



### WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING ALIENATED?

- Do not argue or get defensive with your child, it creates bad feelings and is not likely to change his/her mind.
- Let your child know that you have a different understanding of the situation and you would be willing to share your perspective if and when the child is interested.
- Continue, in any possible way, to let the child know that he/she is loved.
- Control your own anger and stay calm, even when hurt or frustrated.
- Hold yourself to the highest possible standard of behavior (do not give the alienating parent ammunition).
- Work on improving your own parenting skills.
- Always call/pick up the child at scheduled times, and be there even if you know the child won't be available.
- Create positive experiences/memories with your child.
- Provide mental health treatment for yourself and your child with professionals experienced with parental alienation.
- Build a support network with friends, family, community resources, and support groups.
- Become educated and help others involved with your child to learn more about parental alienation.
- Attempt to work constructively with the other parent, either directly or through mediation.
- Continue to attempt positive communication, on a regular basis, even if the child rejects or ignores it.

### WHAT NOT TO DO

- Do not ignore the problem—it will not go away.
- Never give up hope and never give up on your child.

### HOW CAN YOU HELP A CHILD AND HIS/HER REJECTED PARENT?

If you are a teacher, counselor, coach, clergyman, parent of the child's friend, friend, or family member:

- Listen to the child, without negating what the child is saying, regardless of how outlandish it may be (that is the child's reality) and then encourage the child to hear the rejected parent's point of view. Appeal to the child's maturity by saying that is the way mature people handle conflicts.
- Appeal to the child's intellect by encouraging him/her to carefully consider ideas or statements that are blatantly false or outlandish.
- Point out to the child how persuasive advertising can influence a person's thinking and try to relate that to the child's thinking about the rejected parent.
- Look for books or movies that can stimulate discussion about the importance of two parents and the sadness of having only one parent.
- If appropriate, invite both the child and rejected parent to the same function, making the child aware that the rejected parent is valued and appreciated.
- Look for opportunities to provide positive input about the targeted parent.

“...extending through the years of childhood and adolescence in his [or her] relations with both parents, [a child] builds up working models of how attachment figures are likely to behave towards him in any variety of situations; and on those models are based all his expectations, and therefore all his plans, for the rest of his life.”

—John Bowlby, *Separation, Anxiety, and Anger*

### The information provided in this pamphlet is based in part on the following works:

Baker, A.J.L. (2007). *Adult children of parental alienation syndrome: Breaking the ties that bind*. NY: W.W. Norton.

Clawar, S.S. & Rivian, B. (1991). *Children held hostage: Dealing with programmed and brainwashed children*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association.

Darnall, D. (1998). *Divorce Casualties: Protecting your children from parental alienation*. Lanham, MI: Taylor Trade.

Rand, D., Rand, R., & Kopetski, L. (2005). *The Spectrum of Parental Alienation Syndrome Part III: The Kopetski Follow-up Study*. American Journal of Forensic Psychology, 23(1), 15-43.

Warshak, R. (2001). *Divorce poison: Protecting the parent-child bond from a vindictive ex*. NY: HarperCollins.

# PARENTAL ALIENATION



## Undermining and interfering with a normal child-parent bond.





## WHAT IS PARENTAL ALIENATION?

A conflicted family dynamic that draws a child into siding with one parent, changing a previously good relationship with a now rejected parent in order to do battle. The child may become preoccupied with criticisms of the rejected

parent, which are normally inconsequential, exaggerated, or unfounded in reality. A parent may understand the theoretical importance of the other parent in the life of the child, but believes his or her case is the exception.

## ALIENATING BEHAVIORS INCLUDE:

### Badmouthing the rejected parent, such as

- Speaking negatively about a parent to, or in front of, the child.
- Inaccurately or untruthfully telling the child about the rejected parent, or suggesting they are unsafe or dangerous.
- Exaggerating minor flaws in the rejected parent.
- Inappropriately confiding adult information with the child.

### Interfering in a child's contact with a rejected parent, such as

- Throwing out gifts and letters from the rejected parent.
- Calling excessively during time with the rejected parent.
- Early pickups or late drop offs for time with the rejected parent.
- Forbidding any reference to, or photos of the rejected parent.
- Scheduling activities that compete with time with the rejected parent.
- Monitoring or forbidding communication or time with the rejected parent.

### Manipulating a child to reject a parent, such as

- Withdrawing love, inducing guilt for having fun or feeling love toward a rejected parent.

### Undermining child's relationship with the rejected parent, such as

- Asking the child to spy on or keep secrets from the rejected parent.
- Forcing the child to choose between parents.
- Creating conflict between the child and the rejected parent.
- Interrogating the child after time with a rejected parent.
- Providing the child with inappropriate information about finances, marriage or divorce issues.
- Accusing the rejected parent of causing emotional pain to the favored parent that the child should help to heal.
- Giving the child parental decision making authority, ie whether to visit with the rejected parent.

### Undermining the rejected parent's role in the child's life, such as

- Refusing to provide the child's information (medical, educational, etc.), to the rejected parent.
- Not inviting/informing the rejected parent of important events. (awards, honors, graduations, etc)
- Refusing to provide others with the rejected parent's contact information.
- Rewriting history to reduce a rejected parent's role in the child's life.

### AN ALIENATED CHILD OF PARENTS IN CONFLICT MAY:

- Express relentless, unambiguous hatred toward the rejected parent and their side of the family.
- Obsessively parrots the favored parent without regard for their own historical experiences.
- Refuse to spend time, visit, or communicate with the rejected parent.
- Hold negative beliefs about the rejected parent that are inconsequential, exaggerated, or unfounded in reality.

- May lack the capacity to feel guilty about inconsiderate or cruel behaviors toward the rejected parent, or to forgive any past conflicts.

### ALIENATION? WHY WOULD THE CHILD BELIEVE THE ALIENATING PARENT?

- The child feels the need to protect a parent who is depressed, anxious, or needy.
- The child wants to avoid the anger or rejection of the alienating parent.
- The child has unresolved feelings about the rejected parent and the divorce.

### ALIENATED CHILDREN MAY GROW UP TO BECOME ADULTS WHO:

- Have trouble trusting others.
- Have low self-esteem.
- Have difficulty sustaining intimate relationships.
- Experience shame for hurting the rejected parent.
- Suffer from depression.
- Engage in substance abuse to relieve the pain of parental alienation.
- Are more likely to experience divorce.
- Are more likely to have difficulty with authority and the law.
- Experience the loss of their own children through parental alienation.

