

Children should not be allowed to drive the visitation bus.
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To any rational, mature, objective parent or professional, the reason for this declaration could be justified by merely pondering the following question: "How reassured would you feel if you were standing trial for a crime, and your jury was comprised entirely of 18-year-olds?"

The reason children should not be empowered to make a decision about visitation with a parent is as obvious as why no one would feel comfortable having only 18-year olds sitting in judgment of us. A child's judgment, insight, perception, reality testing, and emotions only barely reach maturity by the END of adolescence. One only has to read the epistemological research and studies undertaken by Jean Piaget, philosopher and developmental psychologist, who wrote the "Bible" upon which educators rely to understand the cognitive development of children. Children do not have the emotional and cognitive abilities to evaluate for themselves what is in their best interests; to theorize what it would be like to have a parent eradicated from their lives; to be able to discriminate what is rational, truthful, and moral amidst all the information their parents and other adults impart to them---especially about the malicious, fabricated, and fanciful data from the alienating parent. Children, for example, think very concretely until the age of 8; that is why they actually do believe, "Step on a crack, break my mother's back." Not until much older, can they discriminate reality from fantasy, which is why they should not see horror shows until much older. The ability to think abstractly starts at the beginning of adolescence and is still insufficiently mature by 18. Children lack wisdom! And children further do not have the emotional wherewithal to contradict the alienating parent----if that parent is the residential parent----as they are so dependent upon that parent.

So, to placate the alienated parent regarding the visit refusal, the court sanctions it by making an ineffective order for the child to undergo a course of individual therapy in the hopes of readying the child for a relationship with the alienated parent. Every time I hear the unsubstantiated platitude for the therapist, "to prepare the child for contact with the alienated parent," I want to erupt. Because of their immature cognitive and emotional abilities as previously discussed, children do not possess the facility for abstraction. They cannot participate in a theoretical discussion about what an appropriate relationship entails; nor can they comprehend a desire for something in the abstraction. A child, therefore, cannot have a discussion about desiring a relationship with someone who is in the absentia---especially a brainwashed child; nor can a child participate in determining what to expect from the relationship with that "someone." That "someone" needs to be concrete, in person, in the flesh and blood. The therapist cannot, therefore, prepare the child through intellectualism and abstraction for the re-building of a relationship with someone else. To be able to do this is a fantasy perpetuated by an adversarial child custody system in order to appease the parties and deceive one another into believing that the alienation is being addressed. Individual therapy will not be able to resolve this. To do is also a fantasy perpetuated by the mental health community----partially out of ignorance, partially out of an opposing belief system from this therapist about the power

of the therapist and about how people change, and partially to assure our continued employment. I have lost count of the number of preposterous requests I have received asking me to treat a child whom I have never met in order "to ready them to reunite" with a parent, whom I have also never met and know nothing about. I am being asked to treat a relationship without having observed and examined it! Would a doctor diagnose for a disease without observing/examining the patient?

But why is therapy necessary at all to connect a child to a loving and formally loved parent? The PA-aware professional must educate the judicial system that PAf children's expressed hatred for and refusal to visit with the targeted/alienated parent are not their true feelings----no more than these were the feelings of the thousands of foster children with whom I had worked with during a period of 24 years: not a single foster child ever expressed a hatred for her/his parents or a refusal to visit. Indeed, the two most frequently asked questions were, "When can I go home?" and "When is my next visit with my mommy and daddy?" You have to be carefully taught to hate and fear----especially a parent.

PA children are caught and trapped by their feelings and position: on the one hand, these children love and crave their relationship with their targeted/alienated parent; on the other hand, they are terrified of betraying their alienating parent by expressing their true feelings. The professionals which impact child custody----especially the judge----must release these children from their trap by relieving them from making the decision about whether to visit or not. The professionals who impact child custody and visitation must assume the responsibilities for which we were charged when we were licensed by our respective professions; that is, we must assume our responsibility of guaranteeing the PA child's right to a meaningful relationship with both parents----that starts with the enforcement of the visitation rights of the non-residential parent.