

# (OUR FAMILIES ARE VICTIMS TOO!)

One way or another, our crime and eventually incarceration has made our families victims as well. Due to our actions, it has created all kinds of turmoil - emotional, ~~ph~~ psychological, financial. It may have come as a sudden shock, or it may have come as one more thing in a long series of dealing with us. Either way, our families has been through a lot, - shame and guilt because they sometimes don't want to show their face around other people. They're tired of being known as that person who has a family member in prison. Sometimes they just want to hide from that. On another level, many family members carry around the burden of having to support their love one in prison, because when it's all said in done, your so called homie's have left you all by yourself. So in their dark moments, they beat themselves up for not being a good enough parent. They torture themselves with whether they did the right thing by you.

Sometimes they feel depressed to the point of being physically sick. Mothers especially are hurting, because they know that their Sons are hurting. You know how you feel helpless dealing with the legal and prison system right? Well so does our families. They're been bounced around, been given conflicting information, and waited through endless court hearings... They're sick of it all!

They've been dealing with fear for a long time. And they still are. There was fear of what you were getting yourself into. There were fear of what the next phone call in the middle of the night might mean. There were fear of the night you first got arrested. There was the fear of what would happen to you in lock-up. Then there was fear of how your case would turn out. Now there's the fear of what will happen to you behind bars, whether you'll come out a hardened criminal or at all for that matter.

And so they feel anxious a lot. What are you going to say in your next letter? Is it going to be negative or positive? or will you write at all?

They've drained, emotionally spent. And sometimes financially as well. The path that leads to prison puts a huge dent in a lot of our families finances. They don't have much left in the emotional bank either. They've been caring for so long that there's no longer much positive emotion left. And so when we call demanding, I need this and the other, we don't stop to think that they have needs as well.

From time to time they find themselves really angry at God and the World, because they feel betrayed... "Why my Son?" "What did I do to deserve this?" From time to time, they feel beaten down, robbed of a son, numb and just plain tired. Sometimes they feel like they need to put on a show when you talk to them on the phone or come to visit you. They're not sure if they should share with you the good and bad what's going on in their life (will that depress you?) And when you're finally ready to reach out to them and have

a healthy relationship, they feel that they need to pull back from you to protect themselves.

Maybe the number one challenge facing us when it comes to your family making you a priority in their lives is respect and understanding. When you're lock-up the natural tendency is to become even more focused on yourself, and it can be a good and healthy process for you to look inside yourself. But at the same time, you become so self-absorbed that you forget the needs of other people. So ask yourself, how can you say you love your family when you didn't think about the effects that your crime and incarceration would have on them? They become victims as well.

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