

THE

Alienation Nightmare



Helping Others Understand

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www.keepingfamiliesconnected.com



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Helping Others Understand

This book was written for parents or children experiencing Parental Alienation, to help family and friends understand the danger and damage of this form of abuse. Parental Alienation is when one parent turns a child against the other.

I wrote this book because of my own personal experience. In 1999 I lost my sons to Parental Alienation. By the time I worked my way through the legal system and got a child psychologist to diagnose what was happening, the damage had already been done.

One of the most challenging aspects of this form of abuse is that it's difficult to explain. Or to get others to understand the devastating effect of the tactics being employed against you and your child. Or how any parent would willingly subject their child to this poison. PA goes far beyond a typical ugly divorce.

When I went through my divorce and custody battle, resources like this book didn't exist. There were many books written from a clinical or legal perspective arguing over terminology, classifications, and authority opinions about the subject. But none that could help me explain or validate what my sons and I were going through to those that weren't legal or mental health professionals.

This book is written to help parents and children experiencing alienation to convey the danger and damage associated with PA to their friends and family in a way that anyone can understand its impact.

What are your thoughts?

What are your initial thoughts when presented with stories of an extremely volatile and vindictive spouse, by someone going through a divorce? Especially if it involves their spouse abusing their children in an effort to hurt or control that person?

Here are a few thoughts that I've heard through the years:

- Every divorce is hard
- Every couple has problems
- Every family has problems
- There are two sides to every story
- No one is perfect – we all blow it from time to time
- What did they do to make their spouse so mad
- No one is that messed up - no parent in their right mind would do that
- A judge would never let them hurt a child like that

Although these appear to be valid questions and observations, I believe that you'll find there are certain circumstances and personality types that are far outside of typical divorce scenarios. My hope is that this book will provide you with a much better insight of what your friend or family member is experiencing in their extreme circumstances.



Over 25 years ago I went through a horrible divorce. Through a series of powerful legal and alienation tactics used against me, I ended up financially and emotionally devastated. This included losing all contact with my precious sons who were ages 4 and 7 at the time.

In 2008 my wife and I started a ministry called Keeping Families Connected. Our mission is to help families stay connected despite the challenges of divorce. We offer resources to help people protect themselves. And to minimize the cost, conflict, and damage of going through a divorce.

One of the things we teach is how to recognize and overcome parental alienation before its deadly effects destroy their family. Severe alienation over a long period of time is very difficult to reverse.

The response has been overwhelming. We've been visited and contacted by people from 176 countries. And we've helped thousands of families to navigate through difficult divorces.

Here's our website if you'd like to know more: www.keepingfamiliesconnected.com

Definitions of Parental Alienation

There are many clinical definitions but the simplest is: “When one parent turns a child against the other.”

“Parental Alienation Syndrome is the process of manipulating the child to internally transform their view of the other parent from being an object of love into being an object of hate.”

J. Michael Bone Ph.D - National Association of Parental Alienation Specialists

“Parental alienation is the term to describe the overall problem of children being encouraged by one parent - the favored parent -- to unjustly reject the other parent -- the targeted parent. The specific behaviors that they engage in are referred to as parental alienation strategies.

..... Some children are able to resist the pressure to choose one parent over the other. When they cannot resist the pressure they are said to be alienated. That is, they reject the targeted parent without justification; their relationship with the targeted parent is based on the emotional manipulation of the favored parent rather than based on the actual experiences with the targeted parent.”

Dr. Amy J.L. Baker - Parental Alienation Researcher, Expert, Author, and Coach

Parental Alienation is about parents who place their own selfish needs above those of their defenseless children and in doing so, they deny them their right to love and be loved by both parents. Alienators do not fit the stereotype of the deficient and ill-equipped parent. Instead, these parents are generally articulate, resourceful, and competent in all other aspects of their lives – except in the realm of parenting.

In fact, these individuals might easily be mistaken for ideal parents, except to the properly informed, because they profess love and concern for their children. What sets these individuals apart from other dysfunctional parents is their overwhelming commitment to meeting their own needs first. In doing so, they destroy the relationship their children have with the other parent – at whatever cost.

