

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

Having continued on this subject, attention turns now to *Father and Child Reunion*. Before continuing, a personal note of appreciation to the many fathers who continue to the parent their children; and to the many mothers who recognize the contribution that fathers have made – or can make – in the lives of their children. As the old and proven phrase applies, “it takes two”...

In another of the series for the Web page, “TAKEN INTO CUSTODY” and inputs for “Once and Always Father”, this book has much to offer...and I hope to capture some of its worth in this summary below.

The book begins on the basic question of “why is dad crucial (to his family)?” History is should bear-out the importance of fathers to their families – and to the community at large; and in the present crisis of our society, should offer the consequences of a generation or more amiss of the majority of fathers. **A crisis like no other, the fatherless are not just doomed to the loss of a parent but the devaluing of fathers as a key, essential member of the family.**

As a rule, fathers lose there role as a result of divorce: as a precedent, mothers are awarded the exclusive role of parent while fathers are reduced to something called a non-custodial...which is not a parent but, instead, a ward of the state regulated to visitation and other obligations of the divorce decree, the judgment. Not to prematurely address the costs of divorce but, in terms of the role of a father in the lives of children, this legal event is on the forefront of causes for the demise of dads across our land...

In this first chapter, Farrell addresses some of the myths – or less reported facts – of the father, his value and benefit to this family. For instance:

- A study by the *Journal of Social Issues*, reports that boys who live with their fathers (after divorce) have a higher degree of self-esteem, are more mature, and more independent than boys who live with their mothers.
- Even when the mother and father make the same or similar income, the children that live with their father (full-time) did better* than those who lived with their mother.
- Children in a shared-parent time arrangement** were found to have higher self-esteem (especially girls), be more happy, and less impatient than children who have limited or no contact with their fathers or other parent.

* “did better” refers to behavioral problems and associated academic problems

** “shared-parent” is joint custody (following divorce) where the children and parents live in the same community, and custody is shared equally between parents – rather than disproportional parenting...

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

Shared parenting is a fair a divorce offers; in the best interest of the children, divorce is wrong – as it inevitably and falsely causes guilt (wrongdoing) in the children – as well as shame in the presence of peers. **Sadly, divorce seldom considers the best interest of the children; and in the matter of No-fault divorce, disregards the children altogether.**

Farrell reminds us that the courts require cash to create any semblance of justice of fairness:

Economically, a dad who doesn't have the money to hire a lawyer each time such a decision (of custody or other issue of divorce...post-divorce) might be made should be especially aware of how vulnerable he might be should his children not live with him.

It's true; that fathers who do not have custody rights of their children are vulnerable; my argument is that they have no rights as parents but, as a consequence of divorce, have been stripped of authority and activity – essential to any parent whether married or single.

In drawing some noted differences between fathers and mothers, the author describes the "Single Parent Syndrome".

Being needy of their children – both as a friend and someone who makes them feel needed; they (the parent) fear their child rejecting them. The possibility of conflict with her child makes a single mother fear she is a failure as a spouse, so 'maybe no one' can get along with me and the divorce is my fault. Fearing additional rejection, she is unwilling to enforce consequences for disobedience. However, the degree to which she fears her child's rejection is the degree to which her children sense her fears, test her boundaries, and drive her to exhaustion.

In short, she becomes ultra-compliant and consensual to their behavior in a fear-driven effort to avert rejection or their disappointment. **When more than one child is involved, this degree of passivity is divisive as one child "may get away with murder" while the others suffer from lack of order and discipline.** The mother wants to be a friend – but what the children need is a parent who can guide and instruct – as practices of a loving parent.

On the issue of Child Support, Farrell reports that when fathers have custody rights with their children 79% make full and on time payments; "when seeing their children is undermined or denied, only 56% paid child support."

The nature of a man is such that when his family is taken from him, he is inclined to leave his family. **The intervention and regulation of his role by other authorities is detrimental to his role as dad and, in response, he disregards his role...**

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

Farrell attempts to draw an analogy to the enforcement of Child Support...and denial of parental rights:

The U.S. has one other experience trying to get people to work by force, without the fruits of their labor adding to their ability to give and receive their families' love. **It was called slavery.**

A man (and father's) instinct is to protect, provide and take responsibility...with the reward being to receive and give love. **"The male instinct seems to be triggered when needed by someone who loves him,** and when trusted by someone who loves him." To reduce his to the role as strictly a debtor – rather than a dad – is an affront to his nature to protect and provide...

