

# Fresh Start

After years of selling and using drugs—and a stint in prison—Eric Pogue works to build a trusting relationship with his sons.

November 29, 2007 By Kia Gregory

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**Name** Eric Pogue

**Age** 37

**Incarcerated** 14 months for drug offenses

**Released** March 26, 2007

**Current residence** A halfway house in Philadelphia

**Drug Problems** I started out selling cocaine when I was about 17. Then I began using my own product. I was addicted for about 10 years. I think curiosity and the pressure of dealing with life caused me to use.

**A Shaky Start** Things weren't the way they should have been with my children. It was easier with the younger ones because of their age, and their mom lived closer. With the 14-year-old, it was hard because his mother lives in New Jersey and is married. And I always thought I couldn't get visitation rights because of the drugs, not having a steady job or a steady place of residence.

**Making Every Call Count** I was locked up for 14 months for drug offenses. I called my kids two or three times a week. With the 14-year-old, I would see how things were going in school. I would draw stuff for the little ones, like their favorite cartoon characters, with the words I love you. But I know I missed a lot.

**Reconnecting and Rebuilding** I'm living in a halfway house until April. They have three phones and over 50 people, so I don't talk to my kids as much as I want. I can tell they don't want to get too attached, and they don't really trust me yet. That hurts me a lot. I tell my oldest that he has to learn how to do the right thing so he won't be in trouble like I am, because that's why I can't be with him now. I think he knows he doesn't want to go the route I took.

**Not Giving Up** I usually see the younger ones about once a week. We go to the movies and out to eat. I play ball with my oldest one sometimes. I want to have a house for them. I'm trying to get everything back to where it should have been, where it should be.

## ERIC'S ADVICE

**Continuously write** to your kids while in prison. Make letters personal by adding a drawing or picture, and by asking them about their lives and feelings.

**Be honest** about what's going on, and listen to how it makes them feel.

**Take responsibility** for how your negative choices affected your children, and offer them an apology.

**Realize** that you have to earn your children's trust, and that it will take time.

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<http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/black-drugaddiction-incarceration-fatherhood-13582-7605>