



# Helping Individuals Ascend

Our Mission: 0% Recidivism, 100% Acceptance

## DOs & DON'Ts of Writing to Inmates

*A guide for building respectful, compassionate, and safe pen-pal relationships*

### ✓ DO

- **DO** use a generic pen-pal name like *Hinda* or *Mendel* when signing your letters.
- **DO** maintain a professional, appropriate, and compassionate tone. Intimate relationships are not appropriate—remember, all mail is read by the prison staff.
- **DO** share general facts about yourself (e.g., age, gender, marital status, occupation, hobbies, interests).
- **DO** respond promptly and thoughtfully. Address topics you're comfortable with and ask questions to build connection.
- **DO** be supportive of your pen-pal's hopes, dreams, and plans—even if they seem unrealistic.
- **DO** offer gentle feedback if your pen-pal expresses troubling or unrealistic ideas. You're allowed to challenge with kindness.
- **DO** allow your pen-pal to offer encouragement and advice when appropriate. Many have developed unique strengths through adversity.
- **DO** remember your role: you're a cheerleader first, coach second. Your presence is powerful.

### ⊘ DON'T

- **DON'T** dive into personal details too quickly. Build trust over time through several letters.
- **DON'T** share sensitive information like your address, Social Security number, or financial details—**ever**.
- **DON'T** ask “What are you in for?” Your pen-pal may share when they feel ready—or not at all.
- **DON'T** feel pressured to send money, books, or contact people from their past. If they need help, they can speak to a chaplain.
- **DON'T** agree with everything. Honest, respectful disagreement is part of a healthy relationship.
- **DON'T** contact your pen-pal's family. That's a boundary best left untouched.