A prevailing myth is the "dead-beat dad". Farrell writes that:

When you consider that 42% of mothers present barriers and 54% of fathers see their children weekly, despite the fact that three-quarters of custodial mothers move at least once within the first four years of divorce, we get a different image than that of the "dead-beat dad" portrayed by the media and based on surveys of women only.

As one noted writer puts it, "dead-beat dads" are often not dead-beat...**but have been beaten-up by the violation of their parental and Constitutional rights.** When a father is removed from his family for no reason other than the expressed or implied whim of the mother, than justice has not been served...and the wants of one is being accommodated or adjudicated over rights and needs of the others. Though the social sciences have long determined the consequences and costs (of divorce) to children, the impression is that the legal community does not care by and large...

If the legal community is not powerful enough (in the destruction of families), studies (Judith Wallerstein and Joan Berlin Kelly) show that approximately 50% of mothers either saw no value in the father's contact with his children and actively tried to sabotage it...or resented the father's contact.

Farrell writes that:

The real issue is the self-fulfilling prophesy that father and children experienced that emanated from this behavior. First, **the children felt "in jeopardy between two warring giants" and reacted with anxiety and fear;** and then their mothers used that anxiety and fear 'as proof that the visits were detrimental to the child's welfare and should, therefore, be discontinued.

"Badmouthing" is another *tool of the trade*; where a parent will purposely program the children into hating their father through their commentary – even instruction. Using a blend of deceptive dialogue and, if necessary, threats of one form or another, a parent instills hatred for the other parent...

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

This tendency to “badmouth” is largely limited to the mother; as studies indicate that children report more than half the time of this behavior in their mothers but only a bout 12 percent of the time in their fathers.

In the remembrance of a friend of Farrell’s is the following personal account of his “badmouthing” experience – though in another family...not his own.

Only as an adult have I thought how his dad (the other family) must have felt paying alimony (or child support) to support his own son’s hatred of him, and therefore, **his son’s hatred of himself**. My friend’s mother seemed to assume that along with sole custody came a right to transform her son into a captive audience for her bitterness against his dad. I watched my friend’s anger toward men and himself grow and grow.

Farrell makes note of the ironic outcome that: “Mothers who bad-mouthed fathers eventually produced children who resented their mother more than their father. One additional testimony (of a daughter): “The worst thing about the divorce was that I saw my mother for the person she really is.”

One final note on the potential damage of this behavior is that children tend to “internalize the inferiority” displayed through destructive dialogue of one parent. Because the parent is indeed their parent, the children maintain a connection – even through years of relentless programming. The criticism toward the father and the fear infused in the life of the child takes its toll.

What’s more is the dilemma of an absent dad. Farrell writes:

Sending a father-deprived child into the world and assuming everything is okay is like sending a drunken driver onto the highway and assuming everything is okay because the gas is paid for. It doesn’t mean that the drunken driver want get to his destination. It just means that the risks are enormous. And the consequences of failure are forever.

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

The question of why dads are absent is varied; but what is true in divorce is that money is important if a father is forced to contest any limitation or obstruction to child visitation rights. Perhaps redundant in this summary, but the condition of money is foremost in the fight for parental rights – as Farrell writes:

A dad who is economically poor has virtually no chance of being an equally involved dad without his ex-wife's permission. So he loses without a contest.

Money is no guarantee however; again Farrell comments:

A father with some money soon learns investing in a court case against an unwilling mom is like buying a lottery ticket for \$100,000 and seriously hoping to win. So he too loses without a contest.

And what develops in this no-win war?

Sometimes a dad's sense of powerlessness makes him withdraw. We call him a deadbeat. It's usually more accurate to call him deadened.

The dad is often left with a Catch-22 – or a dilemma (regarding the loss or threat of loss of his parental rights):

If he cares enough about his children to fight for them legally, he cares enough not to want to put them through a legal battle...

A parent must be very careful in exposing their children to the conditions of a court activity. Depending on the age of the child (or young person), such involvement can create undue and long-term guilt - or a sense of wrongdoing. **A father's wisdom in not implicating his own children – regardless of personal gain – is in the best interest of the children...and is a reflection of love over self-serving ambition.**

Besides involving the children in some court campaign, another serious risk is likely – even if he regains his right to visitation; Farrell explains: “And even if he wins...a mother who is angry can wreak havoc on its reality.”

It should be expected that any cause – whether justified or not – can be conspired by one parent against another. Experience has shown that the testimony of the plaintiff (or “victim”...depending on the circumstances) is de facto...or in other words, is accepted without validation or counter-testimony. Thus one parent can accuse the other on pretense along – and the other parent has little recourse. A testimony does not require the truth – but only a conscience that is willing to lie if necessary. **Remember that the fury of one parent may drive them to not only “wreak havoc”, but to lie and use their children to do it!** Much depends on a person's conscience – as to what they will and will not do....

