

## "THE 3 R'S": RESPONSIBILITY, REGRET AND REDEMPTION

The first knock-out question most ex-offenders face often appears on an application form or in the job interview: "Have you ever been convicted of a felony? If yes, give details."

If you have been convicted, how should you best respond to this question on an application form? You basically have four choices:

1. Lie by saying "no."
2. Don't respond; just leave it blank and go on to another question.
3. Be truthful by saying "yes" and giving the details.
4. Be truthful by saying "yes" and then follow up by saying "details provided at the interview."

**Do not lie.** Lying will just delay the inevitable; the employer will most likely find out about your conviction during a background check. **Your best course of action would be #4 - inform the employer that you will provide details at the interview.** You want to do this because you need to be in control of the story relating to your conviction. This part of your story may take three to five minutes. But again, don't talk too much - just enough to let the employer know you are a new and potentially very productive person.

Once you get to the interview, the interviewer may ask about your conviction. **This is the time to follow "The 3 R's": Responsibility, Regret and Redemption.**

1. **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for your actions. Give a very brief overview of what happened to you - the crime, the conviction, the outcome. You should be able to do this in less than a minute.
2. **Regret:** Honestly express being sorry about what you did. But then quickly move to the third "R".
3. **Redemption:** Focus on how you have changed your life for the better because of this experience. Remember, the employer wants to hire your future, not your past. Let him know you

Employers are like many other people: sympathetic to those who have made mistakes but who are willing to take responsibility and make sincere efforts to change their lives. It's part of our culture of forgiveness, redemption, and self-transformation.

## "THE 3 R'S": RESPONSIBILITY, REGRET AND REDEMPTION continued...

**Whatever you do, make sure you stress your future rather than dwell on your past.** But let's also acknowledge that some criminal activities are difficult to deal with in the job market. For example, if you have been convicted of assault, murder, or a sex crime, your red flag is bigger than most red flags of ex-offenders. These are frightening crimes for many employers, who do not want the liability of such individuals working next to other employees. If you've done time for such crimes, you'll need to put together a rehabilitation portfolio as well as seek jobs with employers who are known to work with such ex-offenders.

Here is an example of how the conversation can go during a job interview:

**Employer:** I've noticed that you've marked "yes" in the area regarding if you have ever been convicted of a felony; can you please explain?

**Ex-offender:** Last year I became involved with a new group of friends. Even though my friends were negative influences, the choices I made were my own fault and I don't blame anyone but myself. As a result, I was convicted of burglary and vandalism. I am now under supervision by the court, but that supervision has saved my life by getting me back on track, including passing in school and benefiting from other services given to me. I worked hard this year to understand the poor choices I made and to learn new ways to prevent making those kinds of choices again. I caught up in school by taking on extra work through a school program. I deeply regret the harm that I have caused, but I've learned a valuable lesson. I'm a hard worker, learn new things very quickly, and from what I know about your company, I believe I could be an asset to your business. You won't find anyone who will work harder than me to deserve your trust.

Now your turn:

**Employer:** I've noticed that you've marked "yes" in the area regarding if you have ever been convicted of a felony; can you please explain?

**Your response:** "In \_\_\_\_\_, I was convicted of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(year) (crime(s) that you were convicted of)  
I have \_\_\_\_\_ as a result of my poor decisions. As a result, I have  
(supervision, etc.)  
the opportunity to improve my life by focusing my attention on \_\_\_\_\_  
(programs, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_. I deeply regret the  
harm I have caused, but have learned a valuable lesson. I'm \_\_\_\_\_  
(state specific skills and abilities)  
\_\_\_\_\_, and from what I know about your  
company, I believe I would be an asset to your business."