

A Once Loving Marriage or Amicable Divorce Turned Upside Down by a StepParent or New Partner

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Opinion

When the new wife, husband or even a girl/boyfriend takes over and turns a once amicable divorce into a war between the children and the other parent. What can you do? How do you even prove and stop it?

The first thing to realize is that this new entity in your children's lives is probably a very insecure weak person who demands total control. Not only are they controlling, but abusively so. This is also probably not the first time they have done something like this. Probably throughout their entire lives they have created havoc between their mark (their new partner/spouse) and the people in that persons life. It is almost like a fatal attraction, only this time; there are innocent children involved.

These new partners are masters at deception and disguise. They will make everyone think they are the best thing since the creation of the wheel, which is pretty much what a parent who alienates does but with more gusto because they are really an outsider sneaking in. According to them, no one can do it better, not even the biological parents, including their own partner and spouse. These alienators come only in two shapes and sizes. They either have never had children of their own or they have children who they have alienated from their own children's other parent. I think I can count on my fingers only a single time in the past 16 years that a new aggressive partner was NOT an alienating parent, himself or herself.

The sad part in all of this is that not only are the children and the alienated parent victims, but the marked/new partner parent is a victim. Often, I will hear from the targeted parent how things were going along fine, until their ex-spouse met this new partner and then it seemed like they took over all things involving the children. Often, I will hear about how the targeted/alienated parent can literally hear this new partner verbally abusing the marked parent, while they are on the phone with them. Often, I hear how this new partner convinces the kids that the targeted parent is not a good parent and cannot possibly care for them as well as they can.

This is NOT to be confused with "Remarriage as a Trigger in Parental Alienation" as described by Dr. Richard Warshak in his article in *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 28-229-241, 2000. In the Remarriage as a trigger situation, it involves the remarriage of one parent, who becomes the targeted parent, that causes the other parent to freak out and alienate the kids. In this case, it is the aggressive alienating parent who panics that the new spouse or partner will be a better parent and the kids will like them better. This aggressive parent will do whatever it takes to ensure that the kids hate the other parent and their new partner.

So how do we first prove that this is what is going on. Creating a timeline is going to be the first and most important evidence you will have. It will be able to show the chain of events and how they drastically changed when the new partner came into everyone's lives. Reality is that you should have been documenting from the start but who would think that you needed to do this. So you will now need to rack your brains and start from the beginning of the divorce documenting everything, whether you remember an exact date or not. In other words, document, document and document some more. When we say document, this means Date, Time, Place and event. No emotions, just the facts. You will need to go back in time to when the divorce first occurred, stating with as much accuracy as possible about how things went, visitation and more. If you do NOT know an exact date, then say, 'On or about...' The point is to show that prior to this stepparent coming into the picture, there was no problem between you and your ex-spouse or the children.

Creating a chronology of the events helps evaluators and other professionals to see a pattern of behavior. If you can convert this information into a pie chart or other type of easy to read diagram, all the better. This will create a quick read that shows how the situation has escalated in a picture format.

It is also probably true, that if this new partner is doing this to your family, that they were probably a victim of it when they were growing up, or as I said earlier have done this before and that there is underlying mental issues involved. It is important to try to get some background on this new partner and especially their extended family. If you can contact others who are victims of this new partner, they may be able to shed light on other factors and evidence that proves the problem is NOT you or your ex-spouse but this new abusive controlling partner.

One of the biggest issues with divorce is that the courts do not feel that the stepparent or new partner should be involved in the proceedings. Obviously, the problem with this theory is that when the stepparent/new partner is the problem, then how can they not be included in any intervention, no less that this intervention must occur immediately. With evidence, witnesses, other victims of this new partner and a chronology or timeline, you can now ask the courts for court ordered counseling for everyone in the family, including the new partner.

I have actually seen cases where the stepparent or new partner has been so obviously the problem that the courts immediately created a restraining order barring them from contact with the children. The problem with this is that the children may have already established a tie with this new partner and now feel like this person is being singled out. And thus, it would be much better to order everyone into

counseling and do a proactive approach or Plan B as Dr. Ross Greene calls it.

When we talk about counseling, it must be with someone who is trained in Alienation tactics or Parental Alienation. Even a counselor who deals with Anger and Grief Management as well as Impulse control will be helpful. On my website, www.PAS-Intervention.com, if you scroll down to Resources and Links and then click on Therapists,

it will give you a list of questions to ask so you can determine if the counselor you are choosing is appropriate.

In the vein of counseling, some of the best tools for counselors and therapists I know of, to help combat this problem, are listed below. There are many other resources, but these are the ones we have found to be the most useful with the highest level of success.