

## What To Do If A Loved One Is Missing

1. **Try to stay calm.** Call parents, spouse, children, workplace, school, close friends and anyone else who is likely to know where your loved one is. More Jamaicans have cell phones than anyone else in this part of the world. Use them!
2. **Have someone with a calm manner** start making even more phone calls: broaden the list, call classmates as well as close friends. **Ask everyone you call to help you call around even further.** Your child might have gone off with a friend you don't know about but his/her other friends might. Your husband may be out drinking with buddies and one of his friends knows. If you have to go out, make sure everyone you have called has your cell number.
3. If the phone calls bring no result, a family member should **make a police report. The quicker the report is made the more likely it is that your loved one will be returned home safely.** However, particularly in the case of adults, police do not always want to take a report immediately. You must be able to convince them that you have already checked the likely places and that this is not normal behaviour for this person. The police will need a clear description of the missing person including identifying scars, birthmarks and other identification such as earrings, glasses, etc. Height, weight, hair colour, eye colour. A recent photograph (less than 2 years old for adults & less than 6 months old for children).
4. While the police report is being made have others **conduct an immediate search.** Trace back the missing person's **regular route to/from school or work.** Check nearby places, neighbours, video arcades, malls, nightclubs, any likely place that you may not be able to contact by phone. Check your child's other parent if you do not live together. Check your spouse's ex. Remember to check your own home thoroughly, your child might have come home quietly & be asleep in Grandma's room. **If the missing person is elderly,** possibly suffering from Alzheimer's, they might be trying to go to the house they used to live in or where they used to work, they might even be heading for their school or their parents home.
5. **Go over the past few days in your mind.** Did someone have an argument with the missing person that may have caused him or her to run away? Is there a problem at school, which your child might be trying to avoid? As painful as it might be, could your spouse have run off with someone else? Could your elderly parent be forgetful and wandered off?
6. **Organise an even wider, more careful search.** Go slowly over the normal routes of the missing person. Go over the work/school route again. Go over the route normally taken to visit friends. Go over your child's likely route to the video arcade or your wife's route to the hairdresser. If you find anything, schoolbag at the sports ground or handbag at the bus stop, resist the urge to pick it up and call the police.
7. As much as everyone will want to help in the search, **someone must remain at home at all times, your loved one might call or even come home.** Leave the phone line open,

Young people like to send text messages, so you should also try to keep your primary cell phone free. Use a second or borrowed cell for any calls you need to make.

8. **If you suspect your teenager has run away on purpose**, search their room thoroughly, see if any clothes are missing, are there any signs of them being involved in something illegal or untoward? Check the computer for who they have been talking to online.
9. **If you think your loved one has been kidnapped**, provide the police with any information you might have for your suspicions including the name and description of anyone you might suspect.
10. **If the missing person has Alzheimer's**, physically walk around the area they went missing from, check what buses they might have gotten on, etc. Have the whole family think of where they might have tried to go. Remember people suffering from Alzheimer's, often live twenty or thirty years ago in their minds.
11. **Make a list** of everyone you have contacted and everywhere you have searched and when, so that you do not waste time. If your loved one is still missing, after a few days you can review the list and follow up.
12. **Do not blame the police** if they are not doing everything you think they should; remember the police have thousands of cases dealing with. You must however keep contacting them for updates and continue to give them any new information you have.
13. **Post all the details of your missing loved one on [Jamaican Missing Persons Website](#).**
14. **Call the newspapers & radio & television stations** and ask them to publicise the disappearance. In many cases they will be very willing to help.
15. **Make copies of photographs** of the missing person & put them up around your neighbourhood and in places where he or she normally "hangs out". Remember to ask permission from business places before putting up posters.
16. **Don't give up.** The police will have other cases, the media will have fresher news, but you will always care for the missing person and your determination will probably be the most important thing in helping to find them. Remember, some missing persons have been found even after ten or more years.