

Beware of Super Dad

Setting the stage for your pretrial family life; you have been the primary caretaker of your children during your marriage. In other words, you have been the parent responsible for most of the child rearing responsibilities by providing for your children's needs and desires on a daily basis. You are the nurse who caters to your ill children in the middle of the night and the middle of the day, all the while missing work; you are the chauffeur, shuffling your children from soccer practice, the cheerleading squad and play rehearsal to doctor's and dental appointments, and emergency room visits. You found time to volunteer at the children's school, attend each PTA meeting, parent- teacher conference and read a bed time story to your children each night. Every scratch and skinned knee received loving treatment from you, as you are and were the parent your child runs to first when hurt and scared. Your husband, although not a bad father, left the child rearing up to you, and would help out occasionally with homework, school projects and give you an occasional hour, here or there, of alone time.

Now, though, times have gotten tough and the marital relationship is strained if not severed and your once unavailable husband and father of your children is now super active with your children and interested in every minute detail of your children's day. He is now attending doctor and dental appointments and PTA meetings, and sometimes scheduling appointments without informing you. He begins to slowly push you out of their day-to-day activities and rearrange his work schedule to accommodate your children's school and extra curricular activities, which ordinarily was your responsibility. Once unable to attend family vacations, he now goes away with the kids on long weekends and regular in-law visits. Your first reaction is "Wonderful! Finally he realizes how much I do and how important it is to be involved in the children's lives." You may be reveling in the fact that you now have hours of alone time, which you secretly cherish. Beware! If your marriage is on the outs and he is pushing you out of his life and that of the lives of your children by assuming more and more responsibility for your children, he is setting you up. He is setting the stage for the "take over" and has most likely been advised by an attorney regarding child support and what steps to take to gain primary custody of the children.

More and more uninvolved fathers are becoming Super Dads to gain the upper hand in contested custody cases. It is true that we all want fathers who are involved and who successfully "co-parent." It is the previously uninvolved fathers, with scores to settle, who try to gain control in the custody arena as a form of control and revenge over and against their wives. By gaining custody of the children, these men are ripping the most precious assets out the heart and lives of the mothers and destroying the safety net and stability of the children.

Neither parent should ever deprive the other of reasonable parenting time with the children except in circumstances of abuse where you have been advised by an attorney. But if you find that you are slowly being carved out of your children's lives and your marriage is on the rocks- you should immediately seek the advise and counsel of a custody attorney who will be familiar with this pattern and who will know how to help you protect your parenting time with your children during and after your divorce.

