

Developmental Effects of Parental Incarceration on Children



| Possible Developmental Effects on Children of Parental Crime, Arrest, and Incarceration ¹ | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Developmental Stage | Developmental Characteristics | Developmental Tasks | Influencing Factors | Effects |
| Infancy (0-2 years) | Total Dependency | Attachment and trust | Parent-child separation | Impaired parent-child bonding |
| Early Childhood (2-6 years) | Increased perception and mobility; incomplete individuation from parent | Sense of autonomy, independence and initiative | Parent-child separation; Trauma | Anxiety, developmental regression, acute traumatic stress, survivor guilt |
| Middle Childhood (7-10 years) | Increased independence, ability to reason, importance of peers | Sense of industry, ability to work productively | Parent-child separation, enduring trauma | Acute traumatic stress and reactive behaviors |
| Early Adolescence (11-14 years) | Increasing abstract thinking, future-oriented behavior, aggression, puberty | Ability to work productively with others, control emotions | Parent-child separation, enduring trauma | Rejection of limits on behavior, trauma-reactive behaviors |
| Late Adolescence (15-18 years) | Emotional crisis and confusion, adult sexual development, abstract thinking, independence | Achieves identity, engages in adult work and relationships, resolves conflicts with family and society | Parent-child separation, enduring trauma | Premature termination of parent-child relationship; intergenerational crime and incarceration |

Resources:

The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents: <http://e-ccip.org/index.html>

End Notes:

¹Johnston, Denise & Gabel, Katherine, "Incarcerated Parents", in *Children of Incarcerated Parents*, Edited by Katherine Gabel and Denise Johnston, M.D. (Lexington Books, New York, 1995), p.21

**For more information on drug endangered children, visit our web site
www.nationaldec.org**

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