

“The Forgotten Ones”

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TTASCO

Children of the Incarcerated Finding Hope in the Future



Overview

- Setting the Stage: Context, demographics and *What we know from the research*
- Explore the unique challenges and needs of children whose parents are incarcerated
- Raise awareness
- Strategies that can provide some measure of HOPE

What we know from the Research

- Approximately **2** million U.S. children are estimated to have parents who are currently incarcerated.
- More than **10** million minor children have parents who have come under some form of criminal justice supervision at some point in their children's lives.
- **61.7% of female** inmates and **50.7% of male** inmates said they are parents
- Average age of their children is **8.5 years of age**

What we know from the Research

- African American children are **9 times** more likely than Whites to have an incarcerated parent
- Latino Children are **3 times** more likely than Whites to have an incarcerated parent
- The majority of incarcerated parents are **Drug Offenders**
- At least **1 in 5 children** of offenders have witnessed parental arrest
- The return of a parent to the home signifies a major transition for children

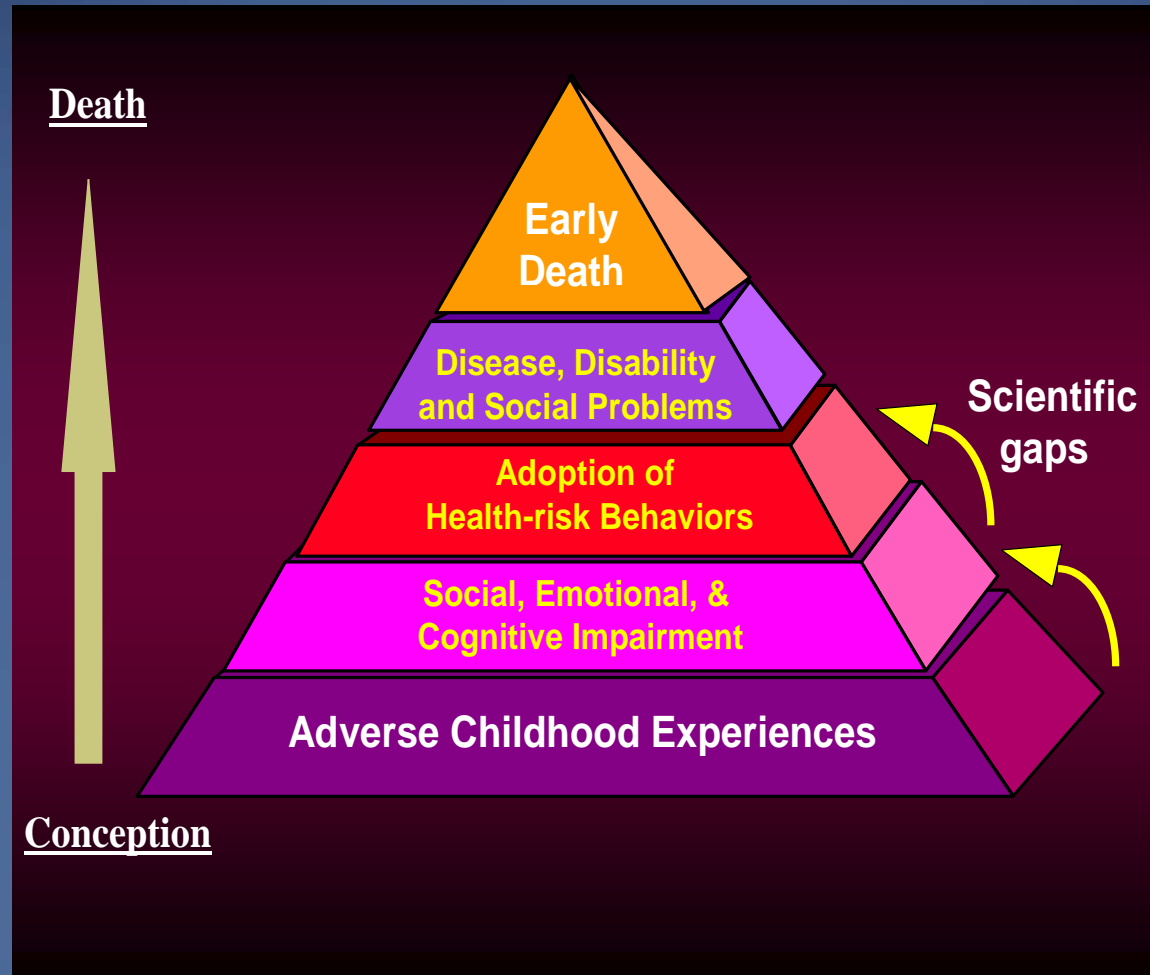
Issues Faced

- Trauma
- Family Financial Disruption
- Social, Emotional and psychological
- Health care
- Ongoing Parent-Child Contact

Why Include an Emphasis on the Children?

- Numbers are so great
- Chronic confusion, fear, stress, emotional and - sometimes - physical abuse
- Developmental and emotional impact from the toxic family environment
- Greater risk for neglect, for mental health problems, for addiction and for entering the juvenile justice system

Adverse Child Experiences Study



Consequences for Children of Incarcerated Parents

- More absenteeism from school, less help with homework
- Daughters more likely to connect to/marry addicted men
- More depression and suicide in adolescents
- More illness, injuries, poisonings, substance abuse, and hospitalizations

What Makes the Family Toxic?

