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Joanne Menter  
717 Lakeview Drive  
Bayfield, CO 81122

Dear Joanne:

***RE: Parental Relationship with Amanda and Ryan***

A copy of this letter is mailed to Ryan.

There are many respectable aspects to the lives of our children and we are both proud of their accomplishments. They are educated, high spirited, self-sufficient, personable and the list continues.

Due to the problem in my relationship with Amanda, my psychiatrist Dr. Sharma who provides a quarterly evaluation of medication effectiveness, took the time to discuss my deep concern over the circumstances, attitudes and values that led to the ending of the relationship between us. Dr. Sharma explained that children should be raised to respect their parents and based on the emotional divide in my relationship with Amanda; Dr. Sharma suggested I seek the assistance of a therapist. I sought the advice of Dr. Mady Fingeret and provided the history of our family relationships from early childhood. I made a deliberate effort to provide facts and not establish a "blame game". I will stay in therapy until deemed mutually appropriate. My primary motive is to "mend the fences".

In the problems that exist, the therapist explained that our children are the "product of divorce". We are not a meaningful hub in their emotional well-being and in my opinion this resulted from the lack of ongoing parental involvement in their day-to-day life as our joint custody arrangement caused a critical divide of time in their upbringing.

We are not aware of the impact divorce and the related joint custody arrangement had in their lives and they are not completely aware of the emotional deprivation caused as a result of these circumstances when compared to a long-term cohesive marital relationship.

We have differing attitudes and values toward parenting. In this letter, there is no intention to blame or imply criticism.

**Amanda:**

Amanda does not want a relationship with me. One of her parents is going to die first. If you die first, Amanda does not have any parents. This does not appear to be in her emotional best interest.

In my opinion, there should be parental communication on issues related to our children. I believe she eloped in her first marriage to “run” from her dysfunctional parental family. I believe she was eager to move to Oregon to start a new life and form new emotional bonds apart from her parents.

I was not included in any planning for Amanda’s second marriage. I was simply a “courtesy” add-on to the invitation list. You spent thousands of dollars and Amanda did not have the common courtesy to make a short speech to thank you and her in-laws for the time and effort to plan and financially provide for the festivities. Is this acceptable? I believe active planning by both parents would have provided for an enhanced presentation at the wedding.

It has been clear that you do not stand in judgment of Amanda’s decisions as she is an adult. I believe we can offer suggestions in conversation regarding a particular situation to help the other person consider alternatives. I entered therapy to make improved decisions about a serious problem in my life.

I have a “Catch 22”. We do not communicate. My sister, knowing there was conflict between Amanda and me, deliberately called the bank instructing AmTrust to FedEx money to Amanda. My cousin uses her omnipotent personality to become involved in the personal matters of others. I was unaware that my sister and cousin had a vendetta toward me. I explained to Ryan that while I cannot direct his relationships, he should consider tactfully ending the relationship with my cousin as she deliberately created a divide between Amanda and me and no one should intentionally come between parent and child to cause conflict.

You met Amanda in the south to help rebuild after Katrina. She was in the middle of a second divorce. She was moody toward you and never said one word about her marital problems. You believe it is acceptable that she choose not to talk to you as you do not stand in judgment of her decisions. Isn’t this a significant warning of an emotional divide between parent and child? At my mother’s funeral, she arrived angry at me (Ryan was as confused as me). She was in the middle of her second divorce and made me the victim.

Amanda walked out on two husbands and her father. To me, this is an important matter to consider. Based on my conversations with Dr. Sharma, behavior can be changed. It has been suggested to me that since you walked out on me, Amanda may view walking out on men as acceptable behavior. Maybe not true, but she has demonstrated an inability to form meaningful bonded relationships with men. In reviewing this letter, Dr. Fingeret was adamant that derogatory comments by you against me over the years likely provided the support for Amanda to behave in this manner. In thinking through this comment, I was reminded that one of the children told me you explained to them that you wanted a divorce because I was bi-polar. However, the last time I had a medication problem was five years prior to the time you wanted a divorce.

You know I have never given money to either child with the expectation of repayment. I believe you have the same attitude to give in an unconditional manner. When the problem arose with Amanda during the estate process, you took no action – why isn't this an issue for you to become involved when a child terminates a parental relationship?

