

The voice of the alienated child

“No one told me anything. This is my own idea.”

A crash course on the skilled maneuvers inherent in directing the minds of children away from loving parents. This step-by-step process is often summed up by simply employing the terminology ‘brainwashing’. Let’s take a look at the subtle intricacies of these games and how they fool us into thinking the guilty parties are innocent and the innocent ones are guilty.

If you were to sit amongst the parents in one of their support groups you would be overwhelmed by the many times you hear the comment, ‘but why can’t my mentor/rabbi/therapist understand me’. The cries are coming from mothers and fathers who have experienced the rejection of their own children. These parents are in deep emotional pain and are longing for answers.

Many of us have heard the terms Estrangement and/or Alienation when reading about broken parent-child relationships. Sadly, within the current culture, where independence is fiercely valued and stepping away from a relationship that is uncomfortable is acceptable, the concept of children that are estranged from parents is very real. Sometimes too, due to the unhealthy behaviors of a parent, a child may choose to disconnect.

It should be noted that when using the term Estrangement, we are referencing a rift between a parent and a child that is a direct clash between these two parties. Although difficult it may be possible to investigate where the problem lies and to make decisions to find possible solutions.

Far more complex is what is termed Alienation. Or the term used for the person responsible for the alienation - an Alienator. An alienator will use subtle tactics that are difficult to pinpoint when attempting to harm a previously loving parent-child relationship. An alienator is a third-party person that is outside of the present parent-child relationship. Their goal is not only to crush their target but to make it appear like the rift is between the parent and the child. This protects them, and they can retain their good standing in their community.

Although difficult to grasp, there are times when an alienator will find it to their advantage for a child to no longer be trusting or affectionate towards their parent.

This parent is referred to as the Targeted Parent. The motive can be financial, such as to gain access to funds and valuable assets or the motive can be more personal, such as to silence the targeted parent by crushing their dignity so they no longer present as trustworthy. This can be a motive if the alienator has done something dishonorable and would like it to remain unknown.

Breaking a parent-child connection will undermine the status of the targeted parent. It will cause the parent horrific grief often to the point of presenting as unstable. A particularly talented alienator will aim to crush their target to the point of losing confidence in themselves. Once this happens the targeted parent has effectively been silenced as few people will trust those that are not stable.

Observing these changes in a parent's persona, a child may find themselves pulling away from a loving parent and actually believing that they are unloving, or even actually flawed. However, it would all be based on evidence that has been fabricated in the presence of the child. The child has no clue that something amiss is transpiring.

Thus, we ask ourselves, is it really possible for someone to break a loving parent-child connection. Do not decades of devotion and sacrifice carry enough weight to diminish any efforts of a third party?

At times, our egos get the better of us. Especially, as stated above if there is something to be gained. The alienator too may wish to establish his or her own ego as the sole person to be trusted. More simply said – to gain power. Once in power they are the ones that make all major decisions and are the ones to allocate funds as they solely desire. They do not need to submit to anyone else's preferences.

**The big question remains.
How do they crush their victim – the targeted parent.**

At the root of their ploy is a concept known as 'Idolize, Devalue, Discard'. This is a process of gaining one's trust, then setting them up for failure, and finally blaming them for their own failures'.

This may seem complex. However, if specific pointers are followed, most anyone can become a victim of their games. Let's elaborate.

The first component of entrapping one's victim is to earn their trust. Often these alienators are prominent people within their communities, people we may already trust. They therefore come into our lives with grace and friendship which we easily accept. Other times, gifts or compliments, or spending special time with their target will gain them their desired goal – the trust of the targeted parent.

The alienator will also make every effort to place the child he/she wishes to alienate under their spell using similar modalities. Earning the trust of those in their social landscape is vital for their future tactics to succeed.

Once trust has been earned, the alienator moves on to the devalue stage. It is during this stage that the various manipulative tactics take place. Each tactic is designed to shock the victim – the targeted parent – with the objective to create shock after shock after shock. Few people can withstand the extent of this amount of trauma and be unaffected.

