

This is a must read for all involved with the task force, courts and professionals!!!
Joani

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2529272/I-cut-ex-daughters-life-Now-Im-glad-fought-tooth-nail-her.html>

I cut my ex out of our daughter's life: Now I'm glad he fought tooth and nail to see her

By [Sally Windsor](#)

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Last night I cuddled up on the sofa with my five-year-old daughter Ruby as we enjoyed one of her favourite TV shows.

It was The Story Of Tracy Beaker — who, I should explain to any non- parents, is a wonderful character created by the children's author Jacqueline Wilson.

Tracy is a young girl growing up in a children's home — she's feisty and funny, but constantly fantasises about a better life. One with parents.



Battle: Sally Windsor with daughter Ruby (left) who she tried to stop James (right) from seeing

Whenever she goes into one of her reveries, claiming to have ‘hay fever’ when she wants to shed a tear, Ruby gets sad.

So last night, when hay fever struck Tracy, Ruby, too, became misty-eyed.

‘I’m so lucky to have a mummy and daddy,’ she said, hugging me. As I cuddled her back, I felt a terrible stab of guilt in my stomach.

For Ruby nearly didn’t have a daddy. For the first two-and-a-half years of her life, I did everything I could to scupper her relationship with her father.

In a fit of selfish pique, I attempted to come between them and deny them the right to love each other.

It was the most spiteful thing I’ve ever done.

Thank God her father, James, fought me all the way and dragged us through the hell of solicitors, legal bills and finally to the Family Court, where he won access to his little girl — access that was his by right.

He never gave up. Such is the testament of his love for Ruby. And for that, I will never be able to thank him enough.

I remember all too well that wretched day in the Family Court in March 2009 as we sat in front of the judge, with a solicitor between us. James, whom I’d once loved so dearly, looked grey and hollow.

I listened with a growing sense of shame as my legal team reeled off the acidic statement I’d made, littered with stupid accusations I’d dramatised to hurt him.



Sally Windsor with James and Ruby before the couple split

Even then I knew it was unfair, but I wanted to punish him. I blamed him for the break-up of our relationship and what better way to hurt him, I reasoned, than to take his daughter away?

The terrible struggle some fathers have to maintain contact with their children was highlighted last week when the Daily Mail told the story of an exemplary father who'd battled for 12 years to see his daughter after his former wife falsely accused him of sexually abusing her.

'It's like a bereavement,' he said. 'My anguish never stops. I wake up every morning with a knot of anxiety in my stomach. I don't know where my daughter is. I don't know how she is. I don't even know if she is with her mother.'

To my eternal regret, it's a torment I tried to inflict on the father of my child.

How could I do such a terrible thing? In my defence, I should explain I didn't know any better.

My mother, Brenda, 73, and father, Bob, 78, though married, have never lived in the same house — they split up before I was born.

Throughout my childhood, I only ever saw my father at sporadic intervals. I still harbour resentments at all the years I spent as the 'mediator' in their fractured relationship.

Somehow, I thought misguidedly I would be doing my daughter a favour in sparing her this disruption if I severed all ties with her father. Ruby, I concluded, didn't need James. She had me: I was all she needed.

How terribly wrong I was.

I'd met James, a 42-year-old newspaper reporter, when we worked together in Bristol in 2003. We were just friends until a Christmas fling in 2006 changed everything. We weren't even a proper couple when I discovered I was pregnant in April 2007.

James was shocked, but nevertheless said he would support me no matter what. So we decided to give parenthood, and our relationship, our best shot.

We moved to the South Coast, rented a family home and determined to make it work. But our path was not to be a smooth one.





Sally Windsor and daughter Ruby (left) and with father James (right). Ruby was ten months old when Sally left

After a traumatic birth, in which Ruby and I almost died due to pre-eclampsia — a condition caused by high blood pressure, which affects 5 per cent of women in later pregnancy — I spent two weeks in hospital.

I was hardly able to pick up my newborn baby, let alone breastfeed her, and struggled to bond with her.

I don't use this as an excuse for the bad behaviour that was to come, but the tranquil birth I'd dreamt of had been smashed to pieces. I sank into depression.

I pushed away James because I felt so sad, when all I really wanted was his love and help.

It was hardly a big surprise, then, that after a few months of sleepless nights with a newborn, tension and arguments, our relationship was in tatters.

Ruby was ten months old when I announced I was leaving. James was utterly taken aback.

I think he thought we'd somehow muddle through, but my mind was made up.

I convinced myself I could just sweep the matter of my baby's father under the carpet. The scars of my parents' acrimonious break-up ran deep.

I moved into a flat in Hove, East Sussex, in October 2008 and set about making it as difficult as possible for James to see his daughter.

I ignored his calls, refused to answer the door and slandered him to anyone who would listen.

I told everyone he was a dreadful father: he didn't give her enough to drink; didn't change her nappy often enough; and his flat was a tip.

Today I can admit my unhappiness was to blame, not James's ability as a father.



Modern family: Ruby with her mother Sally

I thought that if I just ignored him for long enough then he'd disappear. He'd give up and find someone else to pester. Ruby and I would be happy on our own.

But, thank God, James never gave up. When all negotiation failed, he sought legal advice and decided to fight me to gain access to his child.

He didn't even go for shared custody, just the right to form some sort of relationship with her.

Despite this, I still convinced myself that James was trying to take my baby away from me and set out to fight him like a lioness.

The irony of Ruby's first word was not lost on me: it was 'Daddy'. But still I fought to wipe him from her life.

We spent thousands of pounds and the best part of a year in court and at each other's throats.

James could have given up at any stage and, looking at his broken figure at the other end of the bench in court, I realised just how far I'd pushed him.

Finally, an agreement was reached. The judge ruled that Ruby would stay overnight with James every other Saturday. Begrudgingly, I capitulated.

As Ruby and James set about rebuilding their relationship, I began to see just what a precious bond they shared.

They looked so much alike and, as Ruby's personality developed, I realised how alike they were in so many other ways.

They had the same quirky sense of humour and deep concentration at something that caught their interest.

I saw all of the qualities I'd loved and admired in James develop in our little girl. I even felt joy when she came home and chirped happily about their time together.

Having gone from barely mentioning or seeing her father, I saw their relationship blossom and it brought about a thaw in our relationship, too.

"Without a father in her life, she would be bereft of so much love. What child, whatever the situation, deserves to be deprived of that?"

James and I began to trust each other again and to exchange pleasantries when we met until, finally, we became good friends.

He says he has forgiven me. I thank him for that and admire his maturity.

Today, Ruby and James see each other most weekends, but the arrangement is informal.

He sees her whenever he likes. If he's ten minutes away, he'll pop in for a cup of tea and help Ruby with her spellings. Often she has a painting she just has to show her Daddy right now and, of course, that isn't a problem.

They chat on the phone most days. And the three of us spent Christmas Day together.

I know in an ideal world that Ruby would have a mummy and daddy who live together, but this is the next best thing.

Without a father in her life, she would be bereft of so much love. What child, whatever the situation, deserves to be deprived of that?

She brings endless joy when she draws pictures of the three of us, and my dog Ralph, standing together and smiling.

Thankfully, all she remembers is a mummy and daddy who are friends and prioritise her before any emotion we might be feeling.

If James hadn't fought me in court, Ruby wouldn't be the delightful, clever, kind and happy child she is today.

I'm just glad I eventually saw through my own resentment and hurt — and put my child first.