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Divorcing The Kid(s) **Wayne L. Misner**

One of the most confusing areas of the divorce procedure is the parent who not only divorces the spouse but the children as well. When some men and women leave the marriage and get divorced, regardless who made the decision to quit the marriage, they also divorce the kids. Statistics show that 28% of children under the age of eighteen live with one parent. They also show more than one million American children under the age of eighteen are faced with their parent's divorce each year. These children are now going to be forced to form a new relationship at two different households. That includes a very large number of kids. I was faced with this same problem when my parents divorced. One reason there is an abandonment of the children by one parent is that the non-custodial parent can get back at and hurt the other parent through the kid. If the child is hurt, we as a loving parent are hurt. Another reason might be that the parent who is living on the outside hurts so much when seeing the child and having the feelings stirred up with the loss of the family unit, that they avoid seeing the family altogether. Avoiding the family helps this parent not to face the loss. Another possibility is they resent that the children only want to be with them for their pocketbook or wallet, or to use them for other reasons--as a taxi driver, fixer of anything and everything, and so on. It's possible they are angry that the child made a decision to stay with the other parent instead of going with them.

Whatever the reason for divorcing the children, this damages them a great deal. They don't feel that the parent loves them and wants them, and it erodes the self-esteem of the child. Questions and statements by the child, such as, "I must not be a very good kid to have a parent that does not want to be with me or even see me," "Maybe it's my fault that Mom and Dad got divorced," "If I was a better kid they might still be together," and so on demonstrate that damage occurred. How cruel a parent is to abandon their child! It may be that the parent is so wrapped up in their own needs, they

disregard the feelings of the child, and give the message to the child that they don't care about their own flesh and blood. How pathetic! I can not begin to comprehend how these same parents will say and may believe, "I love my children very much." I'm not going to explain how important a father is to his sons. He is (or should be) the role model--what a young boy would want to be when he grows up and becomes a man.

Perhaps men don't believe if the child is a girl, he is needed. Men are very important in a girl's life. Daughters with healthy, close ties to their fathers have fewer babies out of wedlock. A father helps a girl grow into a strong, independent woman. As daughters grow older, fathers need to treat them as equals to reassure them and to build their self-confidence and self-esteem. If the mother has left the children with the father, he becomes the single parent. Some males are more nurturing than some females. Single fathers are very capable of raising healthy, happy, well-adjusted children. If the kids are with the mother, the male must stay in the kid's life for all the above reasons, and this most important one. If you are not in you children's lives as they grow up, they will not want you in their lives when they are adults. You will always be the outsider, the one who walked away and abandoned them. Yes, maybe some will establish some type of relationship with you but it would never really be that close, deep, loving one that all parent wants with their children.

My own father was not there for me as I grew up. He never sent the child support payments, and my mother and I went hungry many nights. We would have soup for meals because we did not have enough money to buy anything else. Even as a young boy and later a teenager, I felt he did not love me or care. Not once in my thinking did I think he was angry with my mother so he got his anger out on her by not sending money. In my mind he did not care about ME! These feelings are still within me. So some logic saying a man is getting back at his ex does not fit. He is getting back at his kids. Believe this, men. If you are at war with your ex, it is the kids who are getting wounded and are dying. Don't ever justify abandoning your children for some stupid, idiotic excuse.

The deep-seated feeling of abandonment stays with us into adult life. Evidence of new research is beginning to show that the effects of parental loss in childhood can surface in later years, showing up in difficulty with close relationships. I bring this to your attention for two reasons. One, if you are the adult whose parent left, you might see this fear of abandonment within you and what it is doing to your relationships. Or, if you are the parent who is leaving or has departed you have knowledge about what it might do to your own children. Therefore do not you might abandon them, but make it a priority to help them grow up with you as part of their lives. (Note: See WORKS CITED: at the end of this book in alphabetic order filed under "Other" number 61).

Polly Joan wrote in her book, Preventing Teenage Suicide,¹⁹ "Family problems, whether divorce or ongoing interfamily conflict, can play havoc with a young person's emotions. To the hurt of loss when a parent leaves the home or when one's secure

status in the family is threatened, may be added the feeling that the young person is somehow responsible and guilty for these family problems. Often, adolescents find themselves caught in a conflict of loyalties between the parents and/or siblings, pressured to take sides. A young person brought up to love and respect the family may then feel torn apart. And increased family conflict is forcing adolescents to evaluate the desirability of marriage for themselves. Many are wary of marriage, of having children, doubtful that they should subject children to what they themselves have gone through. Sometimes an adolescent takes on the guilt that he or she is somehow responsible for the family's conflict. In other cases, adolescents can become the scapegoat for unresolved family problems, with increased feelings of rejection and alienation from other family members."

A few statistics:

- Of twelve million children suffering mental illness, fewer than one in five receive treatment--National Institute of Mental Health.

- Seven to fourteen percent of children will experience an episode of major depression before age fifteen---National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression.

- Each year almost 5,000 youths ages 15 to 24 commit suicide---National Mental Health Association

Our society is asking why our children take drugs, become alcoholics, and get in trouble with the law. It could be maybe we don't love them or show that we care.

I know I suffered with a form of post-traumatic stress. My experience with early neglect and abuse put me into a depression. Traumatic experiences affect the chemistry of the brain.