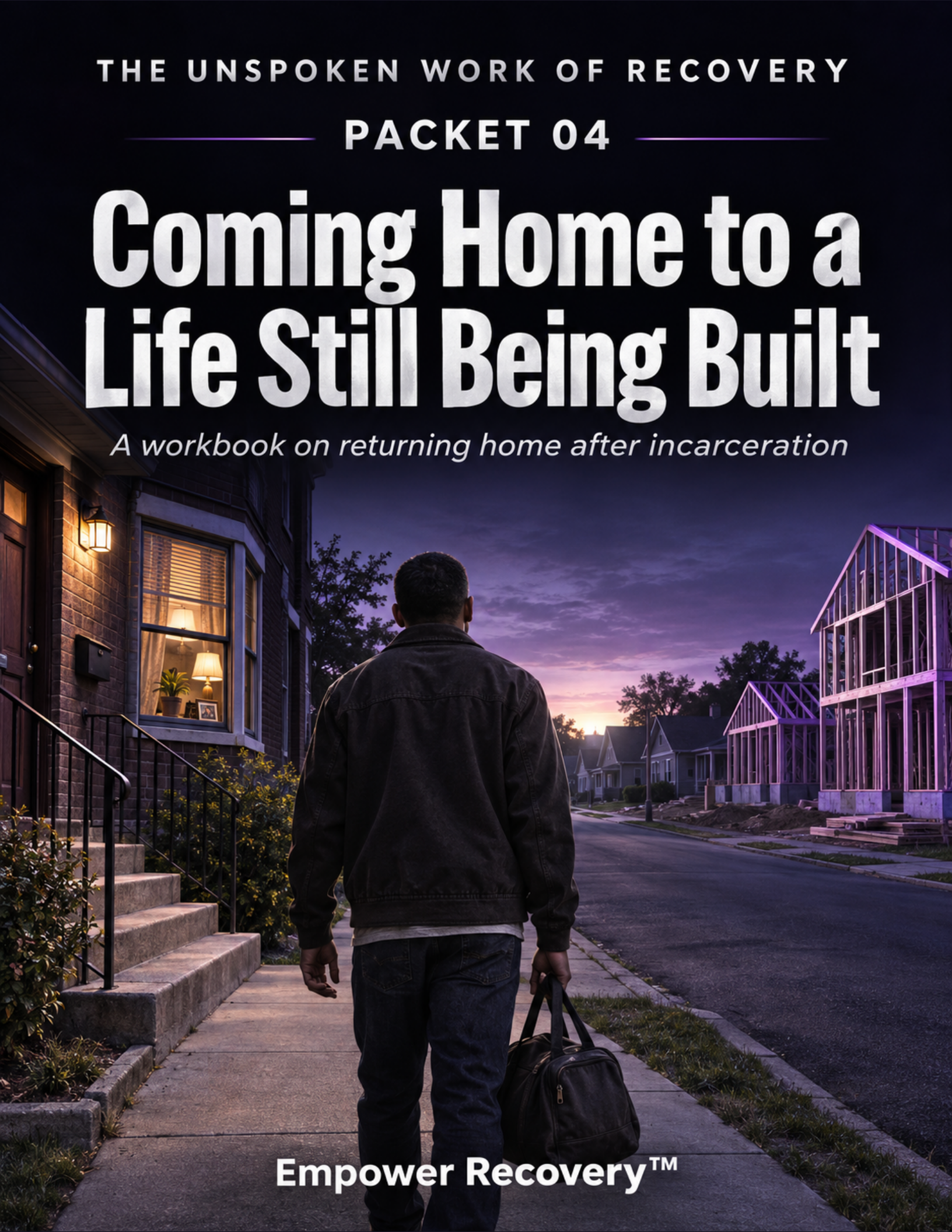
THE UNSPOKEN WORK OF RECOVERY

PACKET 04

Coming Home to a Life Still Being Built

A workbook on returning home after incarceration



Empower Recovery™

WELCOME

Begin with what is in front of you

A self-guided, nonclinical workbook for adults preparing to return or already back in the community.

You might be reading this before release, on your first night back, or months later when the demands of daily life still come faster than you can sort them. Start with the page that fits your situation. If where to sleep or getting to an appointment is the immediate question, go straight to pages 5 or 6.

You can work alone or bring one page to a reentry navigator, peer supporter, or trusted person. Keep names and sensitive details out of worksheets you may share. Use a secure place for identification numbers, case numbers, passwords, and other private records.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Use it to organize choices, questions, and contacts. For case-specific requirements, use your official paperwork and confirm questions with the designated office or your attorney. For health or medication concerns, speak with a licensed provider. U.S. resource starting points are on page 17.

What is the first issue I want help sorting out?

