

MONEY POWER & SEX

I remember being thirteen. I remember thinking that Ashley was the hottest thing in the eighth grade, or was it Audrey, or Crystal, or BeBe, or Leslie or...you get the idea. I remember not knowing if my Dad wanted to be my friend or my father. I remember I wanted designer clothes, less rules, more video game time and no consequences. I wanted power, money, and I didn't know what sex was entirely, but I was definitely interested.

I look back now and I know that my hormones were out of control. My body was trying to assimilate to that little thing called adulthood and it created quite a tug of war between my parents and I. I couldn't understand why my door had to be opened when my girlfriend was over, or why I had to do homework or cut the yard. My parents knew though. They were there to guide me and to make the right decision for me when I couldn't make them for myself. This is what I now as an adult refer to as parenting.

Imagine giving me the power to tell my parents, "No, I don't want to mow the yard and if you don't like it, you better find a way to live with it", or "I'll shut my door and do whatever I like with whomever I please." Looking back, I am very grateful and didn't have the authority to say anything remotely close.

In a separated household we have a Primary Residential Parent and a Alternated Residential Parent. The terms reflects where the child lives the majority of the time. It is an issue that can cost thousands of dollars to dispute in Court and it is something Courts hate to decide, but when called upon to do so, they put a great amount of thought and time into deciding.

There is a urban legend that a 12 or 13 year old gets to choose where they want to live. I don't know where it came from. It is what I like to call street law. "I know a guy, that knows a guy, that hired an attorney once and they said...." It is true that at 12 a child can have their

preference heard in a petition to modify custody, but it is not the deciding factor.

Giving a child that type of power would be a pandora's box that would cause parents to bend to the will of adolescents trying to cope with acne, young love and rebellious angst. It would mean discipline would disappear and fear of loss would take over. I assure you such is not the case.

The factors in deciding child custody can be found in [TN Code 36-6-106](#) . I've linked the code section and you can see that the choice of a child is one of many factors to be contemplated. The important thing to remember is that before any of these factors come into place, a petition has to be filed seeking a change. So don't be afraid to be a parent, and make them keep the doors open; the mind of a 13 year old boy is a scary thing.