

"What's the Impact of Estrangement on Grandchildren?"

QUESTION: "I've been cut off from my grandchildren for 2 years now. Before that, I was a very active part of their lives. What is the long term effect on these children, especially the younger ones? They must feel abandoned by me. Also aren't they prone to repeat this and leave their own parents out when they have children or before? Any statistics on this yet? My mother did this to my dad and to us when she divorced him. We, all 3 of us felt alone and abandoned and don't get along with each other. I have tried everything I know to fix this, I have taken so much responsibility for the dysfunction of this family, my ex-husbands role along with his wife. I have 2 children, one dead, one alive both gone. And now I've been cut off from my grandchildren."

ANSWER: I'm very sorry. You have suffered a lot. First to have one child die and then the other to estrange himself from you and your grandchildren is too much for anyone to be asked to bear.

I think the long-term effects of these estrangements are generally harmful for grandchildren, especially those who were once very attached to the grandparents. They learn that attachments are temporary and that families that were once loving and close can quickly become distant and angry. They're also presented with the model that estrangement is a reasonable way to manage family conflict. In addition, the grandchildren are denied a potentially loving and positive influence in their lives.

I'm hopeful that as there will be greater awareness of the impact of estrangement and alienation that less families have to be faced with it in future generations