Following are some examples of tactics employed to break their target:

If you are the targeted parent, your alienator may choose to share conflicting details between yourself and those around you. Thus, you may be told that a person that is not well is getting better and your children may be told that they are very ill. This puts you in a different mindset than those around you and may make you appear to lack proper affect and you will feel lost within your social landscape wondering why others are looking askance at you.

Another tactic is to share only part of a story with you, the targeted parent. Thus, you may be told that a child of yours has been walking the streets repeatedly and not attending classes. The expression this is shared with you would imply that mischief is at its root. Obviously, this would upset you and you would react – possibly harshly and to the school administration as well. However, once clarified you would learn that your child was out of class because of a school project. The idea is for you to begin to mistrust your instincts.

Furthermore, to shake up your confidence in yourself, it is necessary to confuse your reality. An example given is of a woman that always keeps her car keys on a hook in the hallway. Unknown to her the alienator has chosen to play on her psyche and begins to place them in an odd place. One day she finds them in the refrigerator. This scenario begins to repeat itself day after day. This continues until the target begins to lack trust in her own memory.

The above tactics are often referred to as gaslighting, double crossing, and fabricating evidence.

At this point the children feel that the parent that is targeted is making a mountain out of a mole hole as they have never been privy to these games. They only see the impact of them. They may thus insist that the parent stop imagining things and to let themselves be guided by those that appear more stable – notably, the alienator. They may even threaten that if she/he does not stop the paranoia that they will leave him/her. This is blackmail.

As the targets gets weaker from experiencing one shocking event followed by another the alienator gets colder towards him/her. The affection of the idolize stage is gone.

This is followed by the devalue stage as the target is now often ignored or spoken to in a childish manner.

As a result, the target may choose more alone time to process this major loss in her life and will socialize less. To the children this may appear that she/he is not coping. With this observation the target is now blamed for his/her own failures.

To finalize their game to ascertain that their victim is fully crushed the alienator may continue their tactics using a variation of the above scenarios. Rather than create shock after shock they will play their games in rounds of either crushing their victim or re-entering the lives of their victims with warm apologies, smiles, and offers of friendship. As these cycles repeat themselves the ups and downs of the bad days and good days begin to take a hold of their victim and creates a form of addiction. This is accomplished by creating the lows – the bad days - that ultimately result in the victim anticipating the highs – the good days. The sweetness of the good days fuels one's endorphins exactly like an addictive drug. Since it is happening in cycles the body gets accustomed to it and the need for the good days – the drug - has been set.

At this point the alienator may choose to walk away completely from their target, essentially setting off withdrawal symptoms in the victim. She/he will now definitely appear unstable. This tactic is known as the trauma bond.

When the children see a different view of the parent they once knew, they understandably lose their trust towards that parent. They are quick to diagnose them as a borderline personality or simply as paranoid. With the alienator full of

happy energy and the targeted parent crushed the children will now align with the alienator.

The discard stage has now been completed.

Most fascinating of all is that the child/children were never lied to. Everything that took place was simply something the children observed. To them that their parent appears weak and unstable is the only reality they know.

Therefore, when these children are approached and told that they were brainwashed, they are quick to respond that no one told them anything. That their thoughts are all their own.

Thus, we see how the brainwashing process has successfully broken a once healthy parent-child relationship.

This concludes the dynamics of exploiting another's trust for one's own gain. The ultimate betrayal.

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Thank you for reading this paper. The objective is to create as much awareness as possible of the psychological games used to break an innocent parent. These victims deserve our support. Sadly, too often, family and friends are not aware that manipulative tactics are at play and rather than comfort the victim they too join the bandwagon of the naysayers and blame an innocent person. This blame causes re-traumatization as the victim begins to feel trapped – without anyone seeing their side of the story.

It is my hope that with the above writing I have helped create a measure of awareness to this deceptive pattern of behavior that has harmed so many.