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Tap a title to jump there. You can begin anywhere.

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OPENING ARTICLE

The First Morning Nobody Planned for You

On his second morning back, Andre stood at his sister’s kitchen counter and tried to decide which problem had to come first. His phone had seven percent battery. A reminder on a folded sheet said to call an office by noon. The bus app wanted him to make an account. His niece asked if he could walk her to school. He wanted to say yes before he knew what time he had to leave.

His sister had made space in the hall closet. He was grateful. He also wanted to know how long he could stay and what she expected him to pay once he found work. They had talked about getting him home. They had barely talked about what living together would look like.

Returning can mean making decisions across several parts of life at once. An expired ID can slow down a housing or job application. [1] A shift change can affect a ride, a family agreement, or a required appointment. Some things can be handled with a phone call. Others depend on a document, a decision, or a person calling back.

Andre borrowed a charger, called the office, and wrote down the answer. That evening, he asked his sister to talk for ten minutes about the next two weeks. They disagreed on one thing. They got specific about two others. When his niece asked about the next morning, he knew what he could say yes to.

A QUESTION TO CARRY FORWARD

What would make tomorrow a little easier to get through?

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3 / AWARENESS

Sort the next 72 hours

Use the next three days from wherever you are in the transition.

CHECK THE BASICS

A place to stay: Confirm tonight and the next night if possible.
Daily needs: Food, phone access, transportation, and a way to store essentials.
Time-sensitive needs: Required appointments, care or medication follow-up, and any deadline on official paperwork.

If several things feel urgent, ask what has the nearest deadline and what needs to happen first to make the other steps possible. If where to sleep is uncertain, start there and ask a local reentry contact or 211 about available options.

What do I have confirmed for the next three days?

What is uncertain or time-sensitive? What comes first?

Who can I contact today? What is my backup if I cannot reach them?

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3 / AWARENESS

Know which dates matter

Put your required dates and other appointments in one place. Copy exact dates, times, addresses, and instructions from the relevant paperwork. If a detail is unclear or a ride falls through, contact the appropriate office as early as you can and ask how to proceed. For legal interpretation, speak with your attorney.

WHAT TO RECORD

Appointment: What, when, and where.
Source: The paperwork or office that confirmed it.
Plan: How to get there, what to bring, and whom to call if the plan changes.

What is my next required check-in or appointment, if I have one?

What detail do I need to verify, and with whom?

What is my transportation or phone plan? What is my backup?

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3 / AWARENESS

Notice what feels different

You may be glad to make your own decisions and still feel worn out by how many arrive in one day. A busy store, a quiet room, or a relative asking for a favor can bring up more than you expected. Pick one recent moment and describe what happened in plain words.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

“The grocery store felt loud and I left without what I needed. Next time I can go at a quieter hour, bring a short list, or ask someone to go with me.”

What felt easier than I expected?

What took more energy, time, or patience than I expected?

What would make that situation more manageable next time?

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6 / ALIGNMENT

Make one call with a clear ask

Start with the outcome you need. If you are referred somewhere else, ask for a name, number, and best time to reach the person. If you have limited phone time, write the question first and keep a short note of the answer.

A SCRIPT TO ADAPT

“I’m returning to the community and need help with a place to stay this week. Do you serve my area? What information do I need to bring? If you can’t help, who should I contact next?”

Who am I calling and what is the one thing I need to find out?

What should I have ready before I call?

What did they say? What is the next step and when will I follow up?

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6 / ALIGNMENT

Unblock ID, work, and transportation

Look for the step holding up the others. If you need an ID, ask the issuing agency which documents it accepts and whether an appointment is needed. If you are ready to look for work or training, ask a local workforce program or American Job Center what help is available. See page 17.

ONE CHAIN OF SMALL STEPS

“I want to apply for a training program. First I’ll ask what ID it accepts. If I need another document, I’ll write down how to request it. Then I’ll check the bus route before I commit to an appointment.”

What am I trying to do? What needs to happen first?

Who can tell me exactly what I need and what it costs, if anything?

What ride, fare, phone access, or document help should I plan for?

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6 / ALIGNMENT

Plan for continuity of care

If you have ongoing medical, mental health, or substance use care, identify who can help you continue it in the community. Before release, ask discharge staff what information and referrals they can provide. If you are already home, contact the provider or pharmacy about appointment or refill questions. Seek guidance promptly if you may run out of medication before you can be seen.

QUESTIONS TO TAKE WITH YOU

Who is the next contact? When can I be seen? What records or coverage information do I need? Whom should I call if there is a gap before the appointment?

What care or support do I want to continue or arrange?

Who can help confirm the next appointment, refill, or referral?

What might get in the way? Who can help me plan for it?

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6 / ALIGNMENT

Talk about expectations at home

Returning to a household can mean learning how everyone lives now. Choose one topic and ask for a time to talk. Consider how long the arrangement lasts, what you can contribute, what privacy each person needs, and when you will revisit the agreement. Follow any applicable contact or housing conditions and ask the appropriate professional if you need clarification.

WORDS TO START WITH

“I appreciate having somewhere to stay. Can we talk about what the next two weeks look like? I can help with groceries on Friday. I’d like to check in next Sunday about how it’s working for both of us.”

What expectation needs to be clearer?

What can I offer, and what do I need to ask for?

What will we check again, and when?

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9 / INTEGRATION

Build a week you can repeat

Start with the commitments that already have a time. Add one practical task and one point of connection. Leave some space for waiting, travel, rest, and a plan falling through. A workable week can have open spaces.

A SIMPLE WEEK

Fixed: Wednesday morning appointment.
Practical: Call about an ID on Thursday after lunch.
Connection: Saturday walk with a friend.
Backup: Save the transit number and ask about a ride by Tuesday.

What dates or times are fixed this week?

What practical task would move something forward?

Where will I make time for connection or rest?

What can I move, and what is my backup if a plan falls through?

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9 / INTEGRATION

Keep promises small enough to keep

You may want people to see how serious you are about showing up. Pick something specific you can do and follow through. If your circumstances change, let the person know when you can and propose an honest adjustment. Other people get to choose their own pace for reconnecting.

A PROMISE WITH A TIME

“I can call on Thursday after six. If my shift changes, I’ll let you know.”

Who do I want to reconnect with, and what pace is workable?

What is one promise I can make in good faith this week?

What can I say if I need to change or repair it?

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9 / INTEGRATION

Review the week and adjust

Review one week or a few days. A delay may tell you who has the answer, what you need to verify earlier, or where you need a backup. Take a minute to notice what worked well enough to keep.

What did I complete, confirm, or learn?

What got stuck, and what part depended on someone or something else?

Who do I need to follow up with? By when?

What will I keep, change, or ask for next week?

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OPTIONAL SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

Who am I becoming here?

People may know a chapter of your life before they know how you live today. You can reflect on the person you want to be in a specific place with specific people. Choose a value and give it a time and a place. Honesty might sound like calling about a missed appointment. Patience might mean giving someone room to decide whether they are ready to talk.

GOOD ORDERLY DIRECTION

“With Good Orderly Direction today I choose to live one value in one ordinary moment. May I ask for help when I need it, keep the commitments I can make, and repair what belongs to me.”

What value do I want my choices to reflect this week?

Where can I practice it in one specific action?

Who or what helps me return to that direction?

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REUSABLE WORKSHEET

My next-step reentry card

Keep this page private or share only the sections you choose.

3 · Awareness | What matters most in the next 24 hours?

6 · Alignment | What is the next action? Who can help me verify it?

9 · Integration | When will I do it? What is my backup?

What do I want to confirm or follow up on afterward?

A LINE TO KEEP

“I can build a day I can get through, then decide what comes next.”

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SUPPORT AND REFERENCES

U.S. resources and support

Start with the reentry contact, navigator, or case manager available to you and ask which local services fit your situation. Call ahead to check hours, eligibility, and what to bring. These starting points cover different needs.

Housing and essentials. Call 211 or visit 211 housing assistance for local options and referrals.

Identification. Ask your state's issuing agency about accepted documents. See the U.S. Department of Justice's State Identification reentry fact sheet for background. [1]

Employment and training. The U.S. Department of Labor's Job Seekers page points to local American Job Centers and job search resources.

Behavioral health care. FindTreatment.gov lists U.S. mental health and substance use treatment facilities.

Civil legal help. The Legal Services Corporation's I Need Legal Help directory can point eligible people to civil legal aid. For criminal case or supervision questions, contact your attorney or the relevant office as appropriate.

Which resource will I contact first, and what do I want to ask?

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REFERENCE

Glossary and topic index

Continuity of care. Keeping needed health care or other ongoing support connected as you move between settings.

Reentry. The process of returning to and rebuilding daily life in the community after incarceration.

Reentry navigator. A local contact who can help people find and connect with services, where that role is available.

Supervision conditions. Requirements that apply to a particular person under supervision. Refer to your official paperwork and designated contacts for your situation.

Verified step. An appointment, requirement, or action you have confirmed with the relevant source.

FIND A TOPIC

Care and medication follow-up	**10, 17**
Family and household expectations	**11, 13**
Housing, food, and first needs	**05, 17**
ID, work, training, and transportation	**06, 09, 17**
Required dates and contact information	**06, 08**
Spiritual reflection	**15**
Weekly planning and review	**12–14, 16**

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