

Who Has the Courage?

[Counterpoint / When Therapists Take Away Your Child - Issue 794]

I am responding to one of your Counterpoint letters about therapists who alienate children from their parents. For so many years I had been suffering in silence feeling abandoned and misunderstood by family and friends. Yet, here in the well-known *Mishpacha* magazine was a write-up that practically mirrored my own situation.

My son likewise went to see a therapist feeling that his parents didn't understand him. Knowing we were loving parents, we were not concerned. We felt confident that the therapist, as a professional, would guide our son to see our love through mature eyes. Instead, to our shock and horror, our son began to gradually move away from us, ultimately cutting all ties. No effort was made to request signed consent. He simply turned away from any responsibility, claiming confidentiality. We were totally unprepared for something so traumatic. From a small problem we were suddenly faced with a monumental issue. Here was our son, a young man in need of guidance, yet he wouldn't communicate with us. We were trapped.

It took us a long time to learn that no one, but no one, could get involved. Unwillingly, we realized that alienation is empowering. That once a child chooses to feel like "the chosen one" because he has a problem with his parents, it boosts his ego. It becomes frightening for community leaders and other therapists to offer assistance, as removing that ego will destroy a part of the child's esteem.

I miss my son every minute of every day. I barely function from the emotional turmoil I am living with. This is my beloved son, the one I held and raised. The one I laughed and cried with and motivated toward growth. He is my pride and joy – yet he thinks I have failed him.

The question of who will have the courage to bring back our children constantly swirls in my mind. Klal Yisrael is full of chesed. We have the rabbi of the prisoners, the rabbi of the off-the-derech children, and the rabbi for the *baalei teshuvah*. When, oh when, will we have a rabbi for the alienated children?

Dear reader, please don't just turn the page after reading my story. Please stand up and say "Ani" – it will be me. I want to help rebuild those precious relationships. I will be the one to show these children that their greatest emotional joy will come not from being alienated, but from being reunited!

A brokenhearted mother