate.

Once an inmate targets you as a candidate for manipulation, and before they invest the time for a con...The inmate will want to make sure of their investment...They will identify your weaknesses and prey upon them.

The tactics they use are as varied as the officer's personalities.

They observe your body language for signs of: insecurity – low self-esteem – weakness.

YOU MUST...

- Come across as self-confident even when things seem difficult.
- Remain liable and stick by your decisions.
- Never bend the rules.

- Don't be swayed by flattery or compliments.
- Don't spread rumors or gossip.

Rumors:

- Produce a "Gut Level Feeling" of validity.
- Are "talk of the town" away

- Peer attitudes begin changing.
- Peer contacts become less frequent.
- Inmates become "only friends".
- Never divulge your personal affairs in front of an inmate.

Self-Evaluation

- Am I overly friendly or familiar?
- Do I appear gullible?
- Do inmates consider me too trusting?
- Am I excessively sympathetic?
- Is my demeanor timid?
- Do I enforce rules consistently?
- Do I handle complaints professionally or in an embarrassing manner?
- Do I share personal problems with inmates?

Have I been known to forget to check the validity of inmate information or stories?

Do I sometimes let issues slide that should be addressed immediately?

Do I have difficulty with command, control or saying "No"?

Do I circumvent minor rules?

Can I be made to feel obligated?

Am I easily distracted?

Protectors

Employees set the stage.

Some employees approach the inmate on the inmates level

- Use profanity
- Use inmate slang
- Relegate to the inmate's level – Inmate thinks what he/she says or does is ok because the officer does it also

Inmates need and even desire good examples

- Protector #1
 - Always Be Professional
- Protector #2
 - Learn to recognize the steps to a set-up.
 - *Nip it in the bud!*

- Protector #3

Understand that all communication consists of a sender and a receiver.

 - Messages sent and received by inmates are different than "free world" messages
 - Monitor your and the inmates seeming casual remarks
 - Ask yourself "What would I do if????"

- Protector #4
 - Learn to say **NO** and mean it.
 - Be firm
 - No room for negotiation
 - No hesitating
 - Not in a vindictive or punitive manner

- Protector #5

Be in command of your area

 - Inmates are always willing to "fill in" new employees
 - Leads to over-familiarization
 - Remember to seek advice from staff only
 - Staff's Uniform Appearance
 - Can be a valuable tool in control and deterrent of trouble
 - It cannot command or control; only the person wearing it can do that
 - Be firm but fair and consistent.

- Protector #6
 - Be knowledgeable of institutional rules and policies not covered in the officer rules or the inmate handbook.
 - Inmates usually know if you can grant a favor or not
 - Ask yourself: Is the requested help part of my job or a "friend to friend" type of request?

- Protector #7
 - Keep everything in the open
 - This is a key element in stopping the set-up
 - Tell someone. Make sure to advise the COS and/or Administrator
 - If you notice someone else being manipulated, tell them and then report it to your Supervisor
 - Manipulators do not want "Openness" because another staff member may expose the "set-up".

- Protector #8
 - Do not get into a you/me situation
 - A secret gives one or the other a chance to take liberties if the secret is to be kept a secret
 - The inmate will take the liberties
 - New employees are easily subjected
 - Do not say to or do anything to the inmate you would not do if the supervisor or administrator were standing beside you.

- Protector #9
 - Victims should let someone know they feel they are being cultivated and let the inmate involved know that you have told someone.
 - Silence or inaction could mean approval on your part, whether involved or not
 - If manipulators can get by with it, why should they stop?
 - This action will let them know where you stand.

- Protector #10
 - Put it in writing
 - If it isn't recorded, it isn't so.
 - When do you record it?
 - As soon as possible
 - To procrastinate is to either approve or try to cover it up.

- Protector #11
 - Know what to do in a crisis situation
 - Presentation of shopping list
 - Buy some time
 - Remain noncommittal until out of danger
 - Report to supervisor immediately