Dr. Reena Sommer - Internationally Recognized Divorce and Custody Consultant

The 3 Levels of PA

Mild:

Parents who lose control, make negative comments, or exhibit negative behavior towards the other parent in front of the child, but feel bad about it later. Most parents going through a divorce engage in this level of alienation at some point. But they recognize they're wrong, worry about the effects on the child, and take steps to stop inappropriate comments and actions directed at the other parent. Their goal is not to destroy the relationship between their child and the other parent. They understand their child needs to have a healthy and loving relationship with both parents. These parents rarely use the court system to control or attack the other parent, and rarely start a child custody battle.

Moderate:

These parents are like the mild alienator in that they usually mean well. The difference is that they believe that the relationship with the other parent should never interfere with or inconvenience their life. These parents operate in the emotional, selfish realm, and are very defensive. They have a hard time controlling their emotions and take everything personally. Everything becomes a form of rejection.

During periods of emotional turmoil or disagreement they display an explosive and sometimes even violent attack on the other parent. The gloves are off and they'll do anything to win. They're willing and even eager to use family court to achieve their goals of control and retribution. When the threat disappears, the alienating tactics temporarily subside. Until the next perceived threat.

Severe:

During a separation and divorce, the targeted parent becomes a bitter enemy in the mind of the alienator. Their goal is to destroy the relationship between their child and the other parent. They're determined to be the only parent in their child's life, and they become obsessed with this goal. Which usually leads to a bitter, costly, and lengthy divorce and custody battle. They must win at all costs.

In most cases, the alienator has a history of psychological and emotional issues before they begin their campaign to destroy the other parent. These individuals often suffer from some type of mental illness. They perceive and portray themselves as the victim. They make every effort to enroll family, friends, neighbors, schools and the courts in their quest to remove the targeted parent from their child's life.

They constantly lie, to manipulate the children into believing their false realities. Anyone that might support a realistic and positive view of the rejected parent is considered a threat and cut off from the child's life. They also remove evidence of positive interaction with the child and the other parent, to complete the brainwashing process, such as pictures, cards, presents etc. there is no end to their tactics.

They're so consumed by their hatred and need to control that they refuse to see the pain and destruction they're causing their child. Even after the alienation is complete, a severe alienator will often continue to use the child and the courts to further their revenge on the targeted parent with excessive litigation, illegitimate bills, and false accusations of physical or sexual abuse. They're not satisfied until they see the complete destruction of the other parent both emotionally and financially. They need the rejected parent branded as a threat or abuser to feel good about themselves and their actions.

These people are damaged and in desperate need of professional help and therapy. They often have clinically diagnosable issues such as Narcissism or borderline personality disorder. Most will never get the help they need unless it is court ordered, which is rare indeed.

Personality Types?

Most mild level alienators do their best to work through the stress and difficulties of divorce without negatively influencing or harming their child. They are imperfect people that may say or do something in the heat of the moment that they regret later. They make amends to everyone involved and do their best to be their best daily. They don't use their child as a weapon to inflict pain upon their spouse.

Most moderate and severe alienators are high conflict people. Many of them have mental or personality disorders of one type or another. They often have a combination and overlap of symptoms. You can easily recognize the symptoms of these disorders once you're aware of what they are. These individuals almost always experience inner distress which results in self-sabotaging behaviors that are hard to hide.

High conflict personality types become preoccupied with the target of their blame, usually someone close to them (such as a spouse, relative, neighbor, co-worker) or someone in a position of authority (boss, doctor, administrator, government official). When it comes to a divorce, their ex-spouse will certainly become a target. They become fixated and obsessed with controlling, hurting and dominating the person that they blame for their circumstances or unhappiness.

Individuals with personality disorders perceive the world as filled with threats to their self-image. Their perception of others' behavior are often distorted and, in some cases, delusional. Their world view is generally adversarial, so they often see people as either allies or enemies. Their thinking is dominated by cognitive distortions, such as: all or nothing thinking, emotional reasoning, personalization of benign events, minimization of the positive and maximization of the negative. They often form inaccurate beliefs about another person, but cling rigidly to those beliefs if they're challenged because being challenged is perceived as a threat.

Borderline Personality Disorder

At some point, you've probably met someone with this type of personality. They love someone one minute and hate them the next. They often exhibit a sudden anger that seems to appear out of the blue, or a sudden shift from love or friendliness to intense anger and rage. A short while later, they act as though nothing unpleasant had ever transpired between them and the victim of their wrath. They're an emotional roller coaster that can careen out of control on a moment's notice. They are emotionally and often even physically unsafe to the people around them.

