

articles

Contributed by Administrator

Parenting Tips :

What to Do When You're Told "You're Not My Dad";

By Dr. Noel Swanson

Q. My son's father left us 5 years ago. Since then , I have remarried to a lovely man. David, my husband, had tried hard to make friends with Nathan, and left all the disciplining to me. Yet, though we have been married 3 years, my son still refuses to do anything that my husband asks. How do I get him to listen to his stepfather ?

A. Adults know that problems between spouses cause divorce and any lingering negativity. Children on the other hand, often blame themselves when their parents don't have a succeed at marriage. Nathan undoubtedly feels like his dad abandoned him and not you. Those feelings will be reinforced if his dad visits rarely or not at all. This leaves Nathan feeling guilty, angry, and abandoned. He may even be afraid that you will leave too.

This being the case, the fact that you have now brought in another man presents a couple of problems. First, it dashes hopes that one day Mum and Dad might get back together again. Secondly, it means that someone else is stealing all that attention that Nathan had been getting from you when you were single. No wonder his nose feels out of joint!

Nathan and David may have gotten along well before you were married. He was fun then and no threat since he was just Mum's boyfriend. Now he is an equal in the family and acts like he owns the house and has the same rights as everyone else.

Making the transition from visitor to parent is often very tricky. The key to it is to be open and honest about it all. Communication is the key. Make time to talk together, regularly, in various combinations: you and Nathan, Nathan and David, and all three of you. Include your other children if you have any.

There are a couple of important points to be aware of: first let Nathan know that you understand that he's upset and resentful. Then tell him that David will never replace his father. It's perfectly normal for Nathan to miss and love his dad, even if you don't. Do your best to remain matter-of- fact about your divorce, and don't include any children in disagreements between you and your ex.

At the same time, be clear about the fact that David is here because you love him and asked him to join your family. Tell Nathan that you don't love him any less and that he can like David without betraying his own dad.

Finally, you must make it clear to Nathan that David now has parental authority in your family. What David says goes. Don't let Nathan come to you trying to discount any decision David has made. If you happen to disagree with David on some issue, address it in private. It's important that you stand by him in public. Nathan has to see and hear that you and David are of one mind, and that you will always back David fully.

Dr. Noel Swanson frequently writes for <http://www.yesparenting.com> website and also has a free newsletter on <http://www.good-child-guide.com>. Children's behaviour problems.

Equal Rights to Equal Time with Both Parents after Separation?

by Michael Laycock 08 August 2007

When couples separate questions relating to arrangements for their children can become an emotional nightmare. Parents can find it very difficult to separate their roles as parents from that of spouse or even their inner child. Emotions of anger and hate can make it very difficult to discriminate between what is right and wrong. This is bad news and bad timing for the children, the innocent victims of the parental separation, as the sole question should be what is in the best interests of the children? The arguments for and against a starting point of equality have been debated and have shifted over the decades. In a lot of cases this question has had more emotional than practical significance because the parents lifestyles, demands of work and finances and the children's school and out of school activities often determine the best practical arrangements for the children. However, although it is an emotional question it is also important practically because it is best for the children for both parents to be engaged with their children. If there is a presumption of equality both parents then feel recognised as a parent, which helps to reinforce their individual sense of responsibility for the child.

Some countries for example some States of the United States of America and Australia have a starting point of equality written into their laws. In England that is not the case. In England the question is entirely within the discretion of the court. So what factors are relevant? What do you think is relevant? Well, in a case in England in 2006 Lord Justice Thorpe said the following were relevant:

- * That the child had a strong attachment to both parents and was happy and confident in both homes.
- * There is a real proximity/closeness between both parents homes
- * There is a real proximity/closeness to the child's school
- * The child has a real sense of belonging to both homes and a real familiarity with both
- * The child has a clearly expressed perception that she has 2 homes
- * There is a relatively fluid passage for the child between the 2 homes
- * There is a relatively fluid passage for the child between school and the 2 homes
- * After separation there is evidence that care has been shared by the parents

This is a welcome advance in Judges thinking as not so long ago there was more or less a presumption against shared parenting unless the circumstances were exceptional. In practice this often led to the other parent feeling cut off from his child, disengaged, his status as parent ignored by the courts, which had a detrimental effect on his relationship with his child. Giving sole rights to one parent in effect gave power to that parent which could readily be abused as often there was a state of hostility between separated parents, which hostility could also arise later as new partners entered the scene. This hostility is therefore a case of potentially adverse effects of divorce on children.

