Twelve Essential Principles of Cognitive Science for Alienated Parents and Their Attorneys

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**Related Reference material:** <https://www.familyaccessfightingforchildrensrights.org/uploads/2/6/5/0/26505602/clinical_reasoning_and_decision-making_in_cases_of_child_alignment.pdf>

<https://www.familyaccessfightingforchildrensrights.org/uploads/2/6/5/0/26505602/miller_-_familty_access_talk_10-5-19_-_accuracy_of_the_manifestations_-_revised_10-11-19.pdf>

**Psychological Triad:**

Thinking, Feeling, Acting ===> (Cognitive, Emotional, Behavioural)

Cognitive:

* Most APs have an underlying psychiatric or "cluster B" disorder (borderline, narcissistic, sociopathic)
  + Cognitive distortions (90% overlap)
  + Primitive defence mechanism (denial, projection, splitting)

Emotional:

* Hallmark: emotional dysregulation
  + Inappropriate anger/rage
  + Emotional instability

Behavioural:

* Extreme or bizarre behaviour
* Cluster B disorders

**General Concepts:**

These are big problems.

* Evidence based practice is what we want from the professionals
  + Most don't know the actual definition!
  + Not a requirement out of research study
  + It is using the best available evidence!
    - We do have PA studies
  + Failure to do this is rampant
  + Belief systems & ideology masquerading as science
* What do we mean by bias?
  + Does not mean prejudice, it is a thinking error
  + Ex: Judge thinks should use a high-conflict model for a PA case
  + It is the lawyer's job to educate the court
* Pattern recognition
  + Human brain seeks patterns
  + Can be good, or can be misleading
  + Many professionals use the wrong patterns
    - 4Cs - cool, calm, charming, convincing (AP) - cluster B disorders
    - 4As - anxious, agitated, angry, afraid (TP) - PTSD or similar, under attack
  + Professional should develop multiple hypotheses
  + Alienated children present very differently from estranged children
    - If many signs, this gives undebatable evidence of a high PA probability
    - Eight manifestations
  + 12 clinical axioms
    - Total clinical picture - need to look for patterns
    - Axioms are mentioned in [this document](https://www.familyaccessfightingforchildrensrights.org/uploads/2/6/5/0/26505602/clinical_reasoning_and_decision-making_in_cases_of_child_alignment.pdf)
  + The Big Three
    - Over-empowerment of the child
      * Who is over-empowering whom?
    - Boundary violations
      * Often missed or dismissed
      * Not allowed to tell a child there is something wrong with the parent
      * Inappropriate sharing (not age appropriate, financial info, personal info, legal information)
      * Is a form of child abuse!!!
    - Extreme inappropriate or bizarre behaviour
      * Extremism is characteristic of cluster B disorders
      * Pattern recognition should help with this
  + Make distinction between intuition and rational analysis
    - "Working with alienated children and families" (chapter 2)
    - Human reasoning in two systems:
      * Intuition (Fast, frugal, automatic, easy, effortless, *error pron*e)
      * Rational analysis (Slow, lazy, painful, usually "off", might override System1, *much more accurate*)
    - [Book](https://www.amazon.com/Thinking-Fast-Slow-Daniel-Kahneman/dp/0374533555): "Thinking, Fast & Slow" by Daniel Kahneman (won Nobel Prize for his work)
    - PA cases or extremely *counter-intuitive!!*
      * Will mistake enmeshment for healthy bonding
      * Will think child is not lying
    - Both systems are essential
    - Beware of simplistic heuristic thinking!
      * Relying way too much of rules of thumb
  + Humans tend to be poor statistical thinkers
    - ...when they think intuitively instead of analytically
    - Brain does not well in sorting out false positives/negatives and true positives/negatives
    - Brain tends to see patterns when they do not exist
    - *This is why domestic violence accusations are taken as true*
    - Confirmation bias
  + Metacognition: Thinking about thinking
    - Biases are hard-wired, all of us have them
    - Need to de-bias and compensate
    - Pattern recognition can help
  + PA is one of the most counter-intuitive things ever!
  + Counter-instinctual for children to reject parents
    - Will rarely do it in the absence of a powerful alienating influence
  + Battling claims against the science of PA
    - [RESEARCH](https://www.familyaccessfightingforchildrensrights.org/uploads/2/6/5/0/26505602/miller_-_familty_access_talk_10-5-19_-_accuracy_of_the_manifestations_-_revised_10-11-19.pdf): Surveyed 338 therapists who worked with abused children
      * Embedded 8 manifestations in survey
      * Result: Rarely displayed even half of them!
      * Falsifies hypothesis that 8 manifestations are not clinically useful!

**The 12 Concepts:**

1. **Anchoring** - tend to be hooked on the initial hypothesis, and unwilling to change based on evidence
   1. It is very powerful, cannot unanchor with just a bold argument - you must show it
2. [**Theory of Mind**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_mind) **(ToM)** - how to attribute thoughts, feelings, etc. to others.
   1. Although many TPs are clean to alienation, they fail due to manipulations of the AP
   2. They display the 4 As
   3. Need to cultivate a more sophisticated ToM (see #8)
3. **Attribute Substitution** - when mind has difficulty solving a problem, tends to substitute another problem it can solve
   1. Intuitive thinkers tend to be most confident in their judgements! Dangerous...
   2. "Who do I like better?"
   3. "Handbook for Parental Alienation"
4. **Availability Heuristic** (Judgement Heuristic - relies on attribute substitution) - making judgement based on how easy it is to think of something (e.g. High Conflict Model [HCM])
5. **Representative Heuristic (Rule of Thumb)** - Think something represents one thing, but really represents another (Stereotyping error)
   1. Mistake AP for good parent because of 4 Cs
   2. Mistake enmeshment for good parenting
6. **Confirmation bias** - give too much weight to evidence that supports initial hypothesis
   1. Should go out and seek dis-confirmatory evidence
   2. In general, dis-confirmatory evidence is MORE POWERFUL than confirming evidence (case: white / black swan)
7. **Fundamental Attribution Error** (page 29) - When looking at situational behaviour, tend to think that it is dispositional (external vs. Internal)
   1. Example: See an angry person, then think that this normal characteristic of that person
   2. Targeted parents will lose every time due to this (4Cs vs 4As)
8. **Spontaneous Trait Transference** - Can attribute a trait to someone even if you don't have it
   1. The way you describe people is the way others will look at you
   2. Can work against TPs
   3. There are ways around this (don't lay it on too thickly, be brief/concise)
      1. "I think he's undermining me" (how?)
      2. "I think he's using... " *(quote a specified behaviour)*
   4. 1998 *(what is this a reference to? Missed it...)*
9. **Cognitive Dissonance** - trying to hold two contradictory thoughts at the same time and they don't play well together
   1. [Book](https://www.amazon.com/When-Prophecy-Fails-Leon-Festinger/dp/1578988527): Leon Festinger - "When Prophecy Fails"
   2. Can reject any new evidence that disproves original theory
   3. Reunification therapists think if you generate cognitive dissonance with child in regards to perceptions of the TP, that will work - but it does not!
10. **Lying** 
    1. Children start to lie at a young age (e.g. 2) and are very good at it
    2. Professionals are very bad at detecting it!
    3. Lawyers & professionals are almost ALWAYS bad at this!!
    4. Three types of federal agent are a little better than random chance! (55% of the time)
       1. Carefully gather evidence and look at discrepancies
    5. Dr Kang Lee - [Ted Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/kang_lee_can_you_really_tell_if_a_kid_is_lying?language=en)
    6. [Book](https://www.amazon.com/Spy-Lie-Former-Officers