A borderline personality is characterized by:

- Fear of being abandoned, they exhibit clinging behaviors and manipulation
- A sudden display of intense anger, even at minor incidents - they have a very short fuse
- They seek revenge and vindication when they feel abandoned or threatened. They want to hurt others the way that they've been hurt
- They are impulsive and risk takers and exhibit self-destructive behaviors
- They experience dramatic mood swings, affecting their view of the people around them

Borderlines are often successful in many areas of their lives. However, because of their interpersonal patterns of behavior, broken and strained family and work relationships are common for them. They are preoccupied with issues of abandonment even in everyday common events. To prevent feeling abandoned, they strive to control and manipulate others. They rage against those they believe have abandoned them. Minor events quickly escalate into high conflict disputes. If the borderline is angry, they project this emotion on their partner and then believe the partner is angry with them.

They often switch back and forth between extremely positive feelings to extreme anger and hate. These emotional swings are almost always directed at the people they like or love. When they feel abandoned, disrespected, or threatened, they may file a lawsuit against someone to punish or control them.

Parents with a borderline personality disorder must win at all costs. Divorce and custody disputes are difficult for any family. To off-set, their feelings of abandonment and maintain control, they often do the following:

- Discourage or stop visitation with the Non-Custodial Parent (NCP)
- Allege false claims of physical or sexual child abuse
- Involve police with false 911 false domestic violence calls
- Systematically alienate the child from the other parent
- Eliminate the NCP from educational, religious, and medical decisions
- Engage in litigation on a regular basis for years after the divorce
- Attempt to sabotage the other parent in future relationships with potential partners
- Attempt to alienate the child from the other parents' family members or friends

Antisocial Personality Disorder

An Antisocial personality disorder is a mental health condition in which a person has a long-term pattern of manipulating, exploiting, or violating the rights of others.

Antisocial high-conflict personalities (HCP's) are the Con Artists. They see other people and the law, as challenges for manipulation and control. They have the ability to lie more persuasively than you can tell the truth. They look good on the surface and will often have a very favorable reputation.

According to the DSM Individuals with an antisocial personality disorder show a lack of concern toward the expectations and rules of society. And frequently become involved in at least minor violations of the rules of society and the rights of others.

They don't care about the rules of society and you can sense this before you consciously recognize it. You may get a feeling about them that their "sincere" words don't seem to match their actions. Con Artists are masters at getting you to doubt yourself and believe what they tell you. You develop confidence in them while they're preparing to take advantage of you.

Antisocial personalities:

- Try to manipulate and dominate others to avoid being dominated
- Willingly hurt others for their own personal gain
- Have a strong disregard for social rules and laws and a total lack of remorse
- Are aggressive and exhibit a reckless disregard for danger
- Constantly lie to and deceive others, even when they can easily be discovered
- Tend to be physically aggressive and extremely irritable
- Frequently change jobs because of being fired or quitting due to personality conflicts
- Often abuse or neglect their children (both physically and emotionally)

They fear being dominated and therefore attempt to dominate and control others. This gives them a reassuring sense of power in the world. They're often driven to hurt others to get what they want. They enjoy taking advantage of others. They are the con-man that marries several women at the same time for their money, or the psychopath who has no problem killing you because he wants what you have.

These people are masters at fooling family, friends, legal professionals, and even mental health professionals. Because of their lifelong skills of deception, Con Artists know how to make their stories sound believable. People dealing with an Antisocial in a business can easily be conned by them.

Antisocial's frequently use the legal system to submit false claims against someone they wish to harm or control. They'll even make false claims against a stranger who looks like an easy mark. A common example is bringing false charges of domestic or sexual violence against a spouse. Even if they themselves may have been abusive or violent. This also achieves the goal of control and manipulation of their target.

Family Court is perfectly suited to the goals of someone with a personality disorder: There's an all-powerful person (the judge) who will punish or control their spouse for them. There's a professional ally who will champion their cause (their attorney or the judge). A case is often prepared by gathering statements from allies such as family, friends, and professionals. They seek to gain the total allegiance of their children. If they fail, they treat them as an enemy and "make them pay". Generally, those with personality disorders are highly skilled at and invested in the adversarial process.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

"A Narcissistic Personality Disorder is characterized by a long-standing pattern of grandiosity (either in fantasy or actual behavior), an overwhelming need for admiration,

and usually a complete lack of empathy toward others. People with this disorder often believe they are of primary importance in everybody's life or to anyone they meet.