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

The kind of unhealthy relationship described above – where one parent undermines the rights of the parent – has many potential consequences for the children or young people. For son's, a consequential fear of women, sex and commitment can result; and for daughters, a underlying suspicion of men – while at the same time, the naturally desire to have and need a father. Each of these descriptions however only *scratches the surface*...

The energy or general wherewithal applied in parental wars is analogous to a real war:

- * Unintended consequences and **blowback** will actually drive the children away from the dominating, determined parent – as the details of this deception and detriment unfold over time and age...
- * **Monies are misappropriated** (spent poorly or wastefully) rather than for redeeming purposes as resources for the children and their needs...
- * The innocent suffer with the **combatants** – as children are drafted into the campaign as foot-soldiers to further the cause...
- * These innocent children become **collateral damage** – caught in the continuing struggle that robs them of the security and fragments them – even one from the other (child or young person)
- * These innocent children carry the **shock of war** well into their adult lives, relationships, marriages and families...
- * The children are at higher risk of a host of **post-war health problems** – consequences of parental irresponsibility
- * If even possible, the innocent end-up trying to **re-build or restore** what has been needlessly damaged and destroyed – if they have the strength and will to do so...

The **causalities** of this war extend to the innocent – the children – but also to many men; according to the sources, men are ten times more likely to commit suicide than women in post-divorce circumstances. Farrell writes:

When we demand a dad give child support...then take away his children and home, we kill his soul, his reason for earning, his reason for living. When we drive him into a dead-end, he becomes a deadbeat, dead broke, or just dead. As a dad's death is forced upon him, with him dies his family's soul.

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

In keeping with the *cause for the children* is the repeated risks imposed on those absent from one parent...through the advent of divorce. In this cause has (and continues to be) a *warning shot fired across the bow* of those parents **who perpetrate and perpetuate parental alienation using personal, punishable and punitive tactics – that go beyond badmouthing the other – to extend to legal discourse.**

When one parent is given ostensible authority, she will likely abuse it; the laws established to help the abused are actually abused by her. In the ironic chain of events, she is able to maintain a status of victim, while all along, leveraging the laws designed to protect the truly abused. Such behavior (and methods) is not only a shame (in regard to the children and those for whom the law applies), but it is a sham as well.

Farrell reminds the reader (s) once again:

Denial of parent time is one of the deepest forms of child abuse exactly because stepping into a child's life is like stepping into the proverbial river that is never again the same.

He points out that, after divorce, a father's biggest fear is losing his children. The mother's greatest fear is said to be poverty; but what she also fears is the possibility that the father will use his time (visitation) to align the children against her. In this later fear, she may take an offensive by launching a verbal attack against him...in an effort to prove her value as a parent. Everything that goes wrong (in the family setting) can now be conveniently blamed on the father, and any measure the mother takes in conflict with the father, can be justified through her offensive.

In one example of my own post-divorce, the mother accused me of abandonment – according to one of the children. I learned of this offensive action while picking the children up for our routine weekend visitation and, up to that date, had not missed a single weekend visitation. Several months later my ex-wife moved out-of-state making the distance between us over 400 miles; and after the move, I never received another visitation...

Farrell continues: "Depriving him is her way of "killing" him – of making him miss her contribution – and of reaffirming to herself her own value." Is it any wonder why fathers are ten times more likely to commit suicide than mothers of post-divorce? **In order to mitigate or quash her own insecurities, she must destroy (or attempt to destroy) the other parent...while abusing the children all along.** Unresolved anger discharges plain reason and rational thinking...in view of a passion to destroy one and deny others of genuine love

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

On the *war* that ensues in this *offensive*, Farrell writes;

Although the majority of mothers want father-child contact, it is currently almost impossible to stop a mother who doesn't. She can align the children against the dad, move out the area...make contact with their dad almost impossible, withhold information about the children, or claimed that she has been abused by him (i.e. "the abuse card")

To add to the author's comments (from personal experience...once again) – regarding a mother's *offensive* in the *war*.

