

## **When a grandparent's behaviour is shocking, adult children may need counselling to handle it.**

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My father, in his 70s, has suddenly left my mother for another woman, creating havoc in our entire family.

The woman, who's younger, is a previous business acquaintance of his. He contacted her on Facebook, learned she'd been divorced, and then travelled to meet her while "on business" for his own company.

He started a secret affair, and then threw away every consideration for my mom, and anyone else to whom he'd ever been close.

He's moved to where the woman lives, another city and province, far from where our whole family has been part of the community for years.

My mother's devastated to have to deal with the legal and financial fallout of his actions, at this time of her life. But she's consumed with fighting him hard on the division of their house and other assets, as well as his business, which she helped build. She's facing all this, after 44 years of marriage!

Meanwhile, my two younger brothers and I have decided to deny him access to his grandchildren — early-20s, and teens.

It's the strongest way we can show our disapproval of his cruel behaviour. He could've had his secret fling with this woman if he was so needy of it. But to abandon our mother publicly, at 72, and humiliate her in their close circle of friends is unforgivable.

Despite his previous success as a businessman, he's become a poor role model for our children.

My husband and I have also been thrown into discord because we disagree on how to handle this. He went to talk to my father, even after I asked him not to, and angered me greatly when he reported that it was a love affair that couldn't be helped. I can't accept that opinion.

My one brother's also torn apart as he still has some business ties to my father, which his wife says he must maintain for their finances, yet he feels that would be disloyal to Mom. Our other brother, a professional, is socially embarrassed and can hardly talk about it.

I'd like your thoughts, for us all.

### *Fractured Family*

Your mother needs your support, but she doesn't need you and your brother to harm your own family relationships. That could just create further family breakdown, emotionally and financially.

You would benefit from counselling to help you separate your own family life and its balance, from that of your parents. You and your husband are the main role models for your children, and how you react to shock and change is a more significant model than a grandfather's late-in-life actions.

Your brother could also use some neutral advice, financial as well as personal counselling. He may decide to disentangle himself from business with his father, but doing it abruptly may not be wise, if it punishes his own family.

Your mother needs reassurance that she's not diminished in respect or value by your father's move.

Take her out, publicly, help her stay connected to her friends — couples and those on their own — so her social life carries on. She also needs balanced legal and financial advice, so that she acts out of what's best for her, not just revenge.

As for your children, depending on their age, you can tell them some of what's happened, but don't breed hate for their grandfather. That sends the wrong message about how to react to great disappointment. Besides, there's always some part of a story you don't know, and possibly never will.