

EVIDEXI

FREE PLAYBOOK

Functional Depression: Parenting Through It

You are not broken. You are in a war.

When you are going through hell but still have to make lunches. Honest strategies for parents in the trenches.

10 PAGES · PDF · FREE

evidexi.com

Document. Organize. Prepare for court.

What's Inside

- 01 What functional depression actually looks like
- 02 Why custody battles break people (and why that is normal)
- 03 The bare minimum that still counts
- 04 Routines that run on autopilot
- 05 Getting help without losing custody leverage
- 06 What your kids actually need from you right now
- 07 The oxygen mask: taking care of yourself first
- 08 When to get professional help (and how to afford it)

Who This Playbook Is For

Parents who are barely holding it together. You are still showing up, still making lunches, still fighting, and that is enough. This playbook meets you where you are.

What Functional Depression Actually Looks Like

Functional depression is not lying in bed all day. It is getting up, making lunches, driving to school, going to work, and falling apart on the inside while looking "fine" on the outside.

You Might Have Functional Depression If:

- You are exhausted but you keep going because you have no choice
- You can not remember the last time you felt genuinely happy
- Small tasks feel monumental but you still do them
- You zone out during activities you used to enjoy
- You are irritable, short-tempered, or emotionally numb
- You are going through the motions but feel disconnected from your life
- You cry in the shower, the car, or after the kids go to bed

PRO TIP

Functional depression is still depression. The fact that you are still functioning does not mean you are okay. It means you are strong, and you are running on fumes.

Custody battles are one of the most psychologically damaging experiences a person can go through. If you are struggling, you are not weak. You are human. And you are not alone.

Why Custody Battles Break People (And Why That Is Normal)

A custody battle attacks every part of who you are: your identity as a parent, your financial security, your sense of justice, your relationships, and your mental health. All at once. For months or years.

The Perfect Storm:

- Constant threat to your most important relationship (your children)
- Financial drain with no clear end date
- Sleep disruption from stress and anxiety
- Social isolation (people do not understand)
- Loss of control over major life decisions
- Being judged, evaluated, and scrutinized by strangers
- Grief for the family you thought you would have

Why It Is Normal:

You are having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. The human brain is not designed to handle this level of sustained stress while also being a good parent, employee, and functioning adult.

PRO TIP

If someone told you to run a marathon while someone threw rocks at you, you would not blame yourself for struggling. That is what you are doing right now. Give yourself some grace.

The Bare Minimum That Still Counts

On your worst days, you do not need to be a Pinterest parent. You need to do the bare minimum, and that is enough.

The Bare Minimum Checklist:

- Kids are fed (cereal counts)
- Kids are at school on time (or close to it)
- Kids have clean-ish clothes
- Kids know they are loved (say it, even when you feel nothing)
- You showed up (physically present counts)

What Does NOT Matter on Hard Days:

- Whether the house is clean
- Whether you cooked a "real" meal
- Whether you played an educational game
- Whether the laundry is folded
- Whether you responded to every text and email immediately

PRO TIP

On the days when getting out of bed feels like climbing Everest, getting your kids fed and to school IS climbing Everest. And you did it. That matters.

Lower the bar on bad days. Raise it when you can. This is survival mode, and survival mode has different rules.

Routines That Run on Autopilot

When your brain is running on empty, routines save you. You do not need to think about what comes next. You just follow the routine.

Morning Autopilot:

- Set out clothes the night before (for you and the kids)
- Same breakfast every weekday (simplify decisions)
- Backpacks packed and by the door the night before
- Leave 10 minutes earlier than you think you need to

Evening Autopilot:

- Dinner at the same time every night (even if it is simple)
- Bath/shower on a set schedule
- Same bedtime routine: brush teeth, story or quiet time, lights out
- Your decompression time starts at the same time each night

The Weekly Reset:

- Sunday evening: review the week ahead
- Prep lunches if you can (or buy prepackaged, no shame)
- Check the custody schedule
- One load of laundry

PRO TIP

Routines are not boring. They are the scaffolding that holds you up when your internal structure is shaky. Build them and lean on them.

Getting Help Without Losing Custody Leverage

One of the cruelest aspects of custody battles: you need mental health support, but you fear it will be used against you.

