

Our newspaper article -

The counsellor persuaded my daughters to turn their backs on all of their family.

For ten years I was a single parent caring for my daughters on my own - their mother left when they were very young. The girls got on extremely well at school, had many friends and were well complimented by their teachers and youth group leaders. The three of us had a busy, happy time with many adventures and our house was regularly full of friends and family. Everyone (including my daughters) said that I did a good job as a single dad. We travelled together at home and abroad and the girls saw their mother regularly. My parents lived nearby and saw their grandchildren every week. But in their late-twenties my daughters walked away from everyone!

Mental health issues had caused both of them a lot of stress and we had been in regular discussion with our local GP, mental health teams and teachers. Both daughters repeatedly said how much they loved their family and also apologised for how difficult they had been as teenagers. We thought that matters were settling down as the girls started their future lives and careers. Both of them had finished university degrees and also taken further qualifications with financial and other help from us. But then they came into contact with a counsellor/therapist who had been recommended by their mother. (Their mother has been in counselling for over 25 years and still feels that she has serious unresolved problems.) This counsellor said that family contacts should be broken to help in the healing process (we have since found out that this is a common manipulation). At the time the girls' beloved grandparents were dying but my daughters walked out of the family and have not been seen since. They also walked away from their mother's family.

The counsellor persuaded them that there were serious problems in their lives and that they had never been happy(!). The counsellor told them that they must have been badly treated when they were children – although no-one else had ever noticed this. The result is that they will not talk to the people who know them best and can tell them the truth about how things really were. We care about them deeply and are very worried about them. I would be failing as a parent if I did not try to find out how my daughters are, why they have cut themselves off from their family and how things can be sorted out. Anyone who is a parent would do the same. Gifts, including large sums of money, have not been returned but I have been reported to the police and accused of 'stalking'. My daughters still refuse to talk to any of the family.

The sad conclusion is that although counselling and therapy can be helpful, it can also have a very dark side and it can be very dangerous. Counselling and therapy should be about opening up, sorting things out and healing – instead it can lead to closing down, not moving on and serious damage to everyone involved.

And although you did your best, all of a sudden you are being told that you are a very bad parent.