Parents can now talk these issues through in family mediation, which is now more prevalent and readily available than in the past. Anything that can reduce the emotional and psychological effects of divorce on children helps children to cope with divorce and parental separation. Divorce Mediation is in fact compulsory in some court systems as a means of conflict resolution.

A good example of clear and realistic judicial thinking of positive benefit to children was that of Lord Justice Wall who in an English case in 2004 stated that shared responsibility orders: " emphasises the fact that both parents are equal in the eyes of the law and that they have equal duties and responsibilities as parents. The order can have the additional benefit of conveying the court's message that neither parent is in control and that the court expects parents to co-operate with each other for the benefit of the children."

In another case the court made the point that a shared order was a safeguard against the non-resident parent being marginalized. It used to be the case that a court would only consider making such an order if the parents were able to communicate with each other and the arrangements were working well. However, in English law at least there is a non-intervention principle.

Accordingly the starting point is that a court does not make orders for children unless it is necessary to do so for reasons of the children's welfare. This means that the parents have joint parental responsibility, which carries on regardless of the state of the marriage/relationship. Hence they are expected to make proper arrangements for the welfare of their children and the court does not usually need to get involved in those private arrangements. In a 2006 case Lord Justice Thorpe stated, " A harmonious relationship between the parents is not a prerequisite of a shared care order. Indeed the presence of that sort of harmonious relationship is a contraindication of a shared residence order since both parents would fall within the no-order principle ..."

Regrettably, however, the UK government has rejected putting into law a presumption of equal rights to equal time with their children after parental separation. In a government paper in 2004 it stated, "The government does not, however, believe that an automatic 50:50 division of the child's time between the parents would be in the best interests of the children".

Giving a Voice to the Children

by Michael Laycock 28.06.07

Sadly, when couples split up they are often too immersed in their own grief to consider the feelings of their children or do not understand that children are also fully fledged people entitled to know what is happening, to be heard and to be consulted.

Whilst suffering the effects of divorce and separation the adults at least have the ability to make choices. They can choose where to live and with whom. Children do not have that advantage. They are economically dependant, inexperienced in life and have not fully developed their vocabulary so can find it more difficult to express what they are feeling.

The adults often hand over control to their lawyers who are even more remote from the children than are the parents and the children are rarely heard within the legal context.

Happily there is a better alternative namely Family Mediation. This is a private way in which an independent person, known as a Mediator, helps separating or divorcing couples learn to communicate better and reach solutions to some or all of their issues relating to separation, divorce, finances, property or children.

Mediators are trained professionals experienced in helping people settle their issues. They are neutral. They cannot give legal advice but help the parties to look at solutions to resolve their issues and can give general information about the law and other implications.

Mediation is voluntary and confidential. This means that what is discussed in mediation cannot be referred to later if the matter goes to court. Before mediation starts the parties will sign an agreement to mediate in which these matters will be agreed. This means that if the parties agree that it would be helpful to have their agreement made into a court order they will then need to see a lawyer about that. Mediation is not marriage guidance.

Typically, both parties will meet with the mediator in several sessions. At the end of the process it is usual for the parties to take their proposals to their lawyers to deal with the legal formalities. However, it is important to understand that mediation is a voluntary process, lawyers and courts do not have to be involved and that mediation models can vary. Because it is more direct than dealing through lawyers it is usually a lot cheaper than only using lawyers.

Parents can ask the mediator to talk with the children, which often helps the adults to reach better decisions concerning their arrangements for their children.

The purpose of meeting the children (at which the parents are not present) is to find out, if possible, their wishes and feelings. The meeting is confidential. The only exception to the confidentiality is where any child protection issues arise in which case the matter would need to be reported elsewhere. The parents must have previously agreed that nothing said in that private meeting will be disclosed to the parents unless the children have agreed to that happening. Usually the children do agree to tell the parents.

The parents also agree not to school the children beforehand about what to say in the mediation or to ask them about what they have said to the mediator.

In most cases children report how pleased they are to be consulted, to have their say and to feel they matter. Sometimes they have nothing to say but are pleased to have been given the opportunity to do so. Many say they have not been asked their views before. Children will want to be assured that the process is something of value to them in their own right and not simply something for the parents to use in their separation from each other.

Seemingly simple matters can make all the difference to children. For example in one case the children reported that they wished their parents would at least say hello and goodbye to each other, just that would make all the difference. They also report not liking their parents being horrid to each other and saying horrible things about each other. They like the mediator to be a good listener. The mediator needs to establish rapport and trust quite quickly which underscores that it is important that mediators undertaking this work directly with children have appropriate training in consulting directly with children.

