



When a partner or family member goes to prison

It may help to remember that there are nearly 10,000 people in prison in New Zealand and that many people are facing similar issues.

To talk to someone who understands call Pillars on 0508 PILLARS (0508 7 45 527).

Coping with a partner or family member going to prison can be difficult and it is important you have support from others.

Coping at home

If you have children you may have to make important decisions on your own. If possible, try to include your partner in these decisions. This can give them a realistic idea of what is happening at home and help them resettle when they are released.

If there are things your partner or family member did before that you don't know how to do, seek help. Getting on and doing the practical things such as registering the car or paying bills can give you something useful to focus on.

Many community services can help – often at no cost. You won't always have to tell them where your partner or family member is, and if you do, you probably won't have to tell them why. Ask if they provide a confidential and non-judgemental service and are qualified to support you.

Maintaining your relationship

Staying in touch with someone in prison takes an extra effort. Phone calls and mail are monitored and you will be sharing a visiting room with strangers. The amount of physical contact you can have will be limited.

Try to keep your partner or family member up to date with what's happening at home. If phone calls are focussed on them, you might prefer to write letters about what's happening outside.

You may find it useful to talk to someone about how to raise tricky topics before you talk to your partner or family member. Writing a letter that you don't send can also help you sort out how you are feeling.

It's important to take care of yourself during this time. You can only support others if you feel supported.

Dealing with stress

Stress may affect you differently at certain times during your family member's imprisonment. You may recognise some of the effects of stress listed below:

- » Difficulty sleeping
- » Not eating enough or eating too much
- » Difficulty communicating thoughts
- » Easily irritated
- » Muscle tension, headaches
nausea
- » Disorientation, confusion and trouble concentrating
- » Reluctance to leave the house
- » Feeling guilt or self doubt
- » Mood swings and crying easily



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Try these positive ways to feel better.

- » Eat healthily
- » Go for a walk or get exercise you enjoy
- » Take time out to relax - even ten minutes a day resting can make a big difference
- » Get enough sleep
- » Try to do something that allows you to 'escape' - watch a movie or read a book
- » Have a warm bath, a massage or something that feels like a treat for your body

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"Positive Futures for
Children of Prisoners"
Breaking Cycles of Crime



Things that really help

Take it one day at a time. Try not to let your mind wander too far into the future.

Talk to someone about how you are. If you don't feel you can talk to family or friends see a counsellor or use a telephone counselling line.

Give yourself an outlet to express your feelings safely. Allow yourself ten minutes a day to deal with your emotions, then get on with the day.

Write in a journal or diary. Even if the words seem a jumble just getting them out on the page can help.

Work out in advance how you might answer questions about why your partner is in jail. Not everyone needs to know.

Keeping safe

Try to arrange a time when the person in prison might call you so you don't feel that you must stay inside all day.

If you are pressured in any way by the person in prison you can talk to Pillars for support. Remember, it is okay to have your phone number removed from the person's phone list even if you have previously agreed to be on it.

As time goes on congratulate yourself on the things you are doing well. Celebrate small victories and allow yourself to have good times along the way. Coping or having fun does not mean you love the person any less.

You may find your feelings change while your partner or family member is in prison. Making sure you have the support you need is a brave step.

Who can help?

Pillars - Pillars has a range of services including a free and confidential helpline for anyone who is affected by the imprisonment of a close family member or friend. Ph 0508 PILLARS (0508 7 45 527) www.pillars.org.nz

Lifeline - Free confidential non-judgemental counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Phone 0800 543 354

Citizens Advice Bureau - CAB has free information on debt, loans, repossession and other financial matters. Ph 0800 367 222 www.cab.org.nz

Department of Corrections - The website provides information for friends and families of people in prison, visit www.corrections.govt.nz

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