

Information Sheet for the Opal Parent – AUNTY & JENNA

Hey there. I wrote this story for you to send to your child to help shed some positivity about you coming into prison. Don't send them this Info sheet though!

Coming into prison is hard as there's so much happening & so many unknown details especially if you haven't been sentenced yet. As a parent it's really hard to keep the worry & fear we often feel from projecting onto our children. Sometimes we feel that we have forfeited (given up) any right to participate in our child's life because of what we've done. If this's how you're feeling - don't. We all make mistakes & your child(ren) need you to be positive.

This story covers a discussion between Jenna & her Aunty. At times it may sound corny - but there's not one thing in the story that's false and I've been in your situation too.

Yes – you are in prison, and it may not even be your first time, but you still have the **power** to **choose** how you & your child gets through this. I chose to be positive. Sure - at times in the privacy of my cell, my positivity waivered & I was filled with self-doubt - But that's normal.

I know that my positive attitude definitely helped my son adjust to me being in prison for a number of years. I always talked about positive things even when I felt really depressed. I always tried to make my letters interesting & our phone calls positive (while still being 'real!') What I didn't do was 'off-load' my adult problems or fears onto him.

One of the biggest fears our kids have – is isolation or rejection from their parent. When we come into prison, we actually need to STEP-UP as parents, rather than step back.

Now more than ever you need to be reaching out to your child.

They need to know that;

- 1. You're okay &**
- 2. You're there for them.**

In this story about Jenna and her Aunty, I introduce the idea of brain exercises. This is so that you can introduce into your letters, phone calls & visits things that are fun & interesting & that your child can work on when they're not with you.

Here are some other brain exercise suggestions – you can make anything into an exercise to help make your letter, phone calls and visits fun & help boost your child's brain neurons.

As a word of advice here: keep this fun & introduce ideas & games at a pace that you feel is okay.

Brain games should be fun. Even when you ask you child questions like “what did you think of that” it fires up their brain cells.

- Make a game of being able to say as many colours as possible: Green, blue, red, white, black, brown, tan, yellow, purple... & have fun introducing different variations of colours like indigo, lilac, mauve, silver, gold.
- How many birds can you both name = seagull, sparrow, hawk, tui, kiwi etc.
- How many whanau or family members can you name? If this is too easy then what about putting them in alphabetical order.

Why do brain exercises?

Here are two pictures of our brains. Every-time you give your brain a task your neurons (brain cells) light up & make pathways connecting to other neurons. This basically means that by constantly activating your child's brain that you're helping them to be able to learn and think more speedily.

Having a good healthy brain is cool. Especially if your child is into sport as they can quickly suss out what tactics or move's they need to make much quicker than having a sluggish brain.



Brains are amazing – every time you ask your child a question their brain lights up

Make the time you spend as an Opal – Shine bright in your child's mind – for the good.