***What to Expect When You're Going to Jail***

Plaxico Burress couldn't wriggle out of jail time for accidentally shooting himself in the leg with an unlicensed handgun in a New York City nightclub last November. But the former New York Giants wide receiver's personal fortune will help him on one score. Burress has retained the services of a "prisoner consultant" to advise him on "what to expect while incarcerated, and how to use his period of confinement as productively as possible," as his attorney, Benjamin Brafman, told the New York *Post*. To get a sense of what Burress's counseling sessions might be like, TIME caught up with Steven Oberfest, a personal trainer and martial-arts expert who bills himself as the industry's creator. The founder of Prison Coach, Oberfest - whose background includes a 15-month stint in a New York prison on racketeering charges - has been preparing wealthy convicts for their incarceration since 2002. He talked to TIME about the business of prison prep and the do's and don'ts of inmate etiquette

**How did you get into the business?**  
I was training clients in physical defense, and one of them mentioned she knew a socialite who did something stupid and had to go to prison. She didn't know anything about it, and she was scared. She wanted to prepare for it, to learn how to defend herself.

A light came on in my head. I've been incarcerated, and this experience, [coupled] with the physical element, sparked me to think about what it would take to help someone who had never experienced violence transfer into a whole new society. Many of these guys are fat cats who never had to worry about anything. They really have to adapt quickly, because there are so many people to piss off and so many things you can do wrong. If you wind up doing something on the "No" list, it can make your time - whether it's 16 months or 16 days - a living hell.

**How many people have you counseled?**  
Right now we counsel four to six people a month. These can range from a 100-hour course for $20,000 to $100/hr phone consultations or $150/hr webinars.

**How many prison consultants are there?**  
New guys pop up all the time. But I'd say there are three to five who do it right and have been in the ballgame for years.

**So what's the first thing you do with clients?**  
First I want to find out what their life is like. I want to know about their personality, whether they have any addictions to gambling, sex, drugs, cigarettes. The goal is to get someone to go in addiction-free, where they don't need anything from anybody. You don't want to put yourself in debt.

The other thing is basic prison etiquette. A lot of people don't know how to be respectful - period. They're cocky and they walk around with a chip on their shoulder. Now they don't even have a name; they have a number. They have to follow rules. And they have to make sure they don't do stupid things.

**Like what?**  
Like locking eyes with inmates. Looking into other people's cells, bunks or lockers. There are simple things, like where you sit when you go for chow. You need to sit with your own race, or your own kind. You can be a white dude without any racist issues at all, but if you sit down at a table with five African Americans, you have the potential to really piss them off - and at the same time, white guys will wonder why you're not sitting with them. If you start talking to a correctional officer, people are going to start labeling you as a rat, even if you are just asking an innocent question. They won't look at you as one of them. They'll look at you as a threat.

You want to be invisible. You need to mind your own business. While you're incarcerated, the only thing you have is respect. If you disrespect someone, you'll pay a price for it.

**Popular culture and movies would have you believe that to survive in prison, you're supposed to pick a fight right away.**   
That's just movies. You don't want to pick a fight with anyone. If you follow directions, you can go in and come out with no problems whatsoever. I'm thinking of a guy who was well-known and came out with no problems, and he was 5 ft. 2 in., 130 pounds. If you start being a whiny bitch, people will take advantage of it. You start crying about your sentence and your innocence, people are going to make fun of you.

## *Children in Adult Prison*



Across the United States, thousands of children have been sentenced as adults and sent to adult prisons. Nearly 3000 nationwide have been sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Children as young as 13 years old have been tried as adults and sentenced to die in prison, typically without any consideration of their age or circumstances of the offense.

Many young children in America are imperiled by abuse, neglect, domestic and community violence, and poverty. Without effective intervention and help, these children suffer, struggle, and fall into despair and hopelessness. Some young teens cannot manage the emotional, social, and psychological challenges of adolescence and eventually engage in destructive and violent behavior. Sadly, many states have ignored the crisis and dysfunction that creates child delinquency and instead have subjected kids to further victimization and abuse in the adult criminal justice system.

For children with parole-eligible sentences, unique release and re-entry challenges too often create insurmountable obstacles to parole and successful re-entry. Young people who have been in prison since they were adolescents need help learning basic life skills.

# *Behind bars: Four teens in prison tell their stories*

When I arrived at Central Juvenile Hall, I was expecting guards, watch towers, basically the setting of the Shawshank Redemption. I was told to wait in a small lobby room, which separated the prison from the outside world. While waiting, I saw a few inmates getting on a bus. They wore handcuffs and carried brown paper bags behind their backs. I wondered what these kids did. I looked at each one, trying to guess his crime. "Maybe he robbed a store, maybe he killed somebody, maybe he was selling drugs." Some people might ask, why would I want to write a story about juveniles in prison? Why would anyone want to read what these criminals have to say? Who cares? It’s easy to judge juvenile criminals as bad kids, but not so easy when you’re looking into the eyes of a teenager who is going to spend life in jail.

