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Chasing After Child Support

By Barbara Rose

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Child support is often a source of contention between divorced parents of minor children. I understand this. I have been there. In an ideal situation, the parent who is responsible for paying child support does so out of love for his or her children.

Unfortunately, many of our post-marital relationships are not ideal. Many parents do not pay child support. Some because they genuinely cannot afford to do so. Others parents simply are not willing to. In the latter case, they resent giving money to their former spouse. Bitterness results. Fighting ensues, and the child support enforcement battles begin.

Every parent knows that the financial resources needed to provide children with all they require and ask for is tremendous. Most single parents cannot afford to give their children all they wish they could. I was no different. When I did not receive the child support that was agreed upon during my divorce, my reaction was quite common. It turned out to be futile, and tragic, at the same time.

I borrowed money from my grandmother, hired an attorney, and went after child support with a vengeance. I had income deduction orders in effect. My former husband was sent to jail twice for failure to obey repeated court orders to pay child support. I was consumed with anger, and I justified my anger by focusing on, and trying to enforce, his responsibilities. However, I could not control his actions. I could not make him fulfill his responsibilities. At the same time, I wasted thousands of borrowed dollars on legal fees that got me nowhere. This issue became a raging source of anguish and hostility between us. What I am about to say may shock you, and yet, I speak from bitter experience. If the parent refuses to do what is required of them, all you can do is focus on fulfilling that need for yourself and your children, on your own.

When a parent refuses to take responsibility for their children, you cannot change them. Yes, it is wrong. Yes, it is not fair. Yes, it is for the children. However, when a parent chooses to do what is right, fair and just for his or her own child, that is solely their choice. No matter how hard you try, you cannot force another person to fulfill their obligations. For when you do, retaliation results in the form of revenge.

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In my own case, when I could no longer turn to my grandmother for financial help, and still continued to try to enforce child support payment, the result was that I was sued for custody. The motive was revenge.

I did not have money to hire an attorney to represent me throughout the custody litigation process. As a result, I was railroaded. I unjustly lost primary custody of my children. When this happened, I felt like I lost my soul.

My advise to you as a single parent is to do all you can to maintain open, cordial, civil communication with your former spouse. Be grateful for whatever they contribute. Do not seek to get more, for you risk losing everything.

When you are dependent upon another person for the survival of both yourself and your children, you remain a victim. A victim of dependency. A victim of revolving your time and energy around the other person, when you could use that time to better yourself, and your own finances, for your children.

Is this fair? Taking personal responsibility to fulfill your parental obligations is empowering. It leaves you with a feeling of satisfaction, and pride in watching yourself rise, despite all obstacles. Is it fair that the other parent "get away" with it all? They cannot get away with their own conscience. If they are not giving to their children, they will find their children are not willing to give to them in return when they are grown.

What you sew you shall reap. Give to your children. Do the best you can. Let the other parent "get away" with whatever they choose. In the end, they will find they have lost out on sharing their lives with their children, while you will have your children through your old age.

Hindsight is 20/20 vision. I wasted time, money and energy chasing after child support. As a result, I have bi-weekly visitation rights with the children I gave birth to. Is this fair? No. It is a travesty. I hope to spare you this same injustice and agony. Take whatever your former spouse is willing to give, say thank you, and leave the rest alone.

In her nationally praised seminars and workshops, Author, public speaker and columnist Barbara Rose shares the secrets of turning tragedy into triumph. Her books; *Individual Power: Reclaiming Your Core, Your Truth, and Your Life*; and *If God Was Like Man* (Publication Date April, 2003) share profound, inspiring insight. Please visit her website <http://www.borntoinspire.com>

3 Key Ways to Keep Child Support Funds Flowing

By Detra D. Davis

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If you are one of the millions of parents who receive sporadic child support payments, here are three strategies you can use to improve the untimely receipt of child support payments.

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Caution: These strategies will not work for everyone, but remember nothing from nothing leaves nothing.

1. If you are to receive child support payments, insist the paying parent buy a life insurance policy covering the term of the payments, naming you as the owner and beneficiary. Your "ex" will be unable to change the beneficiary without your agreement. Try to have this court ordered at the time the child support order is established.

2. Take action if delinquent parents are consistently late or refuse to pay child support altogether. You may need an attorney or intervention from your local child support enforcement agency.

A measure you may want to take before seeking legal assistance is offering to renegotiate the amount of the child support order. This may sound unfair, even unheard of, but understand that if the amount set by the court does not realistically allow the paying parent to maintain a decent standard of living, the parent is more apt to stop working or leave the state. The question you must ask: Is it better to receive a slightly less amount consistently or a larger amount inconsistently or not at all. You and the paying parent are the only ones who will know if this option would work.

3. Allow the paying parent to use a variety of methods to pay child support. Child support for some parents is more than money. It may be food, clothing, recreational activities, daycare. If the paying parent is willing to provide pre-paid credit cards, gift cards from movie theaters, clothing stores, grocery stores, gas stations etc. all of these items provided, in addition to the court-ordered child support may assist in reducing arrears or assisting when the child support payments have been reduced.

Both parents should understand that together it is their responsibility to care for the well-being of their child, and both are responsible for keeping a record of all contributions made above and beyond the court-ordered child support payments. Court ordered child support payments are only necessary when one or both parents refuse to take responsibility for the financial welfare of their child. So...do the right thing.

Detra D. Davis is a Consultant, and technical writer with over 20 years of experience. She writes technical and operational manuals, and works as Parent Educator teaching workshops on the importance of establishing paternity and paying child support. Detra may be reached at 313-446-0896, at www.supportingourchildren.com or by mail at J. Davis & Associates Publishing, P. O. Box 44782, Detroit, MI 48244-0782, Attention: Detra D. Davis.

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