

THREE DEGREES OF PARENTAL ALIENATION

Mild Parental Alienation: Refers to cases in which the child objects to and criticizes the targeted parent, but yet enjoys the presence of the targeted parent once time passes or when the location is no longer in close proximity to the alienating parent.

Moderate Parental Alienation: Refers to cases in which all eight primary manifestations of PA are likely to be present and each is more advanced than in mild cases, but less pervasive than in severe cases. Children will usually go with the targeted parent after expressing and demonstrating significant reluctance. Also, moderately alienated children will express consistent negative feelings toward the targeted parent whether or not the alienating parent is present. Although these children may enjoy the time they spend with the targeted parent, they will not admit this in the presence of the alienating parent.

Severe Parental Alienation: Severe cases of alienation are differentiated from mild and moderate cases by the extent of the child's rejection and degree of negativity in the attitudes and behavior toward the targeted parent. Severely alienated children have little if anything positive to say about the targeted parent and often rewrite the history of their relationship with the targeted parent. They seem content to avoid all contact with the targeted parent, may reject an entire branch of their

extended family and often threaten to defy court-ordered parenting plans that schedule them to be under the care of the targeted parent. (Note: Please see "Missing the Alienation" by Linda Kase-Gottlieb for an explanation as to why Parental Alienation is often misunderstood or incorrectly diagnosed for something other than what it is.)

UNDERSTANDING AND MITIGATING THE ALIENATION

Parental Alienation is a devastating form of emotional child abuse, but it is preventable. PA is a dysfunctional family interactional pattern that intensifies appreciably when the professionals in the larger social systems (i.e. the mental health community, Child Protective Services, law enforcement, and the judiciary) become co-opted by the alienating parent and empower her/him in response. Statistics of interviews with alienated children confirm that children desire a healthy loving relationship with both parents. However, due to their loyalty to the alienating parent, children are prevented from this

relationship. Parental Alienation will not simply disappear nor will a child outgrow it. It needs to be dealt with in a proactive manner that can only be accomplished through aggressive measures to prevent or repair the damage caused by alienation.

These are a few items to consider:

1. Work toward teaching the alienated child critical thinking through games, reading, discussions etc...
2. Work with knowledgeable professionals.
3. Keep a journal documenting important information.
4. Keep yourself informed about the child's activities.
5. Be proactive in keeping the school informed about your current contact information.
6. Give the school copies of your custody orders and keep a copy readily available at all times.
7. Understand the Family Law Codes regarding your rights to access information about your child's education, health and well being.
8. Continue to educate yourself regarding new information on PA and reunification techniques.
9. Never give up loving your child.
10. Get support so you can maintain emotional and physical well being for yourself.

Reason for Hope

The stories of reconciliation, more than anything else, offer hope. They confirm that someday, sometimes, alienated children can in fact find their way back to their targeted parent. Knowing that this is true is extremely helpful, if not essential, for currently targeted parents, as it provides them with the much-needed beacon of hope from which they can draw their strength to forge ahead in their own alienation battle. The hope of a better tomorrow fuels them each and every day and guides them on their journey. Without the hope, some may give up.

Amy J. L., Baker and Paul R. Fine, editors, *Surviving Parental Alienation, a journey of hope and healing* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2014) pgs. 78 to 81.