

# SECOND PLACE IN MY OWN HOME: A PARENT'S STRUGGLE WITH BEING SIDELINED

Please read the following statements carefully. As you go through them, circle or highlight any that resonate with you, whether through personal experience, observation, or witnessing. This exercise will help us better understand and discuss your experiences during our sessions.

When one parent consistently prioritizes their child over their partner, it can have profound emotional and psychological effects on the neglected partner. Here's an exploration of how the non-prioritized parent typically feels in such dynamics:

## 1. Feeling Neglected and Unimportant:

The most immediate feeling is often a sense of neglect. This parent may feel like they are not a priority in their own family, which can be deeply hurtful. Their needs, both emotional and practical, are consistently placed last, leading to a feeling of unimportance.

Example: If a partner spends all evening engaging with the child and all discussions revolve around the child, it can make the other partner feel invisible and sidelined.

## 2. Emotional Isolation:

Feeling cut off from the family unit, this parent might experience emotional isolation. The bond that typically strengthens between partners during shared parenting experiences is weakened, which can make them feel isolated not just within the relationship but also in parenting.

Example: During family outings, if one parent is entirely focused on the child and excludes the other from interactions, it exacerbates feelings of loneliness.

## 3. Decreased Self-Esteem and Insecurity:

This ongoing neglect can severely impact the partner's self-esteem. They might begin to question their value not only to their partner but also within the family. This can lead to insecurity, affecting their social interactions and possibly their professional life.

Example: A partner who feels consistently overlooked may start to feel unworthy of attention, which can deter them from engaging in social activities or assert themselves in other aspects of life.

## 4. Resentment Toward Partner and Child:

Over time, the lack of attention and consideration can breed resentment. This resentment may not only be directed at the partner but, unfortunately, also at the child, especially if the child begins to exhibit preferential treatment towards the over-attentive parent.

Example: If a child dismisses or disrespects the less-attended parent's attempts at involvement or discipline, it can deepen the resentment.

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## 5. Frustration and Anger:

The ongoing neglect and emotional turmoil might culminate in feelings of frustration and anger. These feelings can be volatile and damaging if not addressed constructively.

Example: A partner might snap at small irritations, which are actually manifestations of deeper unresolved anger towards their spouse for feeling neglected.

## 6. Anxiety and Depression:

Chronic feelings of isolation and neglect can lead to anxiety and depression. The neglected partner may struggle with feelings of hopelessness about the relationship and their family dynamics.

Example: Constant exclusion can lead to depressive symptoms, such as loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, persistent sadness, or significant weight changes.

## 7. Jealousy:

It's not uncommon for the neglected partner to feel jealous of the attention the child receives. This jealousy isn't necessarily petty; it's often a longing for similar affection and acknowledgment from their partner.

Example: Seeing the partner being affectionate and attentive to the child can trigger feelings of jealousy in the neglected partner, wishing for similar interactions with them.

## 8. Withdrawal:

Ultimately, the ongoing neglect might lead this parent to withdraw from both the partner and the child. This can appear as disinterest in family activities, a reluctance to engage in conversation, or even in seeking solace in activities done alone.

Example: The neglected partner might start spending more time at work or engage in hobbies that don't involve the family, as a form of coping with their feelings of exclusion.

## Strategies for Addressing These Feelings:

## 9. Doubts About Their Role

With the shift in focus towards the child, men may question their role and importance within the family. They might wonder if their contributions are valued or if they are seen merely as providers rather than integral parts of the familial and emotional unit.

Example: Many men will say, "All I am is a paycheck." They see themselves only needed and valuable in what they can provide to the family.

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## 10. Reduced Intimacy and Connection

The shift in focus can also strain the couple's intimacy, both physical and emotional. Men might miss the closeness and connection they once shared with their partner, leading to a sense of longing for the pre-parental dynamics of their relationship.

Example: Men becoming standoffish, cold, disconnected physically as well as emotionally. Desire to instigate intimacy is greatly noticeable.

## 11. Reluctance to Share Feelings

Men might feel reluctant to express their feelings of neglect or exclusion for fear of seeming unsupportive or jealous of their own children. This reluctance can hinder open communication and exacerbate feelings of isolation.

Example: Men learn over time what not to bring up in conversation. When they are cut off of the conversation or told they are wrong over and over again, they eventually do not feel it "is worth bringing up" and become disengaged.

## 12. Seeking Affirmation Elsewhere

In response to feeling undervalued or disconnected at home, some men may seek affirmation and validation outside the family, whether through work, hobbies, or social engagements, further widening the gap within the relationship.

Example: Emotional and physical affairs, long distance relationships, dating apps, computer generated relationships, and pornography seem to surface at times and extremely detrimental and sometimes fatal to the relationship, family dynamics, spirituality, career, family relationships, and self-awareness.