

INTERVIEWING CHILDREN REGARDING CUSTODY SERVES NO PURPOSE AND MAY, INSTEAD, BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

Question: Why is it detrimental to children----with the likely potential for a lifetime of emotional, behavioral, mental, and social impairments----to decide if and what kind of relationship they wish to have with their non-residential parent?

Answer: For the same reason that Alzheimer's patients are not allowed to decide what kind of situation in which they will live.

The cognitive development of children is underdeveloped, and they therefore cannot comprehend what it would be like to have a parent eradicated from their lives. And they certainly have no conception of the meaning of the "best interest of the child." Asking children if they wish to have a relationship with their targeted parent is tantamount to asking them to choose between their parents: these children incontrovertibly understand the choice that their residential parent wishes them to make. The result is a double bind/no-win /catch 22 situation for these children, and such situations have led to numerous, documented psychoses outcomes.

And likewise, it is the inadequacy of the cognitive facility of Alzheimer patients that proscribes that they should not make momentous decisions; but in their case, the inadequacy of their cognitive functioning is due to deterioration rather than due to its underdevelopment.

When alienated children, usually as adults, comprehend the inappropriate, disturbing, and inexplicable choice they had made to reject a parent based solely on the brainwashing of their other parent, they will likely suffer a lifetime of guilt for having made that decision and for having maltreated their alienated parent. And if the alienated parent is no longer around, there is no way for the child to make amends and thereby assuage their guilt.

So, for all of the above, it begs the question as to whether children of divorce should be asked to state their feelings at all about having a relationship with the non-residential parent and/or to decide with whom they wish to live.

Take heed, all parents undergoing divorce: do not condemn your child to a lifetime of guilt and pain, leading to maladaptation!

And to the lawyer for the child, also take heed: when you inquire of your minor clients as to their feelings about with whom they wish to live and what visitation arrangement they desire with their non-residential parent, you are also putting them in the middle of their parents' conflicts. How is it healthy for a child to have to choose between their parents? This family therapist affirms that it is unequivocally unhealthy for the child to make such choices. This information should absolve you from being a mere vehicle to regurgitate for the court the expressed wishes of your emotionally and cognitively immature minor client.

