



Divorce: I Just Want This to Be Over

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Often when I am working with people who are going through a divorce they repeatedly say "I just want it to be over". I think they wish that the person who they married was a figure on a chalkboard that they could just erase from their lives with a few strokes of the brush.

Even if they have reconciled in the past, I hear stories of how inappropriate the other person was as a partner and as a parent. The one who they had so passionately fallen for in the beginning and lived with for years suddenly is the hated enemy who should never have anything to do with the children again. (If the other person was so horrible, maybe you shouldn't have stayed long enough to have children in the first place).

The games begin. One parent might go to the schools to state that the children's names have been changed and that the other parent is not allowed to have any contact with the children or pick them up from school property. (At the same time, however, the school may be told that a new boyfriend or girlfriend does have permission to see or transport the children). The school can be caught in the middle - as can the family physician, joint friends and others who care about the children.

Divorce is a very difficult and emotional time but parents need to seriously consider the harm that is done when the other parent is bad-mouthed, restricted from contact or replaced by someone they barely know who is to be their "new" parent.

Often the "game playing" that goes on is similar to what might be expected from grade seven students! The goal is the same as the playground bully whose position is "I want to look like the best and I will drag you down in order to make that happen".

And trashing the family members of the other parent isn't helpful either. Remember, these are your children's relatives!

I often tell parents that when they discount the other person, they are setting themselves up for trouble. You see, if you say "Your father is an idiot" the children will likely believe you - until they are older. Then they may get to know him on a different level, turn on you and think that you were actually the idiot for bad mouthing him. And it goes both ways.

Be careful - if the children don't trust either of you they might be tempted to believe that 57 year old man they just met on the internet!

Well, parenting should not be a competition and investing all of your time and money into trying to build a case to convince a judge that you are the only parent who should be involved in the children's lives will not work. You will just end up with less money in your bank account and more frustration. Just because you have the opinion that the other person is not a good partner, does not mean that s/he is not a good parent. The Justice system generally grants orders that include access for both parents. In fact, shared custody is much more common than ever.

Over the past three years, I have worked on Parenting Plans for 86 families who are going through separation and divorce. Those who have made the healthiest plans are the individuals who have been able to truly put their children first.

It's hard not to be immature - especially when we have been really hurt. But if you truly want your children to do well, it is important that you deal with your hurts in a mature manner. That means that you acknowledge your "ex" with all the warts and bumps as a parent who the children love and need.

After all, you can have an "ex-partner" but there is no such thing as an "ex-parent".

It's hard to take sometimes but the truth is as long as you have children it will never be "over". The good news is that you can work on lessening your pain so that you will be able to handle things better.

If you need help to get through this difficult time and to make good decisions, set an appointment with a psychologist who specializes in this area. That will be one regret you won't have to deal with in the future!