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## What HEART is

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HEART (Human Equality Action & Resource Team) was incorporated in 1988 as a non-profit volunteer organization to meet the needs of individuals experiencing marriage breakdown, particularly those having difficulty with child custody and access, financial settlements, emotional trauma and the demands of the court.

Through peer support, educational seminars, referrals, professionally guided programs and other mechanisms of self-help, our members learn to cope and help others to cope.

But to truly help ourselves requires that we fulfill our wider mandate of achieving fairness in family law. Through public seminars, literature, and social action, we seek to eliminate gender stereotypes that prejudice outcomes in family law processes, to institute more effective means for adjudicating divorce, and to mobilize the public opinion that favours equal parenting.

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## What we can do together

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- *Together*, we can see each other through the difficulties of our personal situation.
- *Together*, we can work to secure fair adjudication and fair outcomes in family law matters.
- *Together*, we can help each other restore, preserve and sustain our relationships with our children and our full and equal rights to them.
- *Together*, we can help each other to become better parents, and our children to become better adults.

*Our relationships with  
our children must  
survive separation and  
divorce.*

# Two Parents for Every Child



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Human Equality Action & Resource Team

# Our Mission

1

To aid separating and divorcing men and women and their children to survive the process, rebuild their lives, and grow from their experience.

2

To effect such change in society and in the administration of justice as will guarantee

- a) to every child, a right to the equal care, presence, and attention of both parents, and
- b) to the parents in a separation or divorce, equal treatment under law and preservation of the right of each to remain a full and equal parent

and to aid children and parents dispossessed of these rights to regain them.

3

To inspire all parents to become better parents, and to more fully cherish and embrace their opportunities with their children.

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*To develop fully and properly, the child needs the presence, care and attention of both parents. The love of parents is harmonized with the needs of children, and Canadian family courts must cease to act against this design.*

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## The injustice of family court

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Divorcing parents hold one thing precious above all else—their children. Yet in the win-lose adversary system of Canadian family courts, one partner's parenthood is invariably destroyed.

Nine times out of ten, the ousted parent is a father. Banished to the outer fringes of his children's lives, he fears becoming at best a visitor to them. His assigned role: pay money.

One time out of ten, the banished parent is a mother. A non-custodial mother contends not only with the pain of enforced separation from children, but the scorn of other people. What kind of woman must she be not to win custody?

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## The greatest injustice

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Ten times out of ten, a child of divorce grows up with less than optimal contributions from the parents. Confined to the known inadequacies of the "single-parent family", the child aches for contact with the lost parent.

Largely due to the unbalanced prescriptions of family court, children of divorce grow up more likely to be lacking in self-esteem, involved in drugs and crime, prone to suicide, prone to teenage pregnancy, and unable to keep a good marriage of their own.

With a more humane resolution of parenting issues in divorce and separation, these and

other harmful effects could be reduced or avoided.

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## Parenting inequities breed harm

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In the noble and natural language of the family law, issues of child support, division of family assets, and alimony are separate and apart from parenting, or so-called "custody". But in practice, the principle is clear: the custodial parent gets the children; the non-custodial parent gets to pay.

The continuation of this incentive to use control of the children as a financial lever is immoral. It corrupts the custodial parents and demoralizes the discarded parents.

Treating parents inequitably does harm to the rest of society, as damaged parents and children fail to thrive and contribute, in ways too large and complex to comprehend.

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## For the love of our children

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There is no reason why an ordinary parent's relationship with a child should not survive separation or divorce. There are urgent good reasons why it should.

Only prejudice, and a callous clinging to business as usual, block us from achieving fairer and more humane outcomes in family law.

Please join HEART. Please make the effort.