

A Framework to 'Unlearn Negative Behaviour Against Their Mothers' by children following access visits with abusive fathers- A South Asian Perspective.

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Introduction:

The purpose of this article is to discuss the need for developing a framework to 'Unlearn Negative Behaviour Against Their Mothers' by children following access visits with their abusive father.

Discussion:

The women attending support groups have indicated that their children have 'acted out' and behaved badly following access visit from their fathers. The strategy of some fathers is to systematically use 1) character assassination, 2) encouragement of non-disciplined behaviour and 3) lavish spending on children to purchase toys, games, and fast foods in order to turn the children against their mothers, 4) grand parents and other relatives 'spoiling' the child.

1. Character assassination of the mother

The father talks bad about the mother. Teaches his children to call names to the mother and informs that basically she is bad. Many times, the child is told that his/her mother is a 'slut', poor and no good. That is why she is living in poor homes (basement apartment, subsidized housing etc.). In addition, the in-laws and the extended family members often repeat this tactic.

2. Encouraging non-disciplined behavior

The child is encouraged to watch unlimited television, movies and interactive video games. Child's every wish is fulfilled - right or wrong.

3. Lavish spending on children to purchase toys, games, and fast foods

Fast food and spending money on brand name toys, video games and other items is encouraged. The father usually spends no time or very little

time in helping them with homework or other life skills. The money is deliberately spent on items, which 'spoil' or 'distract' the child. Often, children are shown \$100 dollar bills to impress upon them that father has lot of money. The indirect message is that the children should walk away from their mother and live with the father.

4. Grand parents and other relatives 'spoiling' the child(ren)

It has been observed that grand parents or other relatives are often involved in inciting the child against his/her mother. The rationale seems to be that the child should be turned against the mother so that the father can have 'sole' custody of the child.

Observations

These strategies are designed to take children away from their mothers. Attempts are made by the abusive fathers to subtly encourage 'rebellious' behaviour in their children's minds - this is done to create an intolerable situation for the mothers. This confusion, rebelliousness by children, lack of financial support, inadequate support from the social and other circles leads her (mother) to believe that she will be unable to take care of her children. The mothers feel frustrated at the system, which allows the fathers the right to visitation without going through some sort of 'parenting and educational courses'.

What is suggested?

The mothers can do the following:

1. The moment child comes back, sit down with him/her and talk about the visit.
2. Ask your child - what was good, what was bad and what he/she liked and didn't like about the visit. It is good to talk to your child and share his/her feelings about the visit.
3. The behaviours which generate negative feelings in the child needs to be talked about in great detail.
4. Explain to the child about the things that made him/her uncomfortable.
5. Undo the negative thoughts and responses of your child by creating a positive environment of discussion and clarification.
6. Important - don't criticize the father's negative behaviour. Stay calm and in control of the situation. The child needs to distinguish between what is right and wrong. If you criticize the father the child does not know who is right and who is wrong.

7. Share household responsibilities according to the child's age. For example, ask your 7+ year's child to count money for groceries. This will build his/her self-esteem and trust with the mother.
8. Introduce mothers to the helping resources e.g. 'Caring and Sharing'¹ program, salvation army etc. based on the families needs.
9. Play with your child. Play UNO cards. Play games that your child (ren) likes.
10. Spend quality time with your child. Read him/her a bedtime story.
11. Make the Mealtime and Bedtime the most important and precious time for your child (ern).
12. Show interest in celebrating your child's friend's birthday. Take them along to purchase the birthday cards and wrap the gift with your child.
13. Celebrate your child (ern)'s birthday with their friends or as they wish.
14. Plan small activities for March break, summer break and other holidays with your children. For example eating supper in the nearby park and let them play around in the summer break gives them pleasure.
15. Enroll them in the Girl Guides and Scouts Canada activities in the nearby centre. That's where your child will keep himself/herself occupied with quality environment and meet responsible friends. It is necessary to enroll your child in extra-curricular activities. These types of quality involvement keep your child's mind off the negative behaviour of their father. Children appreciate when you drop them off and pick them up from the activities.
16. Welcome your child (ren)'s friends. Encourage his/her friends to come over to your place and also let your child visit his/her friend's place. Make sure you know the parents of your child's friends.

C: my documents \ pchc \ deprogram guidelines

¹ Caring and Sharing program is designed to assist clients with basic necessities such as food and clothes.