

An Overview

Parental Alienation

*A family is only as strong
as its weakest link.*



Let's keep families together!

A Project of Broken Ties

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What is Parental Alienation?



In its basic form Parental Alienation is when children are manipulated by a third party - the alienator - to feel unsafe, unloved and unwanted by a previously loving parent.

The previously loving parent is often referred to as the targeted parent.

Sometimes the targeted parent has absolutely no contact with the alienated child and sometimes there is contact, however, there is usually condescending behavior of the alienated child towards the targeted parent.

The pain the targeted parent feels is huge, crushing and life-altering. It often takes over their entire life and leaves them floundering. What can be more painful for a parent than to lose the child they love?

The alienator can be anyone: a spouse, an ex-spouse, a grand parent, an in-law child, even school principals and community leaders. Their hold on their prey is especially compelling when they are charismatic and also in a position of power.

As will be explained in more detail in the following pages, a major alienating tactic is excessive love. Love works as a drug in pulling in any person that the manipulator targets. They may use praise, money, friendship, or job title to entice the unsuspecting child towards their influence.

With a little criticism toward the targeted parent and the child made to feel uniquely special, the playing field is no longer balanced. What follows is the beginning of a parent-child rift.

Alienated parents who are manipulated and blackmailed by an alienator will appear broken and unstable and exhibit sign of trauma (PTSD). This deceptive aura - of a parent appearing unstable - looks real to the child and encourages distancing.

Usually by the time the targeted parent realizes that their child no longer feels affectionate towards them much damage has been done.

Why would someone Alienate a child?



Alienators feel powerful when they realize they can control and/or destroy another person's success with their cunning ploys. Often these alienators have witnessed this type of behavior either personally or to someone close to them. This gives them a desire to replicate the abuse to put themselves back into a position of power.

HOW WILL CRUSHING THEIR VICTIM BENEFIT THE ALIENATOR?

In addition, once the targeted parent appears unstable the abuser has full control over the targeted parent's social circle. The alienator now has the power to cover up their own personal secrets, access the targeted parent's finances, and to be the one to make all family decisions without the targeted parent's input. Seeing a parent traumatized 'for no understandable reason' the alienated child will then lose their warmth towards the targeted parent. Since the alienator will appear in full control and loving towards the child, they - the alienator - will now be regarded as the 'replacement' parent.

Is Alienation Abuse?



WHAT IS ABUSE?

Abuse is when an abuser plays into the mind of a victim to control their feelings and thoughts based on their wants. It has nothing to do with what the victim wants. It's the act of moving into the victim's personal territory and superimposing their own thoughts and feelings on the victim using various manipulative tactics. When played well these victims truly feel that the thoughts are their own. They are not aware that another person planted them there. These are thoughts and feelings that would otherwise be unlikely to be naturally perceived through life experience.

HOW CAN AN ABUSER CONTROL A CHILD'S THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS TO DISLIKE THE TARGETED PARENT?

Building a relationship that seems like friendship by speaking gently and making eye contact will create warm feelings from one person to another. Being available at certain predictable times on a continuous basis will likewise solidify that trust. That is all wonderful if the goal is to build trust and honor it. However, if the goal is to monopolize the child's thinking to see a specific parent as weak or unloving by having influence in their lives – then this is abuse. It is the abuse of trust.

HOW CAN AN ABUSER DESTROY THEIR VICTIM?

Utilizing various manipulative tactics the abuser can destroy the natural love between a parent and child. Very common is the use of psychological games to make their victim - the targeted parent - appear unstable. This will give the alienator full control over all parties within their and the victim's social structure - ex. family members, friends, neighbors.*

PARENTAL ALIENATION IS COMPLETE

The above scenario would classify as calculated abuse. A dogma where an innocent victim and their social circle is broken down for the benefit of the alienator. This formulates the endgame of Parental Alienation.

** A more detailed explanation of the various tactics employed by the alienator can be found at the end of this booklet - in the Terminology section.*

Why Parents Can't Reach their Child?



WHY SPEAKING TO AN ALIENATED CHILD WILL NOT WORK

Alienators use their charismatic personas to convince the child that their parent has been unloving and fearsome and therefore a relationship with them is toxic. They encourage them to maintain a distant – or if not possible – than to have a cold – barely friendly – connection. This cold/distant relationship is torture for a parent and they will try everything to reach their child.

YET THEY WILL FAIL TIME AND TIME AGAIN. WHY?

What we have learned is that alienated children have been programmed to think they have every reason to be happy, to feel entitled, and/or to be provided various comforts. This will create a powerful image in the alienated child's mind that will most likely clash with the more serious realistic targeted parent's mode of parenting.

FEELING HAPPY IS LIKE A DRUG.

It makes a child feel special – like on a high.

When a targeted parent tries to reason with their child, the child feels that their parent wants to hurt them – wants to take away their very soul – the one that makes them feel happy. Therefore they absolutely cannot listen to the voice of the loving parent from whom they are alienated. It would mean giving up their ‘drug’.

More Tools in an Alienator’s Toolbox

Another important factor to note regarding alienators is that they will give these children – Time. Money. Gifts. and lots and lots of Praise. These alienated children will not only look up to the alienator but the aura effect of the time they spend together with them begins to feel spiritual – almost holy.

Furthermore, the constant time and attention these children receive from the alienator firmly establish into the child’s brain the notion that ‘this person is a good person’.

