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Published on *Explorable.com* (<https://explorable.com>)

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When a Child Rejects a Parent

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In a separation between the parents of a family, everyone gets hurt, especially the children involved. If the adults are able to maintain a relatively calm environment, and leave the children out of conflict, it will help in the adjustment process.

On the other hand, if a child is used as a weapon and as a tool for blackmail, by one or both of the parents, that could have detrimental consequences on the child. Their inexperience and emotional innocence will not allow them to process what is happening. In this way, the children may be influenced into choosing to be on one side of the barricade, which will only lead to feelings of guilt and sorrow. Children love both their parents and need both of them in their lives. When a child is in the middle of parental battles and chooses one side, the relationship with the deprecated parent will deteriorate and in severe cases, become non-existent.



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How Can It Manifest?

The most important aspect that we need to look into, when talking about children who have rejected their parents, is the child's preference of one parents, over the other. This can happen in several forms:

- The child may generally be kept out of parental conflicts, and rarely side with one parent.
- The child is strongly influenced by the parent who they prefer, dislikes visiting the other parent, the bond between the two is starting to deteriorate, as conflict increases.
- In severe cases, the child may perceive the rejected parent as the enemy, and even experience feelings of hatred, as well as full refusal to see that parent. In these severe cases, the bond between parent and child is severely compromised and will need your dedicated attention, to return to a normal relationship.

Common Causes

Although your children may be rejecting you after the divorce, because they are being influenced by their other parent, that is not necessarily the case.

The best thing you can do for yourself and for your children, is to carefully examine your own behaviour. Have you done something that could have turned your children against you? This is a painful question, and requires a lot of retrospection, but if you are able to answer it honestly, you will be on your way to repairing your relationship with your children.

Often, in instances of abuse, the children reject the parent who has been violent. Even if you haven't been physically aggressive with your ex and children, consider if you might have exhibited other forms of non-physical aggression.

How Can You Prevent Being Rejected?

Luckily, there are things you can do to build a stronger bond with your children and to prevent rejection. If you have already been rejected, you can also apply the approaches described below, but be prepared that it may take more time.

Refuse to Leave Your Children

Be a part of your children's lives, no matter what. Spend as much time with them as you can. Even if they seem like they don't want to be with you, keep seeking them out and, calmly and politely, asking them to join in different activities with you. Make sure that the activities you engage in are things your children actually enjoy, and not things you think they like. If your children have strongly rejected your presence for some reason, they may act resentful at times, and you may feel hurt. As difficult as it may be, don't let that stop you – you are fighting for your long-term relationship with your children.

Do Not Engage in Conflict with the Other Parent in Front of Them

Whatever you do, make sure that your interactions with your ex are civilized. Even if he/she is driving you crazy, taunting you, and doing everything in their power to set you off, don't give in to provocations. Your negative reactions will only give your children reason to reject you.

Do Not Complain in Front of Your Child About the Other Parent

You need to keep your child away from this kind of negativity, and be calm, accepting and positive instead. Even if something negative, between you and your ex, has happened in front of the children, make sure you explain it calmly. When you do that, never blame the other person though, and always use “I” sentences.

Do Not Use Your Child as Courier.

At all costs, avoid putting your child in the middle of conflict between you and your ex. The reason why you are being rejected, is because your child was wrongfully placed in the midst of your conflict. If you have something to communicate to your ex, talk to them separately, without involving children.

Confront Your Child with the Truth

“Mommy says you went away because you don’t love us”, can be used as an example. Your answer should be something along the lines of, “Is that what you think happened?”. Rather than forcing your point of view on your child, focus on theirs. Make sure your children have a safe space with you, where they can freely talk about their emotions, worries, and thoughts. Having a calm and open conversation, that doesn’t include you blaming your ex, is the best way for your child to understand what is happening and regain their confidence in you.

Source URL: <https://explorable.com/e/when-a-child-rejects-a-parent?gid=21419>