

SPLITTING

Many children are very manipulative and have become very skilled in the art of “splitting”. This term has come to have two meanings, namely ‘splitting for gain” or “splitting for havoc”

Splitting for Gain

It can refer to the playing off of one parent against another for the purpose of the child getting his own way. In its most simple form it entails the child asking permission to do something from one parent after having been refused permission from the other. The ensuing tiff between the parents is of no consequence to the child whatsoever.

Splitting for havoc

The child, consciously or unconsciously, recognizes his ability to manipulate situations to his advantage, knowing that one parent will invariably side with him. As this skill develops the child may actually instigate situations to hone his skills. This instigation pits siblings, parents and friends against one another and creates chaos between those parties. The instigator is usually unscathed and has got his payoff from the havoc.

It does not take long before the school and/or specific teachers are also pulled into this woeful web. Teachers are trained to recognize a “splitting” situation, but at times they too, are caught unawares. The result is that the child may have to face the consequences, after having been previously warned that “splitting” or instigating is inappropriate behavior.

The “authority clause”

“Michael, I am the parent and you are the child. I make the decisions and you abide by them. You are not in control as to what will be done or not done. That is the job of parents whether you like it or not. I will always listen to what you have to say, but I will make the decision, not you. My decisions will always be what I consider to be in your best interests. There are times when I will allow you to make your own decisions, because that is part of growing up and learning to make choices. There are times when I will not allow you to make decisions, because you are not mature enough to make the right decision and this is one of those instances. Now that we know who is in charge, I want you to repeat what the consequences are the next time this happens”

Rules for children

The only commands you need to learn by heart

You’re not old enough

We don’t have the money

It costs too much

It’s too late; there’s not enough time

We don’t do that in our family