I do not care about the estate money. However, at an ethical level, I respect the opinion of my Estate Attorney who told me Amanda's behavior represented the second most reprehensible act he had witnessed in twenty-five years of practice. The attorney, Seth Marmor is now President of the Florida Estate and Trust Association and our daughter left an indelible impressive in his professional life with poor behavior.

**Ryan:**

When I visited Carbondale, IL for one month to catch up on the lives of our children, Ryan decided to move to Florida and told me he would fly down in two days. I told him to go to your house and spend a week visiting before the move. I had concerns about this transition and wanted him to spend time with you.

In Florida, I visited Ryan's apartment and he told me he was considering signing up for the Army Reserves. We entered into our strongest disagreement. The conversation ended when he told me, "Mom said I am twenty-one and should do what I believe is best". Then he explains, "It is too late, I signed the papers". Where is the parental guidance and involvement with both parents participating in an informed conversation? Do they go to you when they only want approval and avoid me as it is my nature to discuss choices?

While they are grown children, they are our children and the responsibility for parenting never ends. We have different attitudes and values; however, I believe we are equally concerned for the emotional well being and physical safety for each child.

At age 31 Ryan obtained a vasectomy. Is this the result of not wanting to be involved in the responsibility of parenting based on his conclusion as to how badly his parents failed? Is it the result of war and the day-to-day living in an environment where life has little value? I am concerned. I believe he would make a wonderful father from his DNA. There was no discussion with me regarding that decision. Did he talk to you? In amending this letter based on a review by Dr. Fingeret, she was adamant that the vasectomy resulted from our failed parenting and was unrelated to the war.

I have been divorced for many years and you have not. I have a more first-hand view of parenting in divorce as divorced people have represented my friendships for twenty-four years. I believe the lives of children should be a strong motivating force to encourage parental cooperation with a positive spirit to ensure a worthy effort has been accomplished to provide assistance with choices the children might not otherwise consider.

There are **serious** problems with our parenting as related to Ryan's military role and commitment.

We have a unique situation in that Ryan has completed two tours of Iraq and may be called for a third. Emotionally he has the individual support from each parent and his sister; as a blended family unit, he does not have the collective support from his immediate family. Your family has been wonderful and my family, other than my parents have contributed nothing.

The continual flow of military information regarding the emotional difficulties experienced by soldiers in combat and related problems after returning home is worrisome. I joined a military support group for parents with children in combat zones. Would like you to hear the story of the parent returning from a visit to his son in Walter Reed Hospital? I have cried just thinking of the circumstances. **WE** will **fail** Ryan in his military role as a professional soldier by not providing a unified, cooperative and high spirited blended family unit. A family unit that spends time visiting with him should another deployment occur. A family unit that can send emails referring to updates received from Mom, Dad and Amanda.

**Summary:**

Many children seek the opinion and approval of their parents as part of their spontaneous parental relationships. How many spontaneous phone calls do you receive? I do hope you receive many calls as it is an indicator that at least one parent is connected to these children. We have failed for twenty-four years in divorce and our grade in an "F"; I am willing to work toward a passing grade.

There are parental issues I would like to discuss with Ryan, but I am so elated he returned safe, I rely on that logic to accept a relationship that could be meaningful in a more dynamic manner.

Therapy is a luxury as it revolves around self-improvement. I am willing to pay for you, Ryan and Amanda based on your decision. I believe we have a responsibility to begin and participate in a healing process.

It is puzzling that during your second marriage, you devoted time and energy to healing the relationships between your husband and his children who did not talk to him (as one of our children told me); however, this has never been a valued priority for the benefit of your children.

If not acceptable, I believe we will continue to contribute to the dismal realities of divorce, the great American tragedy of our generation.

Aside from Ryan, I am alone. By choice, I do not have a relationship with my sister or cousin. If a healing and bonding process between us with the children is not acceptable to you, the therapist provided alternative recommendations that I will pursue.

I look forward to your reply and hope you recognize the need to help me in healing our family.

Cordially,

Cc: Dr. Mady Fingeret, PH.D., Clinical Psychologist  
Dr. Praturi Sharma, M.D., Psychiatrist