LESSONS FROM THE CHILDRENS CENTER MODEL

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Seven Perspectives for Seizing the Opportunity of Incarceration

• An incarcerated parent is a contributing member of their family.
• As non-custodial parents involved in self improvement, they can play a unique and powerful role in their children’s lives.
• Recovery and rehabilitation include examination of family relationships.
• Children want and benefit from their parent’s presence in their lives, even when their parent is struggling.
• Children forgive easily and their forgiveness is healthier for the child when the parent is able to be honest.
• The parent who caused the harm has the power to help the child heal from it.
• Becoming a better parent is one way to become an effective human being.
An incarcerated parent is a contributing member of their family.

• How the family views the contribution of the incarcerated parent depends largely on how the incarcerated parent offers it.

• It takes time and effort to regain trust and respect.

• Incarcerated parents need support to do this work.
They can play a unique and powerful role in their children’s lives.

- Role models
- Confidants
- Advisors
- Cheerleaders
- Friends

- The parent’s role should be grounded in their children’s realities and needs.
Recovery and rehabilitation include examination of family relationships.

- Parenting classes help parents to examine their own childhoods.
- Parents start to learn to parent themselves while learning to parent their children.
- Understanding family dynamics supports parent’s insight into their own lives as well as those of their children.
Children want and benefit from their parent’s presence in their lives, even when their parent is struggling.

- Parents do not have to be perfect.
- Children may need help understanding their parent’s struggles.
- Children feel shame about their parent’s struggle when their adults are ashamed.
- Children may exhibit over-protectiveness toward their struggling parent.
Children forgive easily and their forgiveness is healthier when the parent is able to be honest.

• Parents need a lot of support while learning to take responsibility for their actions with their children.
• Parents fear their children’s judgment.
• Parents want to protect their children from harsh realities.
• Parents feel guilt and shame which prevents them from understanding their children’s urgent need for clarity and answers.
A parent who caused harm has enormous power to help their child heal from it.

- Children want to reconcile with their parents and move on.
- The investment needed to support the parent is worthwhile, because the pay off is huge!
- The parent is helped and the child is helped.
- It is never too late for this to happen.
Becoming a better parent is one way to become a more effective human being.

- Our families and children are a natural and lifelong source of pride and self-worth.
- Parenting education and family strengthening services are portals through which a wide array of self-improvement and mental health supports can be offered.
- Many incarcerated individuals would prefer to engage in parenting education and counseling than obtain traditional mental health services.
INCARCERATION PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH PARENTING

- WRITING A NEW PARENTING SCRIPT
- PRACTICING NEW WAYS TO RELATE TO FAMILY AND CHILDREN
- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY IN FAMILY DYNAMICS
- DEEPENING APPRECIATION FOR CHILDREN
- MAKING SMALL CHANGES THAT MAKE BIG IMPACTS