I know there are victims of violent crimes whose voices go unheard. But recognize that some people who commit crimes have many reasons behind their actions. It’s a cycle. This is what happens to kids who didn’t have direction or anybody who cared, who had to learn about life the hard way. They were brought up this way so that’s how they’re going to treat others. Sometimes, it’s okay to give a voice to the "villains." They have been victims too.

Inside Juvenile Hall, Javier Stauring, the Catholic chaplain, was there to guide me through the facility and be present during the interviews. We sat down on a bench in the middle of the yard. He told me that high-risk offenders wore orange jumpsuits, and those wearing gray and yellow suits were minor offenders or those who violated their probation. The four teens I was going to interview were all high-risk offenders. Out of 550 inmates in Juvenile Hall, 180 were being tried in adult court, Javier said. He explained that I couldn’t ask any questions about their crimes, use their full names or take pictures of their faces because they were minors and their cases were pending.

While we sat talking, a few teens walked by with a guard, their heads facing the ground and their hands behind their backs. I watched them walk. Then one of them turned to look at me, and I turned my head to avoid eye contact. I felt that he didn’t want to be looked at. I wouldn’t want someone who was free looking at me walking around in prison. I felt uncomfortable that day, like I didn’t have any clue what these kids had been through. Did I feel sorry for them? Not right away. I was surprised by the innocence of their faces, like they didn’t belong there. I was really shocked when I saw a boy who looked like he was about 10 walking in a line with other kids, wearing handcuffs. I also felt glad that my life didn’t take the same road as these kids’ lives had.

Then I met the four teens and I found out just how bad their situations were. Even though I had prepared a list of questions, I didn’t know what to expect. Would they cry? Would they be angry? Though none of the four had an emotional outburst, some questions during the interview caused them to pause and try to hold in their emotions while thinking about painful memories.

When I first met the two girls, Mayra and Elizabeth, I was expecting two huge girls, bigger than me, with short hair and tattoos. But two petite, feminine and pretty girls walked in … What? What could they have done, and to be wearing orange suits at that? Yet both were smiling and saying hello to me.

And when I met the two guys, they seemed calm and laid back. Though they were the same age as me, they seemed older in their ways. They had experienced a lot and you could see it in the way they carried themselves. Elizabeth was more to herself, the day-dreaming type; Mayra was tougher, more independent; Mark was heavy in size, but you could see the sensitivity in his eyes; and David was thoughtful, no doubt.

All four had drifted into a negative lifestyle at a young age. It seemed as if it was impossible for them to overcome their problems. The two girls said they had been sexually and physically abused. Both said that leaving home at a young age was the only thing they could do to save themselves from future torment. The two guys, however, had wanted that wild lifestyle. Both confessed to having been ignorant and making bad choices. What I learned from talking with them is that there are some things we have no control over—our families, where we live and who we know. It was simple for me to see that all four kids had no control over their lives. All they knew was what made them feel better at the moment.

There are a lot of negative aspects about prison, but some positive things can come out of being locked up. David even said, "I’m glad I’m in prison, or else I’d still be out there [getting into trouble]."

Prison, for many out of control teens, is stopping them in their tracks so they don’t go further with a criminal and violent life. Prison allows these teens to stop and think. David told me that his time in prison has allowed him to figure out that he’s a "really cool person."

**Teens should get a chance to change**  
Even though they may take responsibility now for their actions and want to change their lives, they still have to serve their time. That’s the way our system is. I know they have a debt to pay to society, but why doesn’t our system allow young people to redeem themselves? I don’t think our judiciary system deals well with people once they are in the system. Okay, they’re in prison, now what? Mayra is only 17, what can we expect her to do with a life sentence, sit in her cell and rot? I don’t think the system expects or encourages kids to change their lives around. But I can’t complain too much because prison is keeping criminals off the streets and away from my family and me.

Talking to these kids, I realized they had many problems growing up. Some had no friends at all, and many have dysfunctional families. This doesn’t excuse the crimes they committed, but it helps explain why.

After one day at a prison, I see that in prison, it’s just you and time. Too much time for the kids I met that day. That time in prison is time they wish they had to spend with their friends and family. Time they wish they had to go on a date, to play sports, to go to school, to watch television, to lay down on their own beds, to walk free, to laugh and have a good time again. It’s time spent feeling regret for their past actions. No matter how much they regret the past, they will have to finish growing up in adult prison.