- Don't talk
- Don't feel
- Don't trust

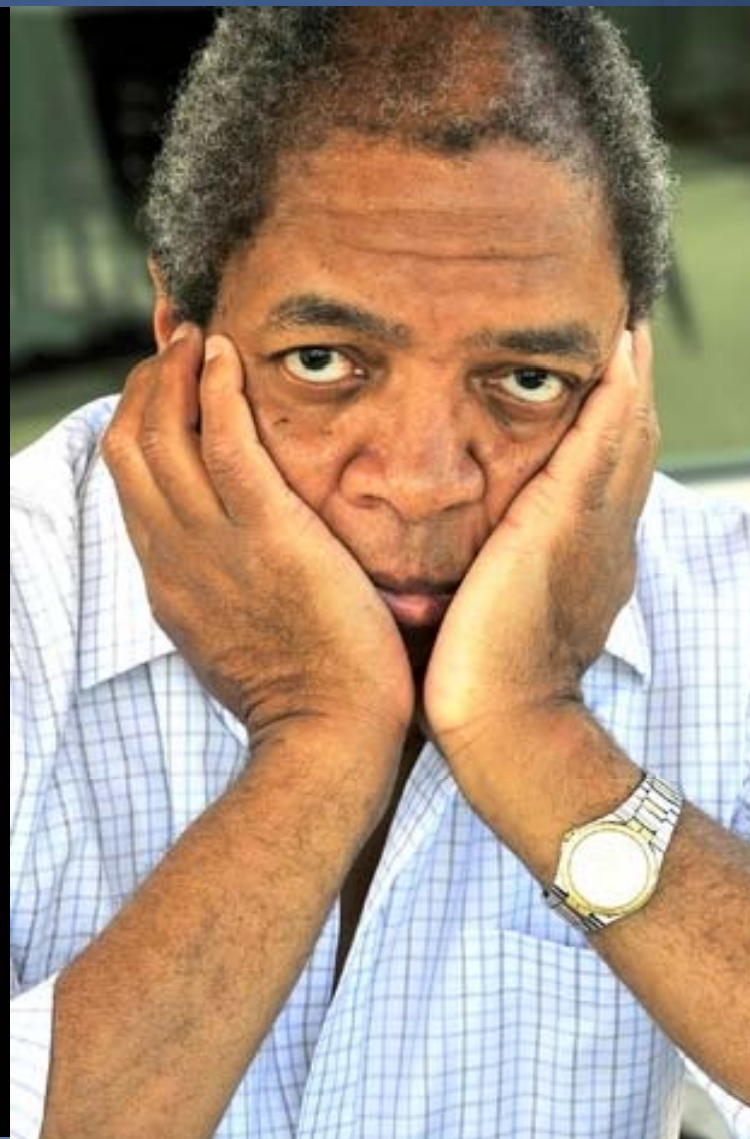
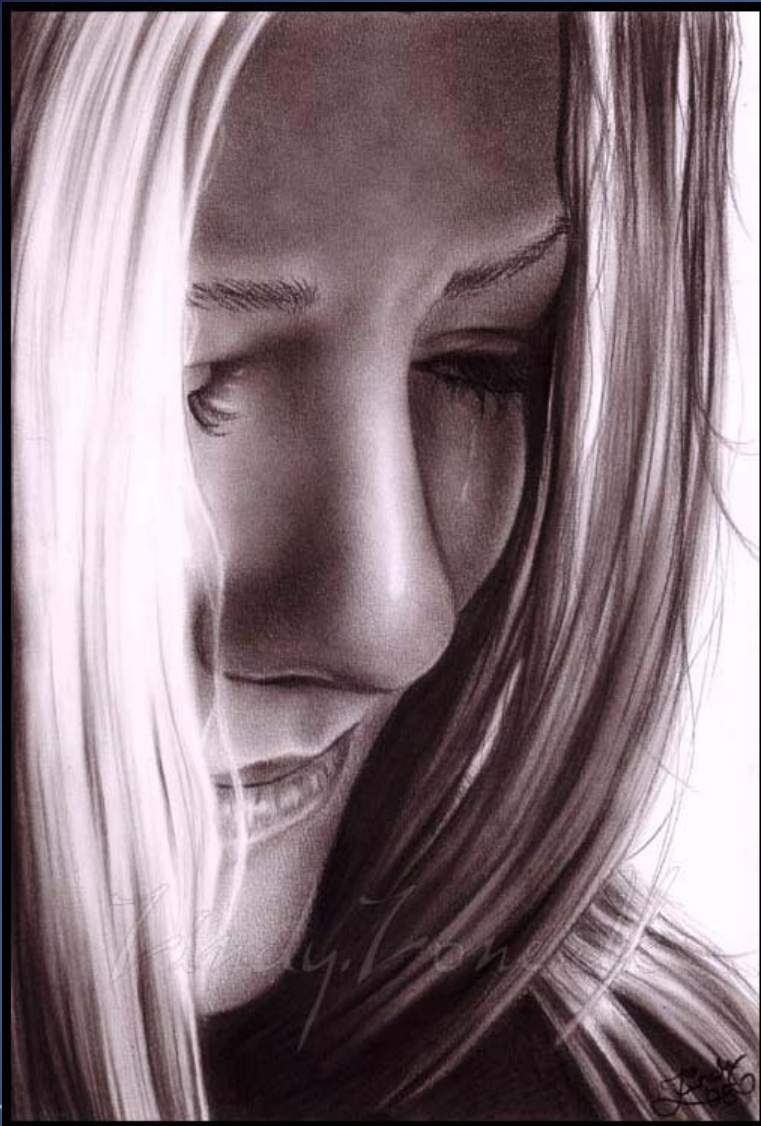


The Family Defense Mechanisms

- Delusion
- Denial
- Minimizing
- Projection
- Rationalization

VIDEO

What Helps?



Strategies to Provide HOPE

1. Be aware of the:
 - Generally accepted definition of alcohol and other drug dependence
 - Societal stigma attached to children of offenders, alcohol and other drug dependence

2. Be knowledgeable about the:
 - Signs of impact on children of incarcerated parents
 - Effects on the individual and the family
 - Characteristics of the stages children experience

3. Be aware that possible indicator of the issue may include, among others:
suicide, family violence (physical, emotional, and verbal), hospitalization, or encounters with criminal justice system.

