

PARENTAL ALIENATION FAQ

What is parental alienation?

Parental alienation is a mental condition in which a child—usually one whose parents are engaged in a high-conflict separation or divorce—allies strongly with an alienating parent and rejects a relationship with the other parent, the “target” parent, without legitimate justification.

Lorandos, D., Bernet, W. (Eds.) (2020). *Parental Alienation – Science and Law*.

Warshak, R.S. (2010). *Divorce Poison: How to Protect Your Family from Badmouthing and Brainwashing*.

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Parental alienation is a family dynamic in which a parent engages in behaviors that can cause a child to unjustifiably reject the other parent. These behaviors are referred to as “parental alienation strategies” or “parental alienation behaviors.”

Baker, A.J.L., Sauber, S.R. (2013). *Working with Alienated Children and Families: A Clinical Guidebook*.

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For the child, the biopsychosocial-*spiritual* effects of parental alienation are devastating. For both the alienated parent and child, the removal and denial of contact in the absence of neglect or abuse constitute cruel and unusual treatment As a form of child maltreatment, parental alienation is a serious child protection matter as it undermines a basic principle of social justice for children: the right to know and be cared for by both of one's parents.

The sad reality is that parents who damage their children's natural affection for the other parent are doing serious—and even abusive—damage.

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Parental alienation can be classified as a psychological hazard to the welfare of a child resulting from an abuse of parental care that exploits the dependency relationship of the child.

Boch-Galhau, W.v. (2018), Parental Alienation (Syndrome) – A Serious Form of Psychological Child Abuse. *Mental Health Fam Med* 14:725-739.

Do all children exposed to parental alienation strategies become alienated?

No. Not all children become alienated and certainly not right away. Alienation is a process.

Are all children who reject a parent alienated?

No. Some children who reject a parent do so because they have been unduly influenced and manipulated by the favored parent (through parental alienation behaviors/strategies).

Some children who reject a parent do so based on realistic reasons based on the behavior of the rejected parent. These children are referred to as realistically estranged.

Are some cases a mix of parental alienation and estrangement?

Yes. These are referred to as hybrid cases.

Do mental health professionals, law professionals, social workers, teachers, and medical doctors generally recognize parental alienation and take adequate decisions and measures to help affected children and families?

No. Among mental health and legal professionals there is a lack of knowledge about parental alienation and how harmful it is.

Harman, J., Biringer, Z., (2017). *Parents Acting Badly: How Institutions and Societies Promote the Alienation of Children from Loving Parents*