People with this disorder believe they're better than everyone else. Because of this, they're constantly getting into conflicts with friends, family, co-workers and even strangers. They're difficult to be around because of their self-centered and superior attitude.

Narcissists are generally characterized by:

- Having an extremely superior self-image
- Feel disdain for those who they view as inferior to them (most everyone)
- Often exaggerate their achievements or talents
- Feel they're entitled to special treatment and attention
- Are self-absorbed - their interest, wants and desires are all that matters
- Take advantage of relationships to serve their own desires without remorse
- Lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others

Their superior attitude is usually out of proportion with their accomplishments. Many successful people have a dose of this attitude. Confidence is one thing, but having a narcissistic personality disorder means that the person is dysfunctional. And this can be a highly destructive force in any community or family.

Narcissistic personalities become involved in business disputes and lawsuits more often than other high conflict personalities. These people can be very charismatic. They believe in their own fantasies. And can compel and inspire others to believe in them.

Narcissistic parents fear losing custody and control, lest they feel abandoned and depressed. Narcissistic personalities often become involved in high conflict divorces because of their disdain for others. And are generally oblivious to the consequences of their own actions. They often feel like they're the victim, when in fact their own behavior usually causes events that upset them. Compromise and respect for others is almost nonexistent.

If you confront the narcissistic personality about their behavior, watch out. They'll become extremely defensive and often respond by an intense verbal or even physical assault. Narcissists are usually no more aggressive than the average person until they feel threatened. However, they will aggressively attack someone when they experience a real or perceived threat to their self-image.

Histrionic Personality Disorder

Histrionic personality disorder is one of a group of conditions called dramatic personality disorders. People with these disorders have intense, unstable emotions and distorted self-images. For people with histrionic personality disorder, their self-esteem depends on the approval of others and does not arise from a true feeling of self-worth. They have an overwhelming desire to be noticed, and often behave dramatically or inappropriately to get attention. The word histrionic means dramatic or theatrical.

Histrionic personalities (often referred to as “drama queens”) can be extremely difficult to deal with because of their high intensity emotions and constant claims of crises. However, these emotions change rapidly. They’re usually very shallow and lack any real substance. Listening to them can be exhausting.

Histrionic personalities:

- Are dramatic and theatrical, with intense fluctuating emotions
- Need to be the center of attention, because of intense fear of being ignored
- They are uncomfortable in situations where they are not the center of attention
- Have difficulty focusing on tasks or making decisions
- Often make rash decisions
- Exaggerate and fabricate events
- Have a low tolerance for frustration or anything that results in delayed gratification
- Use their physical appearance to draw attention to themselves
- Are easily influenced by others and highly suggestible
- Constantly seek reassurance and approval from others

You can’t miss the Histrionics personality. They’re always focused on getting your attention. All too often it’s like watching a performance rather than interacting with a person. Because their emotions fluctuate so dramatically, real relationships with them are difficult and superficial. People in a relationship with this type of personality will usually protect themselves by creating an emotional distance while dealing with them. Those who remain in their lives often become resigned to letting someone else’s crises be the constant focus.

They can be fascinating and exciting but friendships and romantic relationships with them usually end up total disasters. A relationship with a Histrionic will most likely be characterized by fierce intensity, temper tantrums, manipulations, lies and outbursts of

anger. True intimacy with another person is usually unobtainable for the Histrionic without professional help.

Histrionic personalities appeal to your emotions to get your attention, to make demands on you, and to try to convince you of something. Yet their constant “crying wolf” will alienate and wear people out after a while. They’re also easily influenced and may include recent news events into their own stories. In legal disputes, they may allege that they are victims of the latest abuse trend and have the ability to be very persuasive because of their high-intensity emotions.



I realize that I’ve shared a great deal of clinical information with you. And that it may have challenged some of your thinking. But it likely confirmed what you’d already suspected about your family member’s spouse and situation.

As important as it is to understand the clinical perspective about alienation, I can’t think of anything more compelling than hearing stories from real families that have experienced PA. I will only share a few. There are many more on our site.

Here are those stories:

The first several comments are from families of high conflict divorces that escalated to include Parental Alienation (including typos). The last few are from divorces with a difficult spouse that didn’t include PA.

