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[Home](#) > When a Parent Isolates From the Children

When a Parent Isolates From the Children

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Separating from your ex may change your family and split it up into two homes. However, blood and love bonds still remain. It is common for parents to divide weekends with the children amongst each other, and sometimes even to have the children live two weeks in one household and two – in the other.

In some cases, though rare ones, the parent who has decided to leave home, also seems to leave behind their children. They don't call, don't visit, do not make any effort to spend weekends with their children, do not show up for school events and even do not make a financial contribution to the education of their children. Others even find a new family and seem to let the initial one go, as if it has never existed.

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When Does This Occur

Situations like that usually unfold in cases of bad separation or divorce, where the one leaving home is motivated by the desire to hurt their ex-partner, through their children. Alternatively, the behaviour may also be caused by an unpreparedness to be a single parent. Certainly, both of these patterns reveal great emotional immaturity, yet it is not always that person's fault and deliberate intention. Not all people possess the maturity and altruism needed, to put their children first. Additionally, not all people feel confident enough to raise children. The person exhibiting these attitudes may either realize them, on a conscious level, or they could be completely subconscious.

Effects on the Children

Unfortunately, these attitudes have severe consequences on your children's welfare and you may start to notice symptoms of psychological suffering. After all, how they will perceive it depends on their age and level of reasoning, but it's still being abandoned by a parent. This is something difficult for us adults to understand, let alone for a child or a teenager.

How Can You Prevent It?

Although whether or not your ex-partner gets "divorced" from your children is not entirely under your control, there are still some things you can do. Most importantly, your children need to understand that whatever may be happening, it is not their fault. For the sake of their psychological wellbeing, they also need to know that they are very much loved by both parents, even if one is having a hard time showing it.

Keep Pushing

Your ex seems increasingly disconnected from your children? Keep them in the loop, regarding the changes in your child's everyday life. Call, text, and use other means of communication, without being suffocating. Another approach you could try, is to firmly state to your ex that you will not spend weekends with the children, when it is their turn. Just make sure you are being delicate about this and do not demonstrate the process to your children, as you don't want to hurt their feelings.

Facilitate, Don't Collect

It's easy to feel frustrated and disappointed by the way your ex is treating your children. Still, avoiding contact between the parent and the children will only make it easier for your ex to neglect their responsibilities.

Be Honest, without Being Mean

Coming up with excuses for your ex only puts a bandage on the wound. White lies, on the other hand, could sometimes cause more damages than help. However, it is also crucial to try and keep your frustration and disappointments under control. Do not dump your negative emotions, towards your ex, on your children. Phrases such as, "Your father/mother has always been the same. Keeps on making promises they can't keep!", are the kind of observations to avoid.

Encourage Child-Parent Engagement

Remind your children to make weekly phone calls, set up dates, weekend and holiday visits with their other parent. It can be frustrating for a child to initiate the interactions, but it is still preferable to your child not having any relationship with their other parent. Try to teach your children to hold their other parent responsible, if he or she doesn't live up to a promises, and doesn't have a good reason.

If Your Ex is Completely Unwilling to Engage

What if the parent doesn't want to engage with the children in any way? It can be more destroying to push it. And you may need to help your children understand it was a choice they and you couldn't control. On the other hand, if there's still some form of contact and interaction, the best possible thing you can do for your children, is to encourage it.

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