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THE MINDFUL DIVORCEE

Helping Exes Deal With Exes

BY DEBBIE MARTINEZ, DIVORCE COACH



EXES, YOU CAN'T LIVE WITH THEM AND, BY GOD, YOU WISH you could live without them. But, when you have children, even a fairy Godmother can't make that wish come true. A huge portion of my practice is helping exes deal with exes, and it's sad that so much pain is created. I say created instead of caused because most of the time, one of them is deliberate in his/her actions, in order to inflict emotional or financial pain on the other. The energy it takes to behave this way, and the length of time the behavior continues, would have had Einstein scratching his head as to the logic behind it. Here are several questions that I'm sure plenty of you can relate to.

What can I do to stop my ex-husband from telling lies about me to anyone who will listen? I'm losing friends left and right.

All I can say is that they weren't really your friends. Those that know you will know to turn a deaf ear. Shakespeare was a wise man when he said, "the lady doth protest too much." Don't lose your credibility by defending yourself. Spend that time making new friends. An attorney friend of mine told me once that the friends you make after your divorce are the friends that you will have for a long time. Hope you find comfort in that.

My daughter comes home from her dad's wearing makeup and clothes that my ex-husband's live-in gives her. They are clearly not age appropriate. I have tried talking to both of them but they are smug and tell me they will do what they wish on "their watch."

Just a wild guess here, but I would bet you feel like jumping through the phone and strangling them? No doubt this is tough. You feel walked over as a mother by the live-in, feel powerless with your ex, and the bad guy with your daughter. Have no fear; your inner strength is here! Simply put, you are going to take back the power. Send an email to your ex in a very professional way outlining why you feel these are inappropriate (this is for documentation purposes). After that, no need to say another word. When your daughter comes home dressed that way, calmly explain to her that you understand how she might find the make up and clothes "cool," but that it is not age appropriate. Again, you understand she is allowed to wear them at her dad's, but not here. Ask her to change and tone down the make up. Don't bad mouth the dad or live-in, just be matter of fact. Don't get into a discussion with her, as this is not up for debate. You might not be able to control what goes on at his house, but you certainly can take back the power in your home. I have also known a time or two when the clothes goblins come out at night and whisk those clothes to the netherworld, never to be seen again.

When my children come back from their dad's, all I hear about is the girlfriend and what fun they had. I'm sick of hearing it. What can I say to them without sounding bitter?

I will assume they are "filling you in" and trying not to be mean. That assumption in place, understand that they are viewing this as sharing with you. As painful as it might be, you want to keep open communication with them. Try steering the conversation in the direction you would like it to go. When you feel enough time has passed, perhaps guide them to do homework, or get settled in. Let me acknowledge your feelings here for a minute. I know it's really hard to have your children gone only to come home and extol how great the weekend at dad's was, especially if you have spent your weekend organizing closets with your cat. So, let me leave you with this thought. Would you rather have your children spending an entire weekend where they are unhappy? The depth of a mother's love knows no bounds, even when it adds to her own unhappiness.

Debbie Martinez, MA is a certified, mindful life coach specializing in divorce (aka: heartbreak coach). She professionally coaches clients on how to avoid the breakup backlash and live better, not bitter.

As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. She brings her formal training and life experience into her coaching practice to empower and educate clients through their divorce journey and onto new beginnings. You can contact Debbie at debbie@thepowerofdivorcecoach.com.



Obstetrics

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