- ☛ A mother ~~can~~ **has issued a series of restraining orders followed with an injunction.***
- ☛ A mother ~~can~~ **has submitted false testimony both verbally (slander) and in writing (liable) with impunity for perjury – or any responsive action by the court.****
- ☛ A mother ~~can~~ **has abducted or kidnapped their children by leaving the home and the state without disclosure as to the children location, living standards, or general lifestyle.*****

* The mother (victim) has impunity in regard to order or injunction; this means, that she can in effectively break or violate the terms...then use the same order to implicate and prosecute the father. Remember that ostensible, legal authority corrupts – or allows for the abuse of authority, the law.

** The mother has submitted false testimony extending from the hearing (pre-divorce) to the most recent court case (violation of injunction). For example, she has called her ex-husband at his work place using an unidentified phone number and, when he returned the call, established a violation of the injunction under the guise of an unsolicited call. I call this tactic the *bait and switch*.

*** Twice before the divorce, the mother abducted the children and left the resident state. Ironically, she claimed that the father essentially did the same thing when he took them out-of-town to a festival – claiming specifically that he did not disclose the location or overnight arrangements...

Each and all of the described *tactics* used in the *war against the father* have been used at least once; again, absolute authority allows for absolute corruption...

Regarding the abduction of my children (twice before the divorce), Farrell writes: Theoretically, they should be prosecuted under the Federal Kidnapping Act of 1980. However, this is rarely done when a mother kidnaps a child – but quickly done when the dad does.

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

Given the scenario of a *war* – or at least the enslavement of fathers through court policy – the prospect of a revolution is in order. As with the patriots of old – who refused taxation without representation – fathers alienated from their children have just reason to fight...in some form.

On this analogy (to the patriots), Farrell writes:

A divorced father who loses his children often feels “fired” from the family...

Men who are paying money to a person who fired them from their children feel like they are being asked to do their old job (breadwinner) without the old benefits (children). This might be fine for men who don't want contact with their children, but for the majority who do, it feels like...”taxation without representation.”

A man often feels he is the object of his ex-wife's contempt...that is, she can make him the only man in the world who is specifically prevented *by law* from spontaneously (or never) seeing his children...

He continues on the consequence of this so-called *offensive* aimed against him (and his children):

When a dad's child is dead to him, but still alive, he can never begin the process of mourning; he can never heal. We feel this unhealed hurt and bitterness when we meet dads who are denied their children.

And finally, Farrell concludes this chapter with:

The worst form anger can take is that of a parent who feels her chance for “winning my child” is enhanced by “ruining the ex”. The law has given the most vindictive parent an invitation to play the “abuse card”...

William Pitt, in a speech to the UK House of Lords in 1770, said: “Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it.” I have personally witnessed this condition played out in the tactics described as the *offensive* in her war to destroy my fatherhood.

In the most recent and vivid example of this *offensive* is the malicious and mal-directed use of my children to testify in a court case involving nothing more than my attempt to contact and care for my children. In her effort was the deliberate destruction of my son's graduation gift and – if that was cruel – then allowing him to accept it under the premise that I destroyed it – then sent it to him. This series of steps exemplify the result of a consuming fear...to the degree that love cannot survive. **This fear (or hers) is that the children will discover what she has done...and is doing to their lives.** When (or as) they discover this deception played out in her war, *unintended consequences* will follow...

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

In the closing chapters of this book is a continuation of the subject conveniently called “the abuse card”; and very simply, this phrase refers to the misuse of legal policy designed to help and assist people who have or could be abused.

An analogy to this type of fraud is the man who dressed-up like a woman so that he could be boarded onto a lifeboat aboard the sinking Titanic: the Captain’s orders placed priority on the women and children in the problem of insufficient lifeboats to save the passengers and crew; reportedly, some men (or a man) dressed-up like a woman...

In this analogy is the basic instinct to survive at all costs – even to women and children; **and in the misuse of legal policy is the basic instinct to destroy at all costs – even to a father and his children.** Unlike the man who seemingly had “no-relation” to any of the other passengers, this misuse of legal policy ~~can~~ has involved immediate family – and is therefore subject to further criticism and cost...

The misuse of legal policy is only *half the picture*; but in the total scheme of the *war’s strategy* has been the deception of the children and, if not convincing, threats in the form of legal action against their father. This later or second side of the strategy ~~can~~ has infused fear in children: first, the deception that they will be abducted or assaulted by their father (after eight years of alienation); and the second, the threats that they will cause their father to be jailed in his attempts (or their attempts) to have contact...or a relationship.