These tactics will create a very deep bond between the alienator and the child, that is practically impossible to break.

These psychological games have been known to be used by family members, therapists, and mentors. As noted previously, the alienator’s motives are – to gain a sense of empowerment for themselves, to gain access to funds, or as a cover up of a secret.

Let's Stop the Silencing



One of the most powerful concepts that seal the distrust from child to parent is the component of silencing. Silencing is the cult-like lid that is placed on a child's psyche hindering any chance that they will reflect that they may have been deceived, told untruths, or influenced by fabricated evidence. These tactics pull them away from a loving parent.

SOME FORMS OF SILENCING

- Telling a child 'you have every right to be happy and do not need to spend your time listening to a parent that wants to be in pain'. This statement is enough to keep a child from connecting to a parent. In actuality the pain of these parents is a symbol of emotional health as they are grieving the loss of a child. This is known as an ambiguous loss - which is a loss without closure.
- Telling a child that they are a very special child (i.e. smart, talented, funny, and intuitive enough to know what is healthy for their own mental health). This causes the alienated child to look upon the targeted parent - that has been psychologically manipulated to the breaking point - as the weak one and themselves as the strong one.

- Still another tactic is to convince a child that they are exceptionally lovable and that their own parent does not realize how truly special they are. This convinces the child that only the alienator is the one that cares for them.

- Guiding a child to have a right not to argue. This leaves the alienated parent without natural resources to share the reality of the 'entrapment' with their child

- It's the simple game of divide and conquer. This child will now see the targeted parent with diminished qualities and as a burden. The warm/trusting parent-child connection has been lost.

The Alienated child is now effectively silenced.

How to Help



- Listen to BOTH sides before offering guidance. There may be more to the story.
- Parents should not be judged by the pain they feel or how they appear in their shock or grief.
- Understand that grief is a normal reaction to a parent experiencing loss.
- Give Comfort
- Learn more about the complexities of Alienation
- Encourage reunification when possible

Terminology

WORDS AND PHRASES THAT DESCRIBE ALIENATION

Ammunition

This describes the toolbox of psychological games that the abuser has on hand to break their target. As you read through this section of terminology in the field of abuse you will come across the various tools the abusers use.

Blackmail

When we put another person into a position of fear if they do not comply to our wishes we are committing blackmail. Sadly many people fall prey to the alienator's blackmail games in an effort to keep the peace in their homes. It is only after much time that they learn they were exploited for the gain of another person who now has power over them and can control their relationships with their children.

Complex trauma

Complex trauma is a type of trauma that develops over time based on repeated, multiple, and cumulative traumatic events that are often of an invasive and interpersonal nature. It typically involves direct harm, exploitation, and maltreatment of a child or adult victim, especially at vulnerable times in their lives due to age, disability, dependency, and disempowerment.

Digging

When speaking to alienated children we often hear comments such as, 'my parents never understood me as a teenager' or 'they criticized how I keep my room'. These are both typical comments from teenagers worldwide. These are not a reflection of a harsh or derogatory parent. That is why these comments are called 'digging', as these children are taking typical everyday home life and finding fault within those lines.

Estrangement vs. Alienation

Estrangement is often used to explain a rift between a parent child relationship. However it is not a substitute for alienation. They reference very different aspects of the parent-child rift. In estrangement the rift is a fallout between the parent and child. In alienation the relationship was warm and respectable until a third party, the alienator, played his psychological games on the family landscape to unbalance the playing field resulting in the children losing trust and affection towards the parent.

Fear

Fear is a typical complaint of a child towards an alienated parent where the child will claim "I am so afraid of you". However upon further discussion there is no true reason for this fear.

Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a form of mental abuse in which information is twisted or spun, selectively omitted to favor the abuser, or false information is presented with the intent of making victims doubt their own memory, perception, and sanity. It may be to make the victim believe or doubt that the abuse ever occurred, that they are to blame, or to disorient the victim.

Gatekeeper

In alienation a gatekeeper is usually a single person within a family or social group that has a specific goal and uses their power of influence to control the thoughts and behaviors of their followers – often the children and friends of the targeted parent.

Hypnotic Resistance

A state of mind of a child that is a victim of an alienator that refuses to believe anything told to them by anyone that contradicts the belief employed by the alienator. They hold on to these beliefs – often false and exaggerated – to the point of self destruction. It's as if their brain is locked into this belief without the ability – or safety net – to feel able or secure to hear other versions of the concept they presently believe.

PTSD

Post traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a mental health disorder recognized by the American Psychiatric Association and World Health Organization. PTSD is characterized by a cluster of symptoms that develop days, months, or even years after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event such as murder, a fatal accident, or a natural disaster. Emotional and verbal aggression and abuse can also create symptoms resembling PTSD. Symptoms include intrusive flashbacks, vivid memories and recurring dreams of the trauma, avoidance of anything associated with the event, inability to recall some important aspects of the event, sleep problems, irritability, anger outbursts, concentration problems, hyper-vigilance, and an exaggerated startle response

Trauma Bond

The Trauma Bond can also refer to the alienator's use of the victim's own endorphins to create both addiction and withdrawal symptoms so that the victim – the targeted parent – looks unstable. This is another tactic in the alienator's toolbox.

*For more Terminology please visit our website
www.brokenties.org*



brokenties3@gmail.com www.brokenties.org