Strategies to Provide Hope (cont.)

4. Be aware of the potential benefits of early intervention to the:
 - Offender
 - Addicted person
 - Family system
 - Affected children
5. Be aware of appropriate interactions with the:
 - Offender
 - Addicted person
 - Family system
 - Affected children

Strategies to Provide Hope (cont.)

6. Be able to communicate and sustain:
 - An appropriate level of concern
 - Messages of hope and caring

7. Be familiar with and utilize available community resources to ensure continuum of care for the:
 - Offender
 - Addicted person
 - Family system
 - Affected children

8. Have a general knowledge of and, where possible, exposure to:
 - 12 Step Programs: AA, NA, Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, Alateen, ACOA, Winners' Circles, etc.
 - Other groups

Strategies to Provide Hope (cont.)

9. Be able to acknowledge and address values, issues, and attitudes regarding offenders, alcohol and other drug use and dependence in:

Oneself

One's Own Family

10.. Be able to shape, form, and educate a caring environment that welcomes and supports persons and families affected by the criminal justice system, alcohol and drug dependence.

11. Be aware of how prevention strategies can benefit the larger community.

Be Culturally Responsive



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Perspective

I got help with the kinds of things that were most important to me – like getting my daughter back, and putting food on the table for her. Since they were willing to help me with that stuff, I figured, “Hey maybe I should listen to what they’ve been trying to tell me and try out that program they keep talking about.” Today I’ve been clean for nine months...

My clients don't hit bottom; they live on the bottom. If we wait for them to hit bottom, they will die. The obstacle to their engagement is not an absence of pain; it is an absence of hope. —

Outreach Worker (Quoted in White, Woll, and Webber 2003)

And the village was happy.....



Group Work is the Preferred Strategy Because:

- Kids learn they are not alone.
- Group work increases the likelihood of breaking denial.
- Group work provides safety and protection.
- Kids experience healthy social interactions.
- Group work builds trust in social situations.
- Group work provides opportunities for group validation.
- Group work allows kids to try out new approaches to old problems.

Developing Pathways of HOPE & Opportunity



Affected Spouses and Children Need a Framework for What They are Experiencing

- Information about the Criminal Justice System and Addiction
- Information about the hope of **Family Reunification, Treatment** and the process of **Recovery**
- Information on community-based supports such as Winners' Circle, Al-Anon and Alateen
- Validation of their experiences
- Reassurance that affected children and spouses need and deserve support and help...

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Talking Helps to Break the Silence

Talk *TO* the children of the incarcerated, alcoholics and drug addicts and talk *ABOUT* them; explain the disease and 7 Cs

I didn't **C**ause it

I can't **C**ure it

I can't **C**ontrol it

I can take better **C**are of myself:

by **C**ommunicating my feelings

making healthy **C**hoices

by **C**elebrating myself.

Other Messages Children Need

- You're Not Alone.
- It's Not Your Fault.
- You deserve help, and there are safe people who can help you.
- Addiction is a health problem.
- It's OK to feel our feelings.
- It's important to talk.
- Treatment helps, and recovery happens.

There are Many Message Delivery Systems

- Health Care Systems
- Treatment Systems
- FAITH COMMUNITIES
- Courts
- Community Coalitions
- Schools
- Workplace Programs
- Knowledgeable and caring family members

COI Groups

Let them know they are not alone!

- Validate their perceptions and interpretations
- Help them gain some perspective
- Absolve them of blame
- Help them separate parent from parental behavior
- Offer hope, self-care skills and help to cope
- Provide a safe outlet for anger
- Explain risks of behavior, and how to identify safe people in their lives
- Help build self-esteem

What happens if adults

Children are at greater risk for:

- Physical, verbal or emotional abuse
- Poor school performance
- Lacking of trust in others
- Truancy or trouble with the law
- Poor choice of life partners
- Diminished economic opportunities

Starting the Journey of HOPE Begins with US

