

20 points you should consider before taking a sociopath to court

By Donna Andersen, author of Lovefraud.com

Lovefraud received the following email:

"I was previously married to a sociopath, and we have a 4-year-old son together. I have sole legal and physical custody of our son, but have been fighting to reduce the amount of visitation for quite some time. I recently read that having a forensic psychological analysis done on the entire family would reveal that my ex is a sociopath and possibly prevent him from having ANY visitation going forward. Is this true, in your experience? Do you have any advice for me as I embark on this process?"

Many, many Lovefraud readers have realized — to their horror — that they've had a child or children with a sociopath (someone with antisocial, narcissistic, borderline, histrionic or psychopathic personality disorder). Once you realize that your former partner has a serious personality disorder, and that this person is incapable of feeling love, even for the children, your natural instinct is to want to protect the children from him or her.

Figuring out how to do it, however, is incredibly difficult. Following are 20 points you should consider whenever you are contemplating taking a sociopath to court.

The sociopath

1. The sociopath's objective is to win — whatever he or she regards to be winning at the

time. It may mean not only winning the court battle, but winning in a way that leaves you crushed, broken and destitute.

2. The sociopath is capable of doing absolutely anything in order to win. This includes lying under oath, accusing you of doing things that you never did, convincing other people to lie (knowingly or unknowingly), falsifying documents, threatening you and the children, and more.

3. Sociopaths often love going to court. For them it's great drama, an opportunity to be on stage, and they are terrific actors. Sociopaths can break into tears, crying about how much they love and miss the children, even though they totally ignored the kids while you all lived together, or perhaps even abused them. They can discuss your "mental problems" in a voice dripping with concern, even though the only thing wrong with you is him or her.

4. Sociopaths usually pursue child custody for one or both of these reasons: They want to maintain control over you by controlling the kids, or they don't want to pay you child support.

5. A typical sociopathic strategy is to keep dragging you into court simply to cost you money. The idea is to bleed your finances until you can no longer afford to fight.

The law

6. Here's information from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

"The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the fundamental liberty interest of natural parents in the care, custody, and management of their children. This protection does not disappear simply because they have not been model parents or have lost custody of a child temporarily."

Know that if you're attempting to keep your partner away from the children, Constitutional Law is not on your side.

7. No provision in the Constitution says children are entitled to loving care, or even safety, from their parents.

Judges

8. In Family Court, judges are the kings, and you are a serf. Judges have wide discretion to decide what will happen to you, your kids and your money. Their decisions are law, and other judges are loath to change or reverse any court ruling.

9. Most judges do not understand sociopaths and how they behave (just like everyone else in the world — including you before you met your partner). Many judges believe that sociopaths are hardened criminal or murderers. So if you say that your partner is a sociopath, and he or she hasn't killed anyone, the judge will likely think that you are exaggerating and are simply being vindictive against your former partner.

10. Most judges, like most people, believe that children should have both of their parents, so they often want to keep both parents in the lives of children. Even if a sociopath has physi-

cally abused the spouse, if the children themselves haven't been injured, and sometimes even if they have been injured, judges may not keep the kids away from the abuser.

11. Numerous scientific studies seem to "prove" that children do better when both parents are in their lives. Unfortunately, most of these studies do not consider whether a parent is disordered. On the other hand, there is very little research indicating that sociopaths make terrible parents. So you may go to all the trouble of proving your ex is a sociopath, only to have the judge say, "So? That doesn't make him (or her) a bad parent."

12. You can line up all your proof, evidence and psychological reports — and a judge can disregard all of it, deciding your case the way he or she wants to.

13. For all of these reasons, who you get as a judge matters — a lot. When you know whom your judge is, you should find out everything you can about him or her. They are supposed to be impartial, but that isn't always the case. Some judges are biased against men. Some are biased against women. Some judges will listen to kids, some will not. This person holds your fate in his or her hands. If you know the judge you will be dealing with, take that into consideration before deciding how to proceed in any matter.

Lawyers

14. Be very, very careful about choosing a lawyer. Some lawyers are dedicated to serving their clients. But some lawyers are only interested in making money. You should shop around and get referrals — preferably from someone with a case like yours. If you feel at

all uncomfortable with a lawyer, or if you feel that the person does not believe or respect you, do not retain that lawyer.

15. In dealing with a sociopath, lawyers must be up for the challenge. They must understand that the sociopath will stall, delay, fail to produce documents and ignore court orders. Lawyers should never assume that sociopaths are going to do what they're supposed to do. Sociopaths believe that the rules do not apply to them.

16. Somehow, many sociopaths manage to find sociopathic lawyers. This means not only will the sociopath do anything in order to win, but so will his or her lawyer.

The court industry

17. The court sometimes isn't just the court — it's an entire network of psychologists, experts, guardians ad litem, parenting coordinators and others. In some cases, all these people just keep each other in business at your expense.

18. Research shows that whoever pays for a report gets the report that they want.

Mental health professionals

19. Many mental health professionals do not understand sociopaths. They do not understand the experience of being targeted by a sociopath. They do not understand how sociopaths affect children. If you are going to retain a mental health professional, make sure they get it.

20. Sociopaths are quite capable of manipulating mental health professionals. Sociopaths can play the victim, talk about loving their children, paint you as the person with problems — and some psychologists will swallow it all, hook, line and sinker.

Justice may not prevail

For all of these reasons, you need to have your eyes wide open before making any decision about taking a sociopath to court. You cannot assume that your experience in court will be about doing what is right, discovering the truth or protecting the children.

Going to court is always a crapshoot. It may cost you thousands and thousands of dollars, and you may end up with nothing. Therefore, pick your court battles carefully.

For more information, check out Lovefraud's webinars on ***Court and divorce with sociopaths, narcissists and psychopaths.***