The Truth:

Seeking therapy is almost never held against you in court. In fact, judges often view it positively. It shows you are a parent who recognizes challenges and takes proactive steps to address them.

What IS Risky:

- Untreated mental health issues that affect your parenting
- Refusing to seek help when it has been recommended
- Hospitalization for mental health crises (this does not mean you lose custody, but it can be used in arguments)
- Substance use as a coping mechanism

What Is Safe:

- Outpatient therapy (weekly sessions)
- Medication prescribed by a doctor (follow the prescription)
- Support groups
- Self-care routines
- Asking family and friends for help

PRO TIP

Getting help is not weakness. It is evidence that you are a responsible parent. The parent who ignores their mental health is the one taking the risk.

If you are worried about therapy notes being subpoenaed, discuss this with your therapist. In most states, therapy records have strong protections. Your attorney can advise on your specific situation.

What Your Kids Actually Need From You Right Now

You cannot fix everything. You cannot make the custody situation disappear. But you can give your kids what they actually need, and it is simpler than you think.

What They Need:

- Consistency: same rules, same routines, same expectations
- Reassurance: "This is not your fault. Both parents love you. You are safe."
- Normalcy: keep their activities, friendships, and school life as stable as possible
- Permission to feel: "It is okay to feel sad/angry/confused about this."
- A parent who is present: not perfect, not happy all the time, just there

What They Do NOT Need:

- Details about the legal case
- Your opinion about their other parent
- To feel responsible for your emotions
- To choose sides
- A parent who is trying so hard to compensate that they burn out completely

PRO TIP

Your kids do not need a superhero. They need a parent who shows up, keeps things steady, and lets them be kids. You are already doing that. Even on the hard days.

The Oxygen Mask: Taking Care of Yourself First

You cannot pour from an empty cup. You have heard it before. But in a custody battle, self-care feels selfish, impossible, or irrelevant. It is none of those things.

Non-Negotiable Self-Care:

- Sleep: protect it fiercely. Turn off your phone. Set a bedtime.
- Food: eat actual meals. You cannot run on coffee and adrenaline forever.
- Movement: even a 10-minute walk counts. Movement is the fastest antidepressant.
- One thing you enjoy: even small. A podcast. A bath. A chapter of a book.

The Permission You Need:

- It is okay to ask for help
- It is okay to not be productive every evening
- It is okay to let the kids have extra screen time so you can sit quietly
- It is okay to cry
- It is okay to not be okay

PRO TIP

Taking care of yourself is not selfish. It is strategic. A parent who is falling apart cannot document, cannot stay calm in court, and cannot be present for their children. Self-care is case preparation.

When to Get Professional Help (And How to Afford It)

If you are reading this playbook, you may already know you need professional support. Here is when to make the call and how to access it.

Get Help Now If:

- You are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- You are using alcohol or substances to cope daily
- You cannot get through a workday without breaking down
- Your children are expressing worry about you
- You have been in survival mode for more than a few weeks with no improvement

Affordable Options:

- Sliding scale therapists (ask directly, many offer this)
- Community mental health centers
- Online therapy platforms (BetterHelp, Talkspace, often cheaper than in-person)
- Support groups (free: DivorceCare, local family court support groups)
- Your employer's EAP (Employee Assistance Program), usually free sessions
- If you have insurance, call the number on your card and ask for in-network providers

What to Look For in a Therapist:

- Experience with divorce, custody, or high-conflict situations
- Someone who validates your experience without enabling unhealthy behavior
- Practical strategies, not just "how does that make you feel?"

PRO TIP

If cost is the barrier, start with a free support group or your EAP. Something is always better than nothing. You deserve support.

You are going through one of the hardest experiences a person can face. Getting help is not a sign of failure. It is a sign that you are fighting for yourself and your children. Keep going.

EVIDEXI

This playbook teaches the framework.

The app helps you do it daily.

Evidexi helps you document, organize, and prepare for court, all in one place.

Try Evidexi Free

app.evidexi.com

- Log incidents with timestamps and details
- Organize evidence by category and date
- Track custody schedule and violations
- Generate court-ready reports
- Keep everything secure and private

Free to start. No credit card required.

© Evidexi. This playbook is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.