

Freed-Smith Family Case

Stephanie Freed and Sheila Smith have been a couple for two years. Both have children from previous relationships. Sheila and her children moved into Stephanie's large home eight months ago.

Stephanie has a 17-year-old son who has just dropped out of high school and is hanging around with new friends in a different neighborhood. He is not home much and is working a part-time job at a restaurant. He has never met his father and there is little talk of him.

Sheila has twin girls, age two, and a son, age nine, who had to change schools when the families merged. Their father lives 2,000 miles away in another state and left when Sheila was pregnant with the twins. He has since remarried and maintains minimal contact with the children. They have come to therapy because Sheila's nine-year-old son is having difficulty in school and being bullied. He reports "everything is fine" but cries at night when he is alone in his room. He is having difficulty sleeping and has a decreased appetite. The twins have regressed in their sleeping and self-regulation. The boys each have their own room and the twins share a room.

Sheila is not working right now, having been downsized at her last job as a hospital administrator. Stephanie works long hours as an emergency room physician. They have decided that Sheila should stay home for a while until the children settle in.