

My GAL testimony

A divorce is such a hard thing to go through, especially if you are the kids, caught in the middle of the crossfire. You feel like you can't really talk to either parent, because they are constantly spewing venom about the other. I felt like I couldn't talk to my sisters either, because still to this day, they will not tell me their side of the story of what happened. Please take in mind that I was 2 states away when this whole mess started. I felt so helpless, being so far away. Me and my sisters went to counseling. One of the reasons was because we were all depressed, and it gave us someone neutral to talk to, and also to help fix our relationship with our dad. We all trusted our counselors, and they never betrayed that trust. Now unfortunately, our counselors didn't have that much say in the matter with the trial concerning the divorce. The person who the court decided to put our lives in the hands of was a GAL, suggested by our dad, no less. From the beginning, it has seemed like the court and the GAL has leaned more in the favor of our dad, and of course, the GAL and my dad knew each other from before, so our GAL seemed to become our dad's own personal "counselor" so to speak. As far as I knew, GALs are supposed to be there for the kids, to be their voice, and help them...or am I wrong? Is that why my sisters and me never received any of that? Or is it just because we were the unlucky ones to receive a GAL who instead of being there for us, is biased?

Now, throughout our lives, our dad had plenty of time to be with us, but he chose not to. Me and my sisters at least agree that we feel like we cannot talk to our "representative", because no matter what we say, it won't matter. Our GAL actually told us a story about her similar experiences involving her divorce with her husband. She told us that she didn't force her kids to visit their dad, and so when he later died, she felt horrible that she hadn't made her kids visit him and spend more time with him, and she said that she didn't want the same thing to happen to us. Now, I know that every situation is different, but unfortunately it seemed like she didn't. Forcing someone to spend time with someone is not a good way to build a relationship. It just usually builds resentment.

Our GAL used her own personal biases to decide what she thought was best for us. So it felt like we had no say in the matter from the get-go. The last straw that broke the camels back though, was when me and my sister sent a personal email to her, trying to express our concerns and frustrations to her. We were under the impression that we could speak freely with her, like we could with our counselors, but unfortunately, we were horribly wrong. She took offense at our email, and sent it to our dad, his lawyer, and our other sister's counselor (Me and my youngest sister had the same counselor, but our other sister had a different one), and this was just the ones that I know of. Not only did she reveal a private email, but she then sent an email back, (with those people previously mentioned and a couple others as viewers to her response). In her email, she publicly chastised, humiliated, and embarrassed us, and even said that "Children should just do what they are told", and that our mom might face "contempt of court charges" for not forcing us to go see our dad. I was 16, my sister 14, and my youngest sister 12 at the time.

As far as I am concerned, it is almost impossible to "force" teenagers to do anything, but yet the blame was placed on our mom for not doing just that. How was she supposed to do it? Drug and tie us up? After that, we totally lost any of the trust we had in her. Even our counselor agreed that what she did was breaking that trust gap. We begged the judge for a new GAL, but he wouldn't do it. My sisters and me have not spoken to "our" GAL for a couple years, yet she still somehow represents our best interests. How is that possible? This experience has just given me a deep mistrust and anger at our court system, for letting this happen in the first place. I beg all of you...please change this so that other children do not have to go through the same thing that me and my sisters did, and are still going through. It is in your hands now.

Thank you,

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