Some reported outcomes from parents include a mother saying that the mediation "had helped tremendously in coping with children" and a father saying that the mediation enabled him to see his youngest child. The children report an easing of stress, as they do not then feel so much caught in between their parents. Generally children report that the mediation helped them to better understand both what was going on and the views of the other family members. Furthermore there was an improvement of the children and parents understanding each other better.

The whole process is very beneficial in teaching the individuals concerned to work out their problems as a family so everyone is included.

HOME: <http://evolvemediationservice.co.uk/>

Help for the Children and the adults
divorceaid.co.uk

This site is a great resource.

Great for the separating adults as a source of information and support and great for the children under the "Children " section. As well as answering lots of basic questions that worry children it lists resources like "People to Talk to" and "Top 10 Books to Help You".

The first page looks like this :

Children

Help and advice for children in divorce

You MUST remember these things:

Your Mum and Dad still LOVE YOU.

They will ALWAYS LOVE YOU, no matter where you all live.

They are not splitting up because of anything that you have done.

You may feel sad or upset but you will feel better.

Always talk to your Mum or Dad or another adult you can trust in the family.

Read through this section for other people to talk to, where you can get help, leaflets, books and you can email someone who will tell you what you can do. we also have some cool websites and some fun online games.

- You are not alone
- Its not your fault
- Remember this
- How do you feel?
- Who to talk to
- Someone hurting you?
- What will happen?
- Strange parents?
- New people?

Further help

- People to talk to
- Childline & NSPCC
- Great websites for you
- Leaflets for you
- Parents fighting?
- Have some fun
- Books

Dealing with School Stress

Stress in school is a big topic these days. Are you a student suffering from stress? If this is the case, then this article is for you.

As students are being asked to do more, there is a pressure to handle more and more tasks. That pressure can lead to undue stress. Just as their parents suffer from stress in the workplace and at home, students also suffer stress from

work, social contacts and family strife. What can students do in order to reduce the deleterious effects of stress in their daily lives?

Students can help to reduce the likelihood of stress occurring by following these simple rules:

- * Know your learning style; are you a visual learner, or a kinesthetic or auditory learner? Adjust your study habits so that you are accommodating your learning style.
- * Create a study friendly environment in your room or other place where you normally study. Make use of aromatherapy, soothing music and keep distractions away.
- * Learn to manage your time by staying organized and on schedule. Use a day planner, or electronic calendar to keep track of due dates and special assignments. Plan study times throughout the week.
- * Visualize yourself achieving your school goals. Take a few moments each day to make a mental image of how you will look and feel when you achieve a certain school goal.
- * Develop positive habits. Learn how to think in positive terms about self-image. Learn how to accept failure as a learning tool that will increase your likelihood of future success.

What other measures can you take? Remember that sleep is your friend; do not cheat yourself of something that is beneficial to your well being. Planning study time and sticking to your plan will leave you the required time to sleep. Those individuals who are sleep-deprived have more trouble learning facts, and have difficulty remembering them. Those who do not get enough sleep, perform poorly. If possible, take afternoon naps to help you stay fresh and alert especially when dealing with extra assignments or a heavy schedule.

Stress that is chronic can actually affect your ability to learn and to remember facts. Learning how to manage stress is an important school tool. Learn and practice good study skills right from the start. If you are prepared for class, you will not be as stressed as someone who is unprepared.

Stress is dissipated if you share your duties with friends. Take advantage of any mentoring, tutoring or study groups offered by your school. Ask friends to study together or compare notes from class. Make sure study groups do not turn into parties. Leave the fun and games for celebrating after the grades are won.

You need physical activity, healthy meals and snacks and plenty of sleep in order to do well in school. When you lack in any of these areas, you can become stressed. Make sure you are exercising on a regular basis, are eating the proper amounts of fruits, vegetables and dairy for your age groups, and get at least 6 to 8 hours of sleep each night.

John Lonergan is a staff writer for It's Entirely Natural, a resource for helping you achieve a naturally healthy body, mind, and spirit. You may contact our writers through the web site. Follow this link for more information on Stress Management.

The Worst Thing Ever

The Worst Thing Ever? is a special BBC Newsround programme looking at divorce - from a child's point of view. Broadcast 19th March 2008.

It mixes drama, animation and real-life stories.

Well worth a look.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_7140000/newsid_7144600/7144643.stm

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