

by [Michael Allen](#)



My friend [James Ricker](#) asked me if I would write a guest blog post. This is my first attempt so bear with me as I dip my feet into the blogging pool. The topic I wanted to cover here is when we are stuck, how do we get “unstuck”? I started a support group along with a now close friend over two years ago to help uncover the mystery known by popular culture as “Parental Alienation”.

I am a recovering alcoholic and knew that AA (Alcoholics anonymous) in its raw pure form in essence was peer support with 12 guidelines for accountability and helping people get unstuck that were ready to change their pattern of behavior. The key word there is “ready”.....more on that in a moment. I knew back then when I began my journey that peer support worked.....no one could understand what an alcoholic goes through like another alcoholic and I applied the same logic to start [PASO-AZ \(Parental Alienation Support group of Arizona\)](#). I pitched the support group idea in a budding worldwide online support group known as [PAWWSG](#) and a woman popped in and informed me that her husband really needed something like this as he had not seen his kids in years and they also had lived in Phoenix. I scouted out a local church and talked to the pastor and created an event and I met this man and his second wife at the church and we talked for what felt like hours about the things we had learned in each other’s perspective journey’s through what we now call pathogenic parenting where one child begins rejecting an otherwise healthy parent mysteriously during a divorce or separation.

We continued to meet weekly and the group grew and grew and we came to find the work of a [Dr. Craig Childress](#) and a book called “ Foundations” and we all began to see some patterns in our perspective relationships with our ex’s. We met each week for about a month and I was driving 25 minutes away to a church in South Phoenix to meet and support each other and our band of growing parents. One night I had a random emotional crisis during my custody battle as my case was new and just ramping up and anxiety and fear frequently crept in. I called my new friend and I drove to my new friend’s house for late night support and the Universe gave me a shock....this man and his wife literally lived on the same street as me and we had been driving for miles for a month to meet, talk and support each other. I will admit while starting this meeting to help others I also had the selfish motive of picking the brains of other “left behind or targeted” parents to use in my own custody battle as to learn what worked for others and what didn’t. However I held true to my original value and intent was the key to moving forward is to painfully put one foot in front of the other....**turn your pain into something positive**. Force yourself if you have to... to the point of being

uncomfortable but during this journey that was where I saw the successes and failures as I watched learned and absorbed as much as I could to fight for my rights as a parent. Changing mindsets is one of the most difficult and painful processes there but **IT CAN BE DONE**. To break free of a negative data loop takes determination, drive and learning the ability to step outside one's self and say "I can do this". I can honestly say that with every set back I faced .....in my mind ...FAILURE WAS NOT AN OPTION. Period.

I suffered greatly during the initial 10 month battle.....ten months felt like 10 years for an interstate custody battle. Every day it felt like I would take two steps forward only to get knocked three feet back. I kept moving forward.....I kept trying to drag other parents forward with me. I did learn through this journey that people have to be ready to turn the next page in their story, you can't turn it for them. Sometimes it's more comfortable to stay in a cold dark place, blame others ....it's safer. I learned that behind it all the biggest thing keeping people stuck was fear....fear of loss, fear of failure, fear of life. And that's o.k....it's o.k to be afraid.....I know I was....fear is a natural emotion that protects us and keeps us from getting "eaten by predators". It's what we then do with that fear that defines our success in both our custody battles, relationships and even life in general. Do we let that fear consume us? Beat us down? Turn us into hateful people that now begin to hurt others around us and perpetuating the pain cycle? NO! Then we have become the very thing that we are fighting against.....we become that "bad, crazy" parent that the pathogenic parent paints us out to be. The then kernel of truth becomes a reality. The key to pulling free from the muck and mire holding us back is to use that fear to motivate us.....push us forward until we are no longer afraid. Until we can use [Ji Jitsu Parenting](#) (Dr. Childress) to stand on our feet, broken bloody and bruised yet arguably "too dumb" to stay down for the count.

I was asked often why we did a "selfie" in the PASO-Az meetings.....isn't that Narcissistic? Some parents would opt out but it would to me always be a key indicator where they sat with their current level of fear and if they needed more support or time. The reason was simple.....

1. Showed the opposite of what the targeted parent was being pointed out to be...smiling and with new friends vs alone afraid and scared. If their children were watching they would see their parent smiling and maybe even be more apt to reach out going "Hmmm maybe mom or dad isn't so bad after all"
2. Would anger the alienator....."Why isn't mom or dad alone broken and hiding in the corner" (inside the alienator's mind) "How dare they be out and be smiling"

Simple right? Standing on the shoulders of other parents fighting for the same thing.....their children's lives and their own sanity. Using Kindness to fight hate.....lifting your hand up to

pull someone out of the muck or allowing them to pull you under. Which choice are you going to make? It always comes down to choices.....and patterns. If you can step outside of yourself long enough you will see patterns in your life and patterns in the others around you. If you can do that.....you have begun the healing process because once you can see a pattern in your life you can break it. The first step is accountability....."what's my part?". The program of AA has step four to teach addicts/alcoholics accountability...but how do you give that gift to others not blessed with a program to guide them? I would ask "what's your part in your divorce or separation" in the PASO preamble? If the parent answered that they had no part ....they were the victim...I'd try in a kind way to get them to understand that they married their partner or failed to identify the alienation pattern as it was emerging. Perhaps I was too kind about it for the message to get through or the parent was not yet ready to move forward. Whatever it was..... we always have a part and until we can admit and hold ourselves accountable.....we will be doomed to repeat the same pattern. I have seen some huge successes and some huge failures but in my journey through parental alienation....I would call myself successful. I get to be a father to my son and share 50/50 custody with the same parent who tried to erase me. I have freed myself of hate and identified my own pattern of toxic relationships and trying to save others who are not ready to break their pattern or who don't need to be saved. What I learned what was important was I saved myself and I saved my son and I get to be his parent today. I was blessed to meet a mentor by the name of [Dorcy Pruter](#) who is guiding me through a journey to do what I love for a living.....teaching others to move forward if they are ready and stopping childhood trauma before it starts. I will continue to coach parents one by one to fight back with love and use my experience as a guide. I am eternally grateful for every single person that has crossed my path both positive and negative through my journey through marriage, birth, divorce and healing from trauma. I would not change one thing about my story.....because then it wouldn't be my story.

Be kind to each other....sometimes....it's all we've got.

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