

Questions Christina has been asked about the Baldwin/Basinger Case

The media frenzy regarding the Alec Baldwin/Kim Basinger battle is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the enormous burden thousands of children have to face in America today: **Parent Alienation.**

How could this situation have been handled differently? How can he win back his child's love?

Parent Alienation and Divorce & Children expert Christina McGhee offers the following suggestions for the Baldwin/Basinger couple and the numerous parents dealing with divorce and facing possible Parent Alienation and Hostile Aggressive Parenting issues.

THE FIRST QUESTION every parent needs to ask themselves....

DO I LOVE MY CHILD MORE THAN I HATE MY EX?

Parents who go through the process of separation and divorce often experience strong emotions in the beginning stages of the process. For some however, the conflict becomes the new relationship. Instead of passionately loving each other, parents place their energy into passionately hating each other. Consciously or unconsciously, high conflict couples make the decision to honor their anger and hurt and in the process easily lose sight of the damage they are doing to their children. High and sustained levels of conflict between Mom and Dad are seriously damaging to children.

How could the situation be avoided by Baldwin?

When parent alienation or Hostile Aggressive Parenting is present, the targeted parents must learn not to take their child's actions PERSONALLY. In these types of situations extreme pressure is placed on the child to align with the alienating parent. The primary mode of operation for alienating parents is you are either for me or against me. Children learn early on that if they do not side with the alienator they risk rejection. Having seen how the alienator has dealt with the target parent is a clear and ever present reminder of this.

While it may seem like a small consolation usually children are more secure in their relationship with the target parent who is also often the non-custodial parent. The alienator puts the child in a position where they are forced to choose.

Tips for dealing with alienation/ what could Alec Baldwin could have done differently:

- Most importantly, get education and professional support. Alienation is extremely challenging to deal with and the journey to repair your relationship with your child can be long and difficult. Make sure you are taking care of yourself through this process by handling your feelings about the situation in a healthy adult way.
- Be consistent with children. Despite their attempts to reject you; continue to follow through with what you say you will do. While it can be incredibly frustrating if you have arranged a scheduled time to talk with your child and they do not answer or respond, continue to call until other arrangements are made
- Do not put your child in the middle of adult issues. If you are angry about something the other parent has done address that issue with the other parent or the court
- Try to understand your child's position. It is incredibly stressful and difficult when children are placed in a situation where they must align with one parent over the other. Imagine the stress you are experiencing as an adult in dealing with this issue. Imagine how your child feels having to live with this stress day after day.
- Avoid taking the rejection personally . While it is incredibly painful to be rejected by your child, it is important to understand it is not a situation your child can control or successfully manage without support.

- Offer children an alternate perception of reality whenever possible. It is okay to say I do not agree with how the other parent is handling this situation however, be careful not to blame, judge or criticize the other parent as it may push your child further away
- Give clear messages to your children such as:
Children should not have to pick and choose one parent over the other,
This is an issue between Mom and Dad,
Your feelings do not have to be the same as Mom or Dad's,
Kids should always be able to love both parents.

Things to avoid:

1) Do not take a passive stance. Some parent's make the mistake of believing that if they give their children some time eventually they will realize the truth and they will know they have been lied to and come back to them. Maintaining consistent contact with children is especially important. With parent alienation, children NEED AN ALTERNATE PERCEPTION OF REALITY. If parents do not maintain contact, children are left with no defense against the alienator's perspective.

2) Do not Fight Fire with Fire: Because this is such a difficult and frustrating situation some parents may feel that if they tell children the 'truth', try to set the record straight and aggressively fight the situation, children will see they are obviously the victimized parent. In most cases, it will not happen. When parents engage in this type of behavior they are also engaging in alienating behavior, asking the child to choose one parent as right and one as wrong.

Things to Do:

1. Minimize conflicts at all costs.
2. If you feel there is a battle you have to fight, don't wage it through your child.
3. When Parent Alienation is occurring, you almost always have to utilize the legal system to protect the child's relationship with the target parent.

Is the situation between Baldwin and Basinger a true case of parent alienation?

Just because a parent is not getting time with a child, does not mean that parent alienation is occurring. Sometimes parents may alienate themselves from a child by engaging in destructive, harmful or hurtful behaviors. When a parent has behaved badly and does not take responsibility for that behavior, children may distance themselves from that parent. If a child does not want to spend time with a parent, it is important for that parent to reflect on what might be contributing to the problem. However, in high conflict cases, parents often jump to the conclusion that the other parent is responsible for the problem. Usually both parents have some responsibility in contributing to the conflict and in some cases like this one; where both parents are behaving badly it may be difficult to determine what the actual cause is.

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