

PARENTING FROM PRISON

One of the strongest natural inclinations, instinctual--is for a parent to love and seek the best for their child--to parent. But, incarceration presents barriers to effective parenting that a prisoner must be mindful of. And while preventing children from coming to prison is of top priority (especially with the high incarceration rates of children of prisoners)--incarcerated parents often adopt attitudes that alienate their children in many ways. Fortunately, there are things a prisoner can do to use their parenting skills effectively in a prison environment.

Before parenting can even begin, the barriers to it must be overcome. First, a prisoner must overcome the tendency of self-justification or they could possibly impress the tendency upon their child while communicating with them. Then, the child will not be equipped to recognize criminal behavior or wish to stop it. So the prisoner must admit their faults.

Ignorance is another barrier. Thus, a parent must learn to see things the way they truly are. And simply being honest with oneself and learning the difference between fact and opinion, can help anyone see beyond the way they want things to be--to the way things truly are.

The next barrier to deal with is that of decision making. A parent must learn to make wise decisions based upon a factual interpretation of reality. The best approach is to deal with what one is sure about. Then, formulate a solution that involves integrity and no harm to anyone or crimes, and which leads to the most productive outcome.

Once a parent is honest about themselves, sees things for what they truly are, and learns to make wise decisions, they are capable of advising their child. But, incarceration itself presents a formidable barrier to parenting. When a parent puts themselves in prison, they effectively take themselves out



of their child's life. They have told their child that committing crimes is more important than being a parent.

Therefore, a prisoner must be ready to accept the boundaries of their child. And be willing to accept whatever part the child is willing to let them have in the child's life--even if it is the part of a friend, rather than a parent. For if a prisoner attempts to force their way into their child's life, the child may reject or cease communicating with them. Allowing the child to accept the parent on the child's terms is the only attitude which will truly build and strengthen a relationship between an incarcerated parent and their child.

Once a relationship has been established with their child based upon love and trust, the incarcerated parent can begin to use their parenting skills effectively from prison. And, if a parent focuses more upon explaining their views, rather than forcing them, the child will progressively accept more deeply involved parenting--which may prevent future incarceration.