One consequence of this second strategy ~~can~~ has been subtle anger in the children – who are caught between the deception and threats (and fears) of the one parent and the natural desire to have a relationship, as possible, with the other parent...and his family. The persistent and purposeful strategy to destroy the relationship with the “other parent and family” condemns the children as well – who maintain some intrinsic connection of paternity and memory. **In the degradation of their dad, they too are being degraded...**

Studies of children (of divorce) bear-out that such parental behavior can cause longstanding anger and resentment – ironically directed at the domineering and deceptive parent...rather than the “other parent”. **Few if any can appreciate being lied to and threatened...and any healthy relationship will not stand for it!**

Most recently, this *strategy* has been ratcheted-up through the testimony of two of children. If deception and threats was not bad enough, the implication and exposure of the children to the court system is beneath contempt.

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

I have mentioned, in the context of this war analogy, the term “unintended consequences”; which, by the name, indicates some deviation – even contradiction – to the planned or intended outcome of the war, battle or engagement...

When children are used as pawns to further the strategy of one parent...against the other, they (the children) suffer the *unintended consequences* or *blowback* of abuse. In the course of a parent’s use of her children to allege abuse of the father, she is abusing the children.

Farrell lists twelve (12) unintended consequences or outcomes of “the abuse card”...played-out in the lives of the children; below, I have chosen nine (9)... along with effected areas of development.

Distrust	The child’s image of his or her “other parent” is transformed.
Lost Innocence	There is a loss of innocence...
Perverted Perception	A filter or suspicion is created...toward all men – often for years.
Dilemma in roles and caustic shame	The child feels caught between authorities and parents – unable to please either...or both
Dim and devalued view of Marriage & Family	The child views marriage in the brokenness and enmity of their parents.
Insecure and dependent Relationships	The child is <i>played-off</i> by one parent against the other...
De-valuing or loss of self...esteem	The child feels personally responsible for driving the family apart...and lives with the image of not being good enough to be loved, or to love...
Carelessness and parental irresponsibility	Monies expended for legal fees – that could have been responsibly used for the children, family or similar causes...
Loss of intimacy	The child feels powerless to prevent his/her stability from being undermined.

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

The unintended consequences have broader implications; as “the abuse card” ~~can~~ has created a phobia in the general public. Marriage per capita is continuing to decrease – as is the birth rate among the larger segments of the population. Men are not the only targets for this strategy – as teachers and other child-involved occupations are at risk. Children are not always the victims – as described in the nine (9) unintended consequences – but have used legal policy to wield power in the classroom...and the home!

Children who have been subjected to the courts (to testify against a parent) may discover that they have been empowered and, ironically, leverage that power against the parent (s); and the parent may end-up losing authority because of what they’ve taught their children or children. This possibility, coupled with the parent’s ratcheted-down authority or enforcement – as another tactic to maintain the affection of the child (solidify their value as a parent) – creates a very unhealthy parent-child relationship. **On both ends of this relationship is a degradation of love and respect wrought by the uncanny combination of power and weakness entangled in the *unintended consequences* of “the abuse card”.**

The author continues on the subject (of “the abuse card”) and offers some possible *countermeasures* in the matter of legal policy:

1. Court system should actually follow the criminal status of “innocent until proven guilty”
2. Check whether the accuser has cause or reason to file such allegations; in other words, could “the abuse card” be at play?
3. If false testimony, claims, allegations is found to be false or unsubstantiated, then exact the same punishment on the accuser as intended on the accused. (see “hostile witness”, Deuteronomy 19)
4. If a parent is found guilty, then have the parent and child work through a therapist – in order to assist the child of working through the ordeal in a healthy process.

Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell

The political consequences of “ignoring fathers” much be re-assessed in view of the valuable contribution father’s make to families...and to society. As recent as a few weeks ago, the federal government issued more funding for women’s programs – and while such assistance is honorable – it represents a sampling of the disproportionate treatment of programs (and concern) for the sexes.

Numerous programs or organizations have been developed to represent the parental roles of fathers – and the value of conventional families; but the need remains in financing these efforts. As long as the federal government continues to aid one while ignoring the other, the organizations will be relatively ineffective in their efforts.

Farrell writes:

The problem is that the funding has been motivated by anger felt toward men who have rejected women and disappointed women, but the image impacts woman’s sons, and the father of her sons – affecting the way the son feels about the 50% of his genes that are his dad’s.

When a woman berates her ex-husband or, otherwise, denigrates him in front of his children, guilt and shame is felt by the children: guilt because the children have mixed feelings toward the parent and shame because they are related to the man. **Though she may not realize it at the time, the woman is indirectly attacking her own children.**

Farrell generally describes a study of divorced men’s fear to remarrying concluded that men feel as though the courts are stacked against them...and the women’s interests rule the divorce courts.