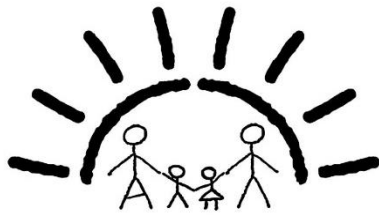


## Family Renewal Resources Project (FRRP)

*For separating and changed families*



**FAMILY RENEWAL RESOURCES PROJECT**  
parenting forever, through whatever

### **Special Parenting Topics**

In our work with separating families, several relatively unique parenting topics have been part of our work and as such an educational exercise for us.

The FRRP does not admit to expertise, but suggest that parents find further resources to support their understanding and their children.

### **Transgender Children**

A separated father with a previously acceptable parenting relationship with the child's mother approached us with a concern that the mother believed that their child was transgender. She was preparing to support a changeover medically and socially in the child's school.

The father didn't agree, on the basis that he was unconvinced of the so called signs and his sense that the child's age was too young to initiate certain steps. I did not sense any inherent bias on his part.

This was a new situation- in some ways I was a blank slate. I focused not on the actual decision, but on how they as 'separated parents' worked out the decision. One parent saw a high level of urgency; the other parent definitely wanted to slow down the process. One parent decided they should be the decision-maker; the other parent wanted to be part of the decision and part of the process to determine the next step, if necessary.

*In many ways, this very significant parenting decision in a separated family is actually a very common problem - power/control vs. sense of exclusion from being a full parent- at stake the long-term welfare of their child.*

They needed a sit down with support, just like every other separating family. Separating parents may disagree with a decision; *however, being part of the process and valued for your input is a must for effective long-term parenting and for positive outcomes for their child.*

Along the path to their decision, each parent will hopefully be on a learning curve that brings them closer to their child.

See resources!

### **Gay Marriage**

Our work over the years has brought up several different issues. I mention them in order that you search out further resources to support an understanding of what your family is going through.

A marriage with children ends after one parent determines that they are gay or lesbian.

Our experience from our work is that a lesbian mother coming out leading to a separation is more likely to have a continuing, positive, parenting relationship with their children. The mother-child relationship is less likely to be at risk in the long-term.

On the fathering side, our experience is somewhat the opposite. The father's relationship with his children is *likely less involved*. It is unclear though whether that is simply the difference that exists already in any male/female parenting relationship that breaks down.

My observation is that there is a *resulting negative sense of failure for a father coming out* after many years that may lead to more of a parenting sanction from a hurt mother. I also suspect that the parenting gap for a father may be self-inflicted/self imposed in his belief that his 'coming out' ended the intact family (even though he did nothing wrong).

A noteworthy issue deals with lesbian, intimate relationships. There is some evidence from research that such relationships have a higher incidence of intimate partner violence. One of the concerns is that the 'normal' women's support services are less involved in recognizing this issue and as such women in such relationships are less likely to come forward.

It appears on the surface to work against the narrative of only male partners are abusive.

I believe professional support dedicated to support the family holistically makes sense.

### **Paternity Testing**

On occasion a dad has come forward questioning whether he is in fact the biological dad. They are unsure as to what action to take. They are usually happy with the idea of being the parent to be. However, often they are being excluded from being a participant in the pre-birth steps, delivery room, naming and any plan to be a parent in the weeks/months after the birth.

This is often between expectant young mothers and fathers.

There is limited support in social services to support a young father's involvement. In addition, there are few effective long-term programs that have proven successful at long-term father involvement for a young dad.

An interesting success for a KND parent in this area occurred when **grandparents on both sides** (relatively young) took control with their youthful, parenting children and worked out shared parenting arrangement for the two homes.

It is the best arrangement that I have seen.

Of course, many grandparents do play a singularly important role; but this was carefully planned out to include both sides of the family. In most other situations, the paternal side eventually loses their involved role.

It is possible to include in legal documents a planned parenting arrangement that includes grandparents.

**Comment:** Each situation above has many complications that play out as family relationships change over the years. Caring relationships must be nurtured during times of crisis. To make that a possibility, each individual must focus on actions that build lasting relationships over time. *We need to avoid absolutism.*

The lesson learned in my life as a separated parent with ever changing relationships is that what was considered 'unacceptable' at one time is acceptable today; e.g. A separated dad could not have their child for overnights until the child was 3 or 4 years of age. Who made such a rule?

One must be prepared to challenge those who attempt to impose outdated beliefs!

**Please do your own research!**

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