

Overcoming Prejudice & Negativity

Towards The Non-Custodial Parent!

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More often than not there are still residues of hostility and bitterness between parents of the child long after a divorce or separation. This inevitably leads to resentment when the non-custodial parent visits the child. The hostility which the custodial parent still harbours could lead him/her to try ways and means to prevent the child from seeing the other parent.

Attempts are made to downgrade the other parent in the eyes of the child. This pitching of one parent against the other will lead to confusion and divided loyalty on the child's part. On the other hand, a child who is against his wishes, denied visitations and love from the other parent, is likely to grow up to be a bitter and angry adult. If such negative traits are not checked, it is likely to affect the custodial parent's relationship with the child in the long run.

The custodial parent may have quite understandable reasons for such manipulative actions. These could be:

1. fear of losing the child to the other parent.
2. fear that the other parent may influence the child adversely.
3. fear that the child may manipulative the parents to his own advantage.
4. hatred for the other parent and thus instigating the child to do likewise.
5. feelings of resentment and betrayal especially when the other parent is not maintaining the child.

anger that the other parent should have access to the child when he/she was the cause of the family breakdown.

Such fears and sentiments are real and the course of action taken may appear justifiable. However, in the long run, both the child and the custodial parent have more to benefit if he/she could learn to let go and share the child with the other parent.

In arriving at the steps which the custodial parent could take to promote better parent-child relationship, the following assumptions apply:

1. that the child is still young and cannot make decisions for himself.
2. that the non-custodial parent still loves the child and wants to continue seeing him/her.
3. that the child still has some attachment to the other parent.

Assuming that the above assumptions apply the custodial parent could take the following steps:

1. Accept that the non-custodial parent has visiting rights and there is no way that you can prevent it unless the court issues an injunction on grounds of cruelty or insanity on the non-custodial parent's part. When you are able to accept this, you will be better prepared to let your child go to his other parent.
2. Understand that your relationship with your former spouse is different from your child's relationship with him/her. Don't impose your opinion of him/her to your child. Let him form his own opinion.
3. Accept that your child is not responsible for the breakup and that he needs his other parent as much as he needs you.
4. Look beyond your own hurt and anger and realise that the welfare of your child depends on your ability to see that he grows into a balanced well adjusted adult equipped to face the challenges of the world. Love from both parents are crucial during the formative years and the child needs this assurance after the breakdown of the family unit. Denial of access to the other parent will only hurt the child.
5. It is healthier to tell the child that daddy/mummy still loves him/her although he/she is not living with them than to tell him that his daddy/mummy doesn't want him anymore.
6. Do not overly question the child when he comes back to you. If the child refuses to talk about his stay with the other parent, it is better to let the matter rest. But show interest and understanding if he does talk or feel upset after each visit.
7. Look at the positive side. When the child goes to the other parent, use the opportunity to pamper yourself, visit friends or go shopping.
8. Create a secure and happy home environment for your child so that there will be less fear of the child refusing to come back to you.
9. Inculcate values like honesty and trustworthiness in your child. Let him/her know that you place importance on such values and that you expect it of him/her.
10. If there is a spiritual dimension in your life, than inculcate a love for God in your child, reading the holy books and going to places of worship. Show him/her that these are very important to you.
11. Remember, that being the custodial parent, you are the closest role model to your child. You need not fear losing your child if you make the concerted effort to be an exemplary parent figure to your child. It only follows that in his eye no other daddy/mummy could ever replace you.

Fortunate is the child who has an enlightened custodial parent who is gracious enough to share with the other parent because she is able to transcend her personal grief and hurt by placing a high premium on her child's well being.

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