

Divorce rate



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Custody Battles Custody battles for children can be very complex and always difficult not only for the parents but also for the children. These battles seem to be divided into two categories, those where the child needs to be protected from a parent and those where the parents can not adjust to parenting in two separate locations.

Protection of the Child

This is the easier of the two situations from the child's perspective. The child wants and needs protection so there is some relief for the child even though these children also have the innate need for two parents. This innate need tends to show up more in adolescence. If the custody battle occurred when the child is young your research shows that by adolescence children begin to fantasize that their parents get back together, often in a fairytale way and they all live happily ever after. The earlier abuse is minimized or not thought about. By adolescence these children show the same symptoms of divorce as other children experience, difficulty making decisions, difficulty in relationships, more susceptible to depression and higher degree of acting out including the use of alcohol and drugs (Johnson, 2004)

Parenting in Two Locations

From the parents perspective custody battles ensue for many reasons but most involve the inability to problem solve how to fulfill the child's parenting needs from two locations. Every child, male or female, need two parents but to provide that parents must work together. One theory says one of the reasons parents can not work together is because they are taking out their anger toward the spouse in the custody battle. Another theory is that one parent feels they can not trust the other. This often occurs when one parent has been unfaithful in the marriage or has been neglectful in the marriage

(Booth 2001).

In any case a custody battle generally involved a failed attempt at mediation. It then moves into the legal realm which is likely to involve a custody evaluation of both parents either by a social worker, a guardian adlitem or a psychologist of all three. When everyone's reports are finished, which can take months and involves multiple interviews with the children, family members and the parents and financial information is usually also included, the case is brought before a judge. The judge then hears from all the professionals involved, both parents and the children if they are old enough. The average contested hearing is from two to three days. At the present time, joint custody or 50/50 custody is the most common ruling(Amato & Sobolewski, 2001 & 2005).

All of this has an effect on the child, as this is stressful because of their feelings they must choose a parent. That is a grown up decision that is not appropriate for a child. They are also often pulled by whatever parent they are with to try and please that parent. This kind of conflict does not make the child feel loved or wanted but rather like they were an object the parents are using to hurt each other. Studies suggest that exposure to chronic, overt, unresolved conflict between parents, even in the absence of divorce, increases the risk of comparable long-term problems for children (Amato 2006).

Of course, many children who experience divorce or grow up with discordant parents do not develop serious problems in adulthood. However, these findings have been repeated so frequently coming up with the same conclusions that the findings are considered conclusive.

References

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