

# HOW IN THE WORLD DO I TALK ABOUT MY OFFENSE?

### WILL AN EMPLOYER HIRE ME?

Yes, in most cases. Most employers will look at the hiring decision on a case-by-case basis. They will typically look at 3 things:

- The type of offense (see below)
- How long ago the offense was committed
- The number of offenses. One crime is better than multiple violations, even if the crime was a violent one. With one offense, you can claim an isolated event, whereas a string of offenses indicates a pattern of behavior.

### WHICH CRIMES CREATE THE MOST DIFFICULTY IN GETTING HIRED?

1. Sex offender
2. Violent offender
3. Drug sales/theft/receiving stolen property
4. Drug possession
5. DUI

### HOW DO I TALK ABOUT MY OFFENSE?

Be brief. Don't volunteer details, unless it is something that will help you.

- "I was convicted of \_\_\_\_\_. It cost me dearly in lost income and in pain caused to my family and friends. Now, I'm very committed to showing my true value to an employer."

Be sincere. You can say the words, but if you don't mean it, it WILL show through. You can tell when someone is not sincere with you, and so can the employer.

### HOW CAN I EXPLAIN MY OFFENSE?

Which sounds better?...

- I'm a Thief or "I took something that didn't belong to me."
- I'm a Sex Offender or "I did something inappropriate with someone who was not yet of age."
- I'm a Prostitute or "I used my body as a way to support myself."
- I'm a Drug User (possession) or "I had some illegal substances in my possession for my own personal use."
- I'm a Drug Dealer (sales) or "I was looking for some fast, easy money."
- I made a Terrorist Threat or "I got angry and said things I should not have said"
- I'm a Drunk Driver (DUI) or "I drove my car when I shouldn't have."
- I was Mentally Ill (Mental Health issues) or "I was struggling at the time."
- I assaulted someone (Violent offense) or "I was involved in a situation that got out of hand and someone ended up getting hurt."
- I was in a gang (Gang-related violent offense) or "I got involved with a group of people that I never should have associated with."

# HOW IN THE WORLD DO I TALK ABOUT MY OFFENSE?

## POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

- Young and stupid - highlight the “young;” tell them you’ve had a chance to do a lot of growing up since then.
- Isolated incident
- Distance – it’s been a long time
- For the middle-aged offender: “I’m just too old for this.”

## PHRASES TO AVOID

- Addict
- Alcoholic
- Recovery
- Treatment: Use the past tense if you have to discuss treatment. Tell them you were struggling at the time and got involved in programs to help you refocus your life to get back on track.
- Anger Management: Say that you “took an effective communication course to help me communicate better in my relationships with other people and learned how to effectively handle negative situations.”

## DON'T SAY

- “I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.” — Employer’s reaction: Excuses, excuses.
- “I was influenced by bad people”. — Employer’s reaction: YOU made the choice.
- “I’ll try to stay out of prison.” — Employer’s reaction: You’ll try harder not to get caught this time.
- “I think I can.” — Employer’s reaction: Well, can you or not?

## FROM THE EMPLOYER’S PERSPECTIVE

Employers think of their employees as an extended family. We all want to protect our home, property and family from a potential threat. Employers want to protect their business.

So it is up to you to convince the employer that you are trustworthy and will not be a threat to their employees.

How do you do that? It’s important to explain your offense and list the actions you have taken to improve your life since then. However, your attitude, body language, and tone of voice are the true indicators of credibility.

- Does your body language, tone of voice, and facial expression match what you are saying?
- Do you shift uneasily when asked if you are committed to respecting the law?
- Do you show sincere remorse for the harm you caused?

Finally, you should acknowledge the pain that your family endured because of your crime(s).

## REMEMBER RSLA FOR YOUR DISCUSSION

- **Right to know** The employer has a right to know about your incarceration. He is the one paying your wages.
- **Be sincere** The employer wants to know that you take responsibility for your actions and that you are sorry for what you did. This shows him that you are on the path to rehabilitation.
- **Learn** What have you learned from your experience? List the positive things you have done and the changes you have made in your thinking and life.
- **Action** What actions are you taking now in your life?