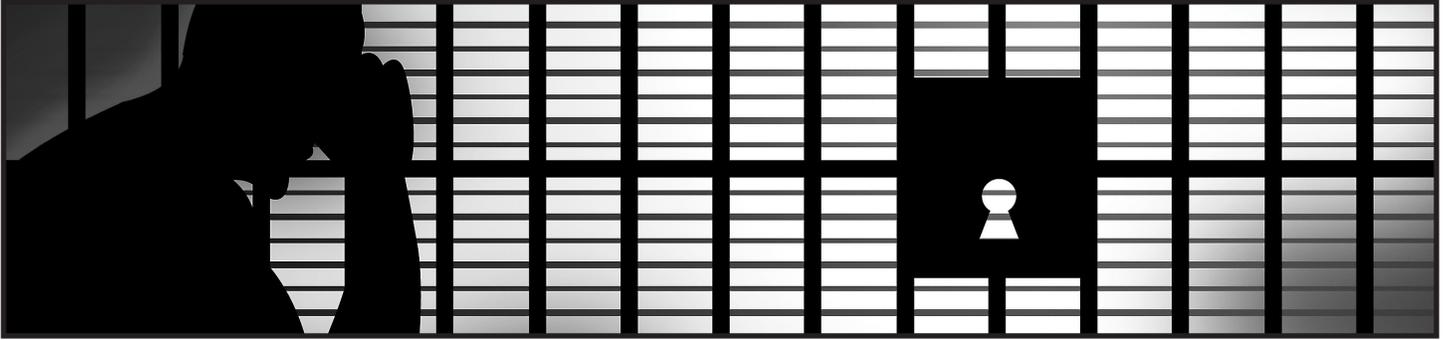


WHEN A PARENT IS INCARCERATED



After being sent to jail or prison, it is natural to worry about how your son or daughter is managing without you.

It is a lot to think about.

But did you know there are some things you can do to develop *a closer relationship* with your son or daughter despite the physical distance? Here are nine ways to strengthen the relationship:

- ✦ **BE HONEST.** If your child is old enough to understand that a jail or prison is where adults go after breaking the law, explain where you are and for how long.
- ✦ **GIVE YOUR CHILD A KEEPSAKE.** Provide a special photo or something else that reminds your child of your special bond.
- ✦ **COMMUNICATE OFTEN.** Develop a plan and commit to how frequently you will connect with your child.
- ✦ **PHONE HOME AND WRITE LETTERS.** Stay in touch to know what is going on in your child's life. If your facility allows video or audio messages think about creative messages you can create for birthdays, report card days and family celebrations.

✦ **LOOK FOR TEACHABLE MOMENTS.** Talk to your child about the need to follow rules at home, in school and in the community and the consequences of not doing so.

✦ **EXPLAIN VISITATION RULES IN ADVANCE.** Help the child understand what may and may not happen during the visit. Help your child feel comfortable during the visit.

✦ **PRACTICE PATIENCE.** Your child may not respond the way you expect to your feelings when expressed during visits, calls or in letters. Be realistic with your expectations. Give your child time.

✦ **MANAGE YOUR TIME POSITIVELY.** Spend time improving yourself. Take classes on parenting, or anger management. Get your GED or take other educational classes.

✦ **TREAT THE AT-HOME PARENT WITH RESPECT.** Avoid acting negatively toward the mother or father of your child. Even if the relationship has ended, work to keep it positive. Parental conflict is the last thing your child needs to experience during this challenging time.

**MAINTAIN MEANINGFUL AND CONSISTENT CONTACT
WITH YOUR CHILD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN HIS OR HER LIFE
NOW AND AFTER YOU ARE RELEASED.**



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1-800-552-7096 Virginia Child Abuse Hotline (language line available)

800-Children (800-244-5373) Parent Helpline