

## Needles in Prisons – another impediment to recovery?

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Deliberately establishing a Needle exchange/provision or supervised injecting room in a prison? I could never do that to people I care about.

For many addicts, going to prison is a relief. A relief from the hectic merry-go-round of using, doing crime and /or selling their body to support their habit of sticking a needle in their arm to relieve the pain and purposelessness they feel inside. The constant pattern of being sick, lying, cheating and dodging authorities, debt collectors (of all types) and those who know what you're up to is exhausting and shameful at best.

To be caught and locked up certainly isn't at first appealing but for many, it is not long until they are actually very grateful that things have turned out that way. No more running, no more trying unsuccessfully to get your act together, no more dysfunctional relationships that only bring you down. It's a relief to be safe, have a roof over your head, not to be constantly looking for money you don't have just to survive, and to be removed from the chaos of life on the outside. Most of all it's a time to get healthy, to think, regroup and get a chance to make a fresh start. Many are sick of being a slave to the needle and want to make a new life for themselves and their families. A life where they can rebuild the trust of others and themselves.

Admittedly, this is not the attitude of some. For them, despite having a love/hate attitude to drugs there is no intention, at least at this stage to stop. But for those who do, surely it is not fair to put the trigger of a needle right in front of their face. For the same reason you wouldn't give a pornographic magazine to a person struggling with lust or put a bottle of bourbon in front of a newly sober alcoholic correlates to why you shouldn't display needles and provide easy access to them to a user AND to all those around them who they have to share cells or units with. The result can surely be that a person can be surrounded by the very thing they are seeking to overcome. Easy access to needles only makes the battle not to constantly entertain the thought of using that much harder.

Anyone working in the field is well aware that drugs get into all prisons, but I have no doubt that easy access to equipment such as needles would only make obtaining drugs more desirable. The hassle of getting clean needles is definitely a deterrent for many. Moreover, the availability of needles would also add to the temptation of prisoners to crush up pills they receive at medication times and shoot them up. This in turn is likely to lead to prisoner's increasingly standing over each other for medication. In more ways than one, I believe the safety of those in prison would be jeopardized and that the care shown for those who are seeking to overcome their life controlling problems should take priority over those who are seeking to continue in a lifestyle that is after all illegal.

Prisons are surely for those who break the law. To lock someone up and then provide the goods to assist them to further do so seems ludicrous to me and very difficult to justify.

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