

Response to Schetky's "Comment on Goldzband's Adult Psychiatrists Doing Custody Evaluations"

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It is best to begin with agreement. Dr. Schetky is absolutely correct when she states, unequivocally, "... adult psychiatrists who choose to do custody evaluations should be aware of their limitations and vulnerabilities and should know when to ask for help." It is a wise professional who knows his or her limitations. But I still maintain that in most cases it is not necessary to call for help.

In most cases it is necessary to determine the relationships between the children and each parent, and, as Dr. Schetky also points out, it is necessary to try to lead the warring parents into an out-of-court resolution of the battle. The capacity to get the parents to sit down and to thrash out a mutually agreeable system of custody and visitation ought to be the property of every general psychiatrist. Also, although they may not have the extensive capacities of child psychiatrists, most general psychi-

atrists ought to be able to provide the courts or referring special agencies, or the parents themselves, with a fairly comprehensive overview of the way the children relate to and with each parent. Certainly, they ought to be able to provide them with a valid picture of what the battles have already done to the children.

Had child psychiatrists become involved to the extent they should have over the years, it is possible that this debate would never have been necessary. But they did not, thereby leaving the field open to, it is hoped, other trained people. Dr. Schetky opines that child psychiatrists are now being trained to enter these frays. I hope so, but the numbers do not indicate that there will ever be enough of them to match the burgeoning divorce statistics. General psychiatrists must fill the bill. They must train themselves or seek further or ongoing training in child development and diagnostic techniques, and they must provide a service to the embattled parents and to their struggling children.

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