



The impact on young people in high school when a parent is in prison

The effects of parental arrest and incarceration on a young person's development are profound. The young person may suffer from multiple psychological problems some of which may include:

- trauma
- anxiety
- guilt
- shame
- fear
- sadness

Many children of incarcerated parents have trouble forming healthy relationships and may engage in a variety of self destructive behaviours. The affects can be different for each child and may manifest itself in a multitude of negative behaviours some of which may include:

- a lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- depression
- low self-esteem
- withdrawal from peers and family
- nightmares
- uncontrollable crying at night
- verbal aggression
- physical aggression with peers, siblings or caregivers
- victims of bullying
- decline in school performance
- truancy
- lack of concentration or stopping of education all together
- self harm
- drug or alcohol use
- eating disorder

Although the affects are adverse for both male and female children, boys are likely to exhibit externalising behaviours such as aggression, whilst girls are more likely to exhibit internalising behaviour such as depression or eating disorders. Positive intervention can help reduce the negative impact for the young person.

It is imperative for the young child to feel comfortable to express their concerns and feelings in regards to their parent's incarceration. Creating an honest and open relationship with the young person whereby they are able to talk freely will help them reduce the guilt and stigma often associated with having a parent in prison.

Talking to the appropriate member of the young person's school can be helpful in combating negative behaviour. Therefore being able to assist in sustaining a productive education for the young person and can be paramount in assuring the right interventions can be offered.