



TIPS FOR PARENTS WHEN YOUR CHILD(REN) REACH OUT

- 1) Before your visit, prepare by speaking with a qualified family coach or therapist (who practices Cognitive Based Therapy) about remaining in the present and maintaining a productive mindset as you move forward.
- 2) When with your child, keep your conversation light, positive, and let them know how great it is to hear from them.
- 3) Focus on listening. This time together is about your child, not you or your ex.
- 4) Avoid discussing how much time has passed, your pain, the suffering, or the wrongs done by the other parent.
- 5) Make it easy to set your first visit together. Remember, your child may still hold a negative view of you -- "show them" your love instead of "telling them." This is very important, especially in the initial interactions.
- 6) Allow your child(ren) to notify you when they are ready to discuss anything from the past. If they share a false memory, always respond with kindness and empathy instead of defending. For example, *"That must have been devastating for you to experience. Sometimes it's hard to remember circumstances from the past. How can I best assure you I am always here for you and will always be looking forward to our time together?"*
- 7) Manage your expectations before your child arrives. Simply asking yourself, "What are the expected behaviors and words from my child?" and "What would be unexpected behaviors and words from my child?" Being grounded at the moment, with realistic expectations is essential during these first interactions. Remaining grounded, calm, and focused on your child and their needs is non-negotiable.
- 8) It will be awkward, and that's okay! (Remember #7 – "Expected"). Often a child will want to bring a friend along. The good news is, the more time you spend together, your child will become restored to their authentic relationship with you. Also, they have someone they trust validating your love with first-hand testimony.
- 9) Practice reflective listening with your current family/friends. What is your child's perspective, and what is the best way to respond to illustrate you are safe, loving, and available? (If unsure, search "Reflective Listening" on YouTube.
- 10) Children always love both parents and deep down want to reconcile, no matter how they "show up." Practice writing out any good qualities of their other parent ahead of time, so you have positive feedback already in your mind. Trust the unbreakable bond, as your child's parent, staying away from comparing your relationship to the relationship with the other parent. Your child desires the freedom to love both parents, right or wrong, and need to process their understanding and perspective. Your child, as an adult, might only want occasional interactions, or perhaps move in with you! (See #7)
- 11) A child may blame you for certain things. Focus on being "kind" instead of being "right."
- 12) Trust the process – this is a marathon, not a sprint. Trust and love yourself.
- 13) Offer to make amends. Unconditional love is key to your future together.