

# The First 90 Days

*A Family's Checklist — what to expect, week by week*

The window right after release matters most — and nobody hands families a manual. This one covers what to expect in each phase, what helps, what accidentally hurts, and when to seek more support. Check things off as you go. Imperfectly is the only way anyone does this.

## DAYS 1–7 · THE LANDING

*Expect: relief, awkwardness, and exhaustion — theirs and yours. Everything is louder, brighter, and faster than they remember.*

- ☐ Keep the welcome small — big parties overwhelm; one quiet meal beats a crowd
- ☐ Let them set the pace on hugs, questions, and stories
- ☐ Walk through the house once — where things are, how things work now
- ☐ Expect odd sleep, fast eating, closed doors. Don't correct it; just notice it
- ☐ Handle urgent logistics together: ID, phone, parole check-in dates on a shared calendar

## MONTH 2 · REALITY SETS IN

*Expect: discouragement if job or housing searches stall. Old contacts may resurface. Anger may spike over small things.*

- ☐ Celebrate effort, not just outcomes — applications count, not only offers
- ☐ Agree on one signal for “I need space” before arguments, not during
- ☐ Keep money conversations short, concrete, and judgment-free
- ☐ Watch for isolation creeping in — invite, don't push
- ☐ Revisit boundaries you set: which ones held? Which need adjusting?

## WEEKS 2–4 · SETTLING

*Expect: the honeymoon fading. Frustration with slow systems (ID, benefits, work). First conflicts.*

- ☐ Build one small daily routine together — coffee, a walk, a show
- ☐ Ask before helping: “Do you want ideas, or do you want me to listen?”
- ☐ Keep choices small: two options, not ten
- ☐ Notice triggers (crowds, noise, waiting) without labeling them out loud
- ☐ Take one honest break for yourself each week — this is a marathon

## MONTH 3 · BUILDING RHYTHM

*Expect: real progress mixed with setbacks. This is normal. Recovery isn't a straight line.*

- ☐ Mark the 90-day point — name three things that got better
- ☐ Encourage one connection beyond family: group, church, gym, workshop
- ☐ Hand back one responsibility they're ready for (bills, appointments)
- ☐ Plan the next 90 days together — their goals, not your goals for them
- ☐ Join them at a BCMM support group session — family is welcome

# Helps & Hurts

*What supports healing — and what accidentally works against it*

## WHAT HELPS

- Listening without fixing — being heard is the medicine
- Predictability: routines, kept promises, no surprises
- Patience with silence — connection returns in small doses
- Naming PICS: “this is the injury, not who you are”
- Your own support system — you can't pour from empty

## WHAT ACCIDENTALLY HURTS

- “You're free now — be happy.” (Freedom is also overwhelming)
- Surprise gatherings, crowded outings, loud celebrations
- Doing everything for them — helplessness was the injury
- Taking the distance personally, or forcing closeness
- Threatening the relationship during arguments

## WHEN TO SEEK MORE SUPPORT

Reach beyond this checklist if you see: talk of self-harm or hopelessness · substance use that's escalating · violence or fear in the home · weeks of total isolation · symptoms getting worse, not better, after month two.

**In crisis now: call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). For clinical care, ask us — we'll help you find it.**

## YOUR BCMM TOOLKIT

- **Free Weekly Support Group** — live video, every week — family welcome, no cost ever
- **Family Support Systems Workshop** — 1 day · 4 hours · scripts, boundaries, and understanding — free when sponsored
- **PICS Workbook + App** — \$35 · work through the five syndromes at your own pace
- **The PICS Explainer** — [breakingchainsmendingminds.com](https://breakingchainsmendingminds.com) — the full guide to what your loved one carries

***You don't have to figure this out alone.***