

## You can talk about these topics with your child

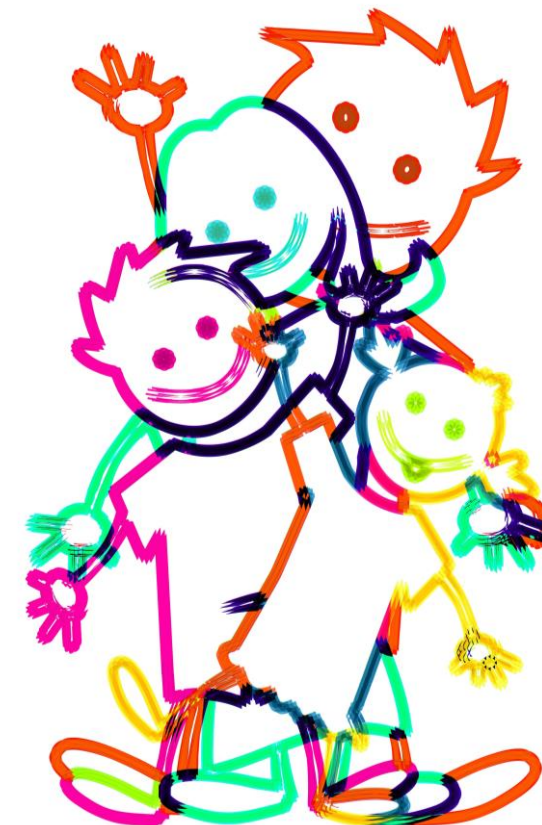
- What is the daily routine in prison?
- What did you do today? What did you eat?
- What does the detention room look like?
- What do you do there and what objects are there?
- What did the children experience in the kindergarten or at school?
- Questions to your child: What did you eat today? Did you play with your friends?
- How is life going on outside?
- What questions do you have to me?
- What else do we need to discuss?

If you have further questions about your child's visit, you can contact the social workers in your department and/or the staff of the independent organizations.

You can discuss questions, concerns and ideas for the organization of visiting hours with them. For older children, for example, you can prepare topics of conversation that include their living environment. Even if a visit went differently than you had hoped, you can discuss this in order to be better prepared for the next time.

Basic questions concerning your relationship with your child can also be discussed.

Some prisons have special offers, for example supervised play sessions of the inmates with their children. Find out what your prison is offering.



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## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS IN PRISON

How you can keep in touch  
with your children

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## If you have children

If you are in prison and have children, your relatives "outside" usually face a new and unfamiliar situation that can also be difficult.

Every child is different and every family situation is different. That is why every child and every parent must find their own way of dealing with the new situation of detention.

Children have different ages and each reacts individually - that is why you should treat your child or children in a very individual way. This works more or less well, according to the situation. Sometimes it can be even frustrating as well.

It is important that you respect the different feelings that arise in you and your child

## Keep in touch

Even if the usual contact with your child is interrupted by the detention, you can continue to support them.

Get in touch by writing letters or talking on the phone. The younger the children are, the shorter and more regular this contact should be.

Show your child or children that you are thinking of them.

Do not have too high of expectations.

Even if your child cannot or does not want to talk on the phone for a long time or you cannot find a good topic of conversation together, you can show them that you are thinking of them by calling regularly. It is helpful to have a regular fixed appointment that you reliably keep.

Even if it is difficult for you: answer your children's questions gently but clearly and do not look for excuses. Also tell them about your daily routine.

This helps children to imagine where you are and how you are doing.

Show that you can be asked anything. This will help them understand the situation better. Also remember that children sometimes blame themselves for the situation - so tell your child that it is not their fault.

Do not promise your children anything that you cannot keep. So if you don't know for sure that you can get a day-release [*Freigang*] or will be released for good, don't hold out the prospect of this either, otherwise you will disappoint your children very much.

## How children react

Every child reacts differently to the new situation and every family situation is different. Behavior and feelings differ in all people and should be taken into account sensitively. Children's reactions can also change over time.

Some children react aggressively, some withdraw and others behave as they always have. Many children feel guilty because they relate the situation to themselves and believe that they are to blame. Some keep quiet about the parent's detention and do not want to talk about it at all.

Younger children do not understand at first why a parent is simply no longer there and cannot call them. Older children are often ashamed, some even hide what is going on from others. Some children can express their sadness and anger, others close themselves off. Some children don't want to visit, others want to talk to you a lot and even talk on the phone.

## What can a visit look like?

When your child comes for a visit, they will usually come with an accompanying adult. There are exceptions in some prisons, for example an unaccompanied play session in the women's prison.

When you get a visit from your children for the first time, think about how this encounter feels for children. Even though you may have many organizational things to discuss with your relatives, there should be time to turn to the children. Perhaps you can make a first visit alone or clarify urgent questions in advance.

If your child is present, take time to respond to them and talk or play with them, depending on his or her age.

