

What Causes Parental Alienation?

Parental Alienation represents the family's inability to transition from an intact family structure united by the marriage to a separated family structure united by the children and by the continuing parental relationships with the children.

The family's difficulty with this transition is the result of one parent's narcissistic personality traits that are distorting this parent's response to the divorce and dissolution of the marriage.

The narcissistic personality traits of one parent are then infecting and distorting the child's relationship with the other parent.

Parental Alienation

Is a destructive family process that occurs in some families during and following a divorce

In which the distorted parenting practices of one parent have a severely distorting influence on the child's relationship with the other parent

Leading the child to entirely reject a relationship with a normal-range, loving and affectionate parent

So that, as a result, the child loses a healthy relationship with a loving and affectionate parent and is instead left in the unhealthy psychological care of a pathogenic parent

Parental Alienation

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Why does a child reject a parent?

Divorce produces a grief response among all the family members. Even if the marriage was problematic, family members, particularly children, will still experience grief about the loss of the intact family.

The narcissistic personality of the alienating parent, however, is pathologically unable to experience or process sadness and grief, and instead translates these emotions into anger, resentment, and a desire for retaliation and revenge toward the other spouse, whom the narcissistic parent blames for the public narcissistic injury of rejection and abandonment.

Under the distorting influence of the narcissistic personality of the alienating parent, the child is led into a similarly distorted interpretation of the child's own grief and sadness, as representing anger and resentment toward the other parent rather than authentic sadness at the loss.

For the child, parental alienation represents a **misinterpreted grief response** to the divorce.

What are the child symptoms of Parental Alienation?

1. A distortion to the normal-range functioning of the child's attachment system, in which the child entirely rejects a relationship with a normal-range loving and affectionate parent.
2. The presence in the child's symptom display toward the targeted-rejected parent of five specific and characteristic narcissistic personality disorder traits, acquired by the child through the distorting parental influence of the narcissistic parent.

In some cases, the child may display an unwarranted over-anxious fear of the targeted-rejected parent that meets DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for a specific phobia, but reflects an unrealistic "mother type" or "father type" of phobia.

3. The presence in the child's symptom display of an intransigently held, fixed and false belief that the parenting practices of the targeted-rejected parent are abusively inadequate.

What can the targeted parent do about Parental Alienation?

The targeted-rejected parent must learn to become an exceptionally good parent.

In order to resolve Parental Alienation the targeted-rejected parent must have the support of a skilled and knowledgeable therapist, and the support of the Court.

With this support, appropriate therapy will require that the child be protectively separated from the distorted and pathogenic parenting practices of the narcissistic parent during the active phase of the child's treatment and recovery in order to **protect the child** from becoming a "psychological battleground" as a result of the narcissistic parent's pathogenic parenting practices and active resistance to therapy.

Parental Alienation is not a child custody issue; it is a child protection issue.

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