



“TOGETHER APART” ACTIVITIES

After we mentioned some of these “Together Apart” activities during a workshop, a person in the audience asked for a handout. Her request motivated us to compile a list with the help and guidance of families who have or had a parent in jail or prison.

We tried to provide some details for each activity. One member of our family review team thought the descriptions would provide “more motivation to pursue these activities . . . setting positive goals for what they would like to achieve in their relationships.”

Please keep in mind that these activities will vary from family to family and will depend on:

- each individual situation
- relationship between the child and parent
- age and developmental stage of the child
- support of the child’s caregiver
- individual facility’s rules and restrictions about allowing in certain materials.

While the focus is on parents in jail or prison, this list could be a resource for parents who have been released and are working to re-establish their relationship with their child.

We welcome your thoughts, feedback, additions, etc. Thanks!

- ★ **Read the same book.** When possible, let the child decide which book. The child and parent can then talk about it during calls and visits or write about it in letters and pictures. If the child selects the book, the parent can learn more about the child’s interests.
 - pray or read a Bible passage
 - say a silly phrase they agree upon
 - take a favorite snack break
 - write in a journal (confirm they both have one); select a daily theme (Sunday: something you’re grateful for; Monday: special person in your life; Tuesday: an adventure you’d like to go, etc.)
- ★ **At a set time,** the child and the parent can do one or more of the following and think of the other:
 - look out the window or door at the same sky, stars, clouds, moon
 - whistle or sing their favorite song
- ★ Arrange for both the child and the parent to **receive a copy** of *Sowing Seeds of Connection* so they can complete the worksheets and share

them with each other, either during a phone call, in a letter or during a visit.

- ★ **Watch the same TV show/movie/cartoon**, letting the child decide. They can quiz each other on what they saw and heard, their favorite part or character, what they think will happen next, what questions they have, what a different ending might look like, etc.
- ★ Provide/create a **scavenger hunt** that both the child and parent can do, write down their answers, and share during their next call, letter or visit. The next time, they could create one for each other.
- ★ Find out what the parent eats on a certain night and **make the same or similar dinner** for the child at home. Children may be curious about what foods their parents are eating in jail or prison and may have certain thoughts based on what they see in the media.
- ★ Provide both the child and parent a **coloring book/pages** so they can color at a certain time (Saturday afternoon, Tuesday morning, etc.). They could send the pictures to each other and talk about colors they picked and why, their favorite colors, etc.
- ★ Set goals to **stay active**. If the child has a step counter, encourage them to wear it, while the parent uses their own step counter or records laps around the yard. Create a common workout schedule/routine: legs on Monday, arms on Wednesday, cardio on Friday, etc. There could even be a competitive spin to this!
- ★ Provide both the child and the parent with a copy of “**Would You Rather?**” questions, then develop a plan to share the answers during calls/visits/letters. The answers could be shared all at once or a few at a time.
- ★ Ask if the child’s caregiver can create **crossword puzzles or word searches** for the child and parent based on memories they have shared. Provide copies to both and encourage them to share their answers and their memories.
- ★ **Play Scrabble** with word tiles (if the parent has access) or printable tiles. Be sure to print two sets so they can play the others hand as they are told. The game may take a long time but can help nurture trust and honesty between parent and child.
- ★ Set up a **Bible study** with the child and parent reading the same chapter/verse, then answering common questions they can talk about later. If the jail or prison has a chaplain (paid or volunteer), that person might be able to provide some resources.
- ★ Do a timed **Sudoku or other pen and paper game** contest. Have the parent time themselves doing the puzzle, then have the child time themselves doing the same one.

★ Find an interesting **podcast** that the parent and child can both listen to. Choose something fresh and new that both have never listened to, then talk about each new episode. If the parent is unable to access the technology, see if the episode text is printable and can be shared with the parent. Another option is to listen to the same radio stations at the same time depending on the child's proximity to the jail or prison

★ **Write a story or book together** about "what I miss about you and when we are together again" - an autobiography, biography or imaginative story/book. Add drawings and share page by page or when completed. Younger children could start a story (write on their own or have the caregiver write the words) or picture, send to the parent to add to the story/picture, send back to the child to add more, and continue back and forth.

This provides the opportunity for them to reflect on what is going on in their lives and their emotions; it could be healing and allow for more in-depth conversations. The child could

ask questions about what their parent is experiencing. A parent may like this idea and find it relieving because it is a low-key chance for their child to ask questions about what is going on, while the parent can be as transparent as they would like. This obviously would depend on the child's age and the relationship between the parent and child. This would also give the parents insight into their child's developing imagination and thoughts that they may not get to see regularly!

★ Create a **common homework time**; this maybe especially appropriate if the parent is taking a class, studying, etc. Reinforce with a homework hotline. Have the parent help with/ review the child's homework, then share with the child what their homework is if they're taking a class, studying, etc.

★ **Share a special treat** (candy bar, ice cream, cookie, etc.; may depend on what the canteen has) to celebrate a good report card, baseball game, dance recital, etc.

★ **What would YOU add to this list?**
Please share with us!

Melissa Radcliff
Our Children's Place of Coastal Horizons
P.O. Box 13073
Durham, NC 27709
(919) 904-4286 (Google Voice)
mradcliff@coastalhorizons.org
[Facebook](#) | [Website](#)

