

"How Can I Reconcile When I Don't Know What's Wrong??"

Q: We have a split with my son because of a daughter-in-law. They have an 11 year old girl and a 8 year old boy who are caught in the middle. I've made so many overtures in an attempt to bridge whatever has caused this gap but whatever I say or do seems to be the wrong thing.

It's rather like my daughter-in-law simply wants to be mad about things. I could live with that, but it's taking a huge toll - especially on the 11 year old. She and I have been close since her birth. She doesn't understand this rift any more than I do, and for her sake, this breaks my heart. The grandparent topic is going to be of special interest to me.

If I have one question I would like an answer to it would be how does one find out what caused a rift if the adult child and spouse won't tell you?"

ANSWER: You may well be right that your DIL needs to be mad and she'll stay mad no matter what you do. That said, I would continue to reach out to your grandchildren on a frequent basis. Sometimes, not always, the grandchildren can pressure the parents into behaving better than they might otherwise because they can't adequately justify their behavior. It's also good for you to have a record in the hearts and minds of your grandchildren that you continued to reach out even when you were being denied contact.

The other option is to write something to your son and DIL such as, "I can only assume that I did something that was very hurtful or wrong to one or both of you for you to need this distance in our relationship. While I have plenty of faults, I actually don't know what it was and am wondering if you'd be open to talking with me about it? I really want to have a closer relationship with you both, and I really miss seeing you and my grandchildren as much as I used to."