

One case study described an eight year old boy who suddenly began slugging classmates in an unprovoked fashion. Upon examination, it turned out he was doing what he thought the guards were doing to his father currently serving time in prison. After expressing his fears and paying a visit to the prison where his imaginings could be tempered with reality, his behavior improved.⁽⁶⁾

Third, visits help the child come to terms with a parent who has committed criminal offenses.

We are all shaped by our parents. What they have done in their life helps to determine what we ourselves will do. Doctor's sons become doctors, lawyers daughters become lawyers and frequently children of prisoners become prisoners themselves. At the very least, having a parent in prison opens up the possibility that one day you may go there as well.

The following is a quote from a fourteen year old girl who was contemplating her mother's release from prison:

"We'll be together and see how it goes. If it works out, fine. If it doesn't, we'll split up...Maybe someday we'll be having our regular weekly meetings at a restaurant somewhere. Or a bar more likely. Or maybe she'll end up back in jail. Or maybe I'll end up in jail.

The reasons why some children repeat their parents actions and wind up in prison are complex. However, I firmly believe that it is not the result of knowing the incarcerated parent, but comes rather from knowing the parent only as a crude stereotype; a bank robber, a drug addict, a prostitute, a convict.

A colleague of mine who worked in the Counseling Unit at MCI Walpole remembers young men entering who wanted the same cell as their father. When questions were asked it was clear they knew little else about him.