

## Suggestions on How to Reconnect with an Estranged Child

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Some parents have estranged relationships with their children. Whether it is because they made bad decisions, they have been alienated by the other parent, because of geographical constraints, because they were in the military and separated from their child for a long period of time, or other reasons, there is no better time than the present to take the first step. Some parents might be afraid of being rejected by their child, but children need their parents. Taking the first step to reconnect can sometimes be the hardest, but it is also the most important.

There is no manual on how to be a perfect parent, and there is no perfect parent. As a parent, if you do not have a relationship with your child, the worst thing you can do is sit back and think, "He will come to me when he is ready." If you are a parent in this situation, you must take the initiative and set a good example by doing the right thing. Reaching out to let your child know you care or going to court to get court ordered time to spend with your child are important first steps.

When you are with your child, focus your time on the present and the future. What events is your child involved in? What school projects is your child involved in? Who are your child's teachers? What is your child's best friend's name? What activities is your child interested in? Is your child being bullied at school? Ask questions. Your child will appreciate your interest, and will derive confidence from having a positive relationship with you. Do not focus on the past. Do not speak ill of the other parent. Do not discuss your hardships, whatever they may be.

If you go through the court system to establish or re-establish a regular schedule with your child, be proactive, prepared and persistent. There may be steps you have to take before you can get the schedule you want, and it may take time. Do whatever you have to do to rebuild the relationship, and do not give up. It will mean the world to your child.