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# **Suggestions For Caregivers Or Family Members Of Children Impacted By Incarceration**



1. Provide quality time with the remaining parent, when possible, and other family members and friends. Don't isolate the family from normal interactions with others.
2. Protect younger children from all the frightful details. Be honest, but age-appropriate when explaining the cause for the incarceration.
3. Reassure the child that he/she will be taken care of in the absence of the incarcerated parent.
4. Continue with your normal routine and consistent discipline as much as possible.
5. Provide opportunities for discussion and decision-making. Use the experience to teach the child about the consequences of our choices and taking responsibility for our behaviors.
6. Avoid either "running down" or glorifying the person who is in jail. Simple, honest facts are best.
7. Always be aware that a child's self-esteem is closely interwoven with his/her image of his/her parents. What he/she hears about them will greatly effect the way the child feels about him/herself as an offspring of those parents.
8. Assist the child in maintaining communication with parent through calls, letters or visits whenever possible and prudent.
9. Remember, if handled sensitively, this experience can strengthen the child. It doesn't have to ruin a child's life.

# Discussion Guide

(Have drawing paper and crayons available in either loose leaf form or stapled in a booklet for each child to use throughout the group.)

## Questions for discussion with story page 17:

1. How is Deena feeling? Why?
2. Do you know of anyone who has gone to jail?
3. Tell about or draw a picture to show how you feel.
4. Have you ever seen a real jail or prison, or seen one on TV?
5. How was it different from a home?  
*(small cells, bunk beds, bars and locks, lots of people, etc.)*
6. What, if anything, scares you when you think about the person you know being in jail?

## Facilitator Comments:

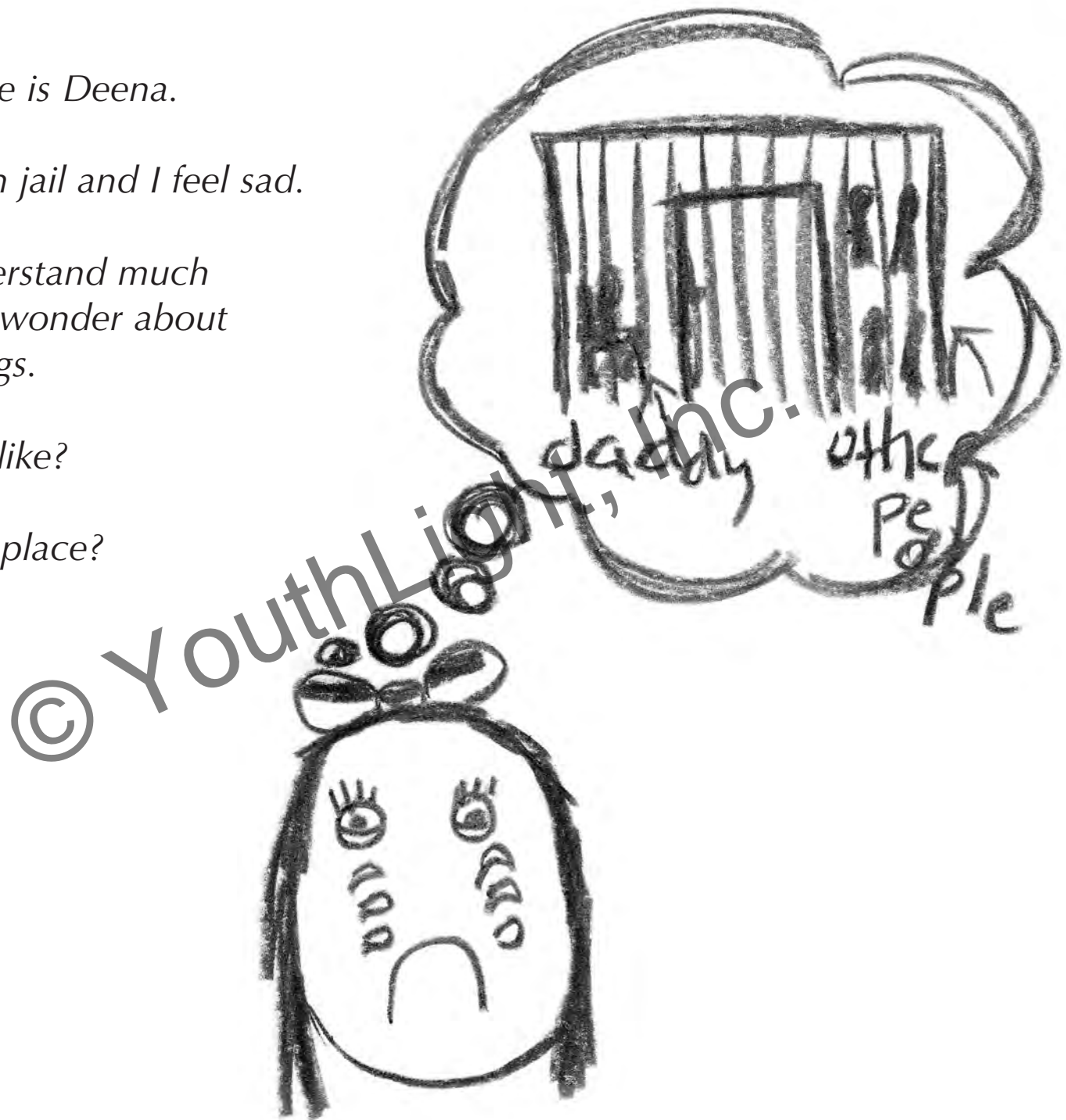
**Living in prison or jail is very different from living in your home. In jail, people all wear the same kind of clothes called uniforms. They sleep on small bunk beds in a cell with bars and a locked door or gate. They cannot come and go places outside of the jail. They have guards to tell them what to do and where to go. Jails have tall fences or walls around them to keep people inside. What else do you know about jails?**

Hi, my name is Deena.

My dad is in jail and I feel sad.

I don't understand much about jail. I wonder about a lot of things.

What is jail like?  
Is it dirty?  
Is it a scary place?



# Optional Small Group Activities

For Use With Story

## Objectives:

1. To express and process one's feelings about having a parent or loved one in prison.
2. To meet and share with other children in similar circumstances.
3. To strengthen one's self-esteem.
4. To share concerns and gain strategies for coping with them.



# Session #1

## Introductions & Goal Setting

### Icebreaker such as the Name Game

Each student says his/her first name and a food he/she likes.  
i.e. "I'm Susie and I like spaghetti."

### Group Rules

- 1) Take turns talking
- 2) Listen and make eye contact with speaker
- 3) No "put downs" / we're here to help each other
- 4) Option to pass
- 5) Confidentiality

### Sharing Time

Introduce self and family with small people figures. Provide a container of people figures and take turns letting each child choose the ones that represent their family members. Discuss which members live where as they are introduced. After all have had a turn, help children identify a common theme. (They all come from families where someone is incarcerated.)

### Goal Setting (See objectives)

### Success Cards

Let group choose a success card\* to record their attendance each week by placing a sticker on it. (A success card can be any picture with boxes on it for placing stickers.) Each session should end with the routine of getting stickers and whatever gesture of closure (handshake, hug, etc.) you have determined to use.

Enlarge and duplicate success cards on colorful card stock, or construction paper if available. Let students cut them out and display on the wall in your guidance office and take home at the end of group sessions.

\*Success Card idea adapted from *Child Support Through Small Group Counseling*, 1984. L.Landy. KIDSRIGHTS



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