Hi I am an Adult Survivor of Parental Alienation Syndrome & a Lost Father. this is very real very painful...its killing me. J., United States



My son Christopher committed suicide Nov 13, 2008. He was a victim of Parental Alienation and the resulting depression. PAS is VERY REAL and very lethal.

Would that all alienating parents realize this and get help. My prayers are for all the parents and children who are experiencing this hell on earth. Continue to pray that God would open blind eyes, soften hardened hearts, and heal the wounded. D., United States

since the day i was born my ex-mother forbid me too see my fathers side uncles aunts grandparents and cousins after the deforce my dad was on that list too today i haven't spoken with her for about 8 years and i'll probably never forgive her she will probably die alone because i sure won't come. Whatever evil parent reads this don't be so stupid. GF, Netherlands

I watched this video a couple of times. It was a reminder of my childhood dealing with PA myself. This movie is the true story of how a child's innocence is kidnapped from them and how love is turned to rage and misplaced anger because of someone else's issues. I'm sorry you have to go through this. I did return to my mom and someday your sons will return as well. C., United States

Reading your website was a story that I have heard. It happened with my husband. I sat by his side and watched as she did what she said she was going to do. His ex-wife told him she knew how to get him out of his children's lives and she was going to do it. She succeeded. His children did not see him for 6 years. The next time his children saw him was 2 years ago at his funeral. My husband died at age 41 unexpectedly from a heart attack.

There are so many details into this story but I want the world to know this is real. It causes so much suffering. My step children will never know their father. He was a kind, gentle hearted beautiful person and a wonderful loving father. He was not portrayed that way in court. They will never, ever get to know that. Their mother took that away from them.

I guess I wanted to tell part of his story. You truly never know what may happen. SC., United States

This video was so beautiful. I too have not seen my 5 boys in 4 years due to my ex's control to keep them from me. The first year we did not know where they were since he hid them and told them I was dead. Now I am fighting the courts in

Utah to see them. My ex has money and false accusations to keep me away. I pray every day that you, and people like me will get our children home soon. Thank you for doing this video and your website. You are doing a great work on getting the word out!!! L., United States

I'm a mother experiencing this as well. Please take heart that it's not just Dads who suffer this. The decision of custodial parent should stand with truth, ability and love and most importantly the parent who has the child's best interest at heart. Man or woman, we deserve to be with our children and our children should not be punished for loving us. I'm so sorry to all of you who have to deal with this. R., United States

I am behind you 110%...I'm praying for the day that all of our voices will be heard. It is so sad that the rest of the world is in the dark as we fight a secret war in our own back yards! Although I've won my daughter back, I'm never going to give up my fight to expose these people as well as tell the world what they do to children for the sake of money. T., United States

Rick and Barb helped me more than I can say. They were amazing!

I was married for over 35 years. My husband was a narcissist and I found out he was having an affair with a much younger woman.

Barb and Rick shared strategies that helped me to prove there were assets that my husband didn't disclose in our interrogatories. They helped me to say no to a needless and expensive court proceeding that my lawyer was adamantly pushing me to pursue. They also helped me to figure out how my husband was tracking me while we were separated.

They saved me a great deal of money. But more importantly they helped me avoid putting children, family and friends into a difficult and relationally destructive position by needlessly testifying in court.

I was blessed to have their advice, encouragement, and strategies. They made a huge difference in my life. If you're getting divorced, I would highly recommend getting their help!

CG – MI



Thanks! Started this book between going to work, college, family and church. Wow! Real eye opener. Let's just say I have made too many of these divorce mistakes. I definitely made some poor choices. My lawyer was not qualified to handle this type of person either and I could have started off in a better position. Be Blessed, Tom (CA)



This should be required reading for every man before they step one foot into court. It was life changing! I learned more in this book than I ever did from a father's rights group. Thanks! Mark (TX)

What if it were you?

What would you do to protect your family if you were being attacked with the intention of destroying your relationship with your children? With the potential of being totally removed from the rest of their life?

Because of a biased judge and vindictive ex-spouse, I lost everything fighting to protect my sons. My business, a house, I went through bankruptcy, spent 5 years in court, and accumulated over \$150,000 in legal fees alone. And that doesn't include the emotional trauma and grief of losing my sons.

Please do everything you can to help whoever gave you this book to read. We have a number of practical suggestions for friends and family that want to help children and targeted parents at: www.keepingfamiliesconnected.com. You can make a difference!

It has been an honor to be your tour guide through this difficult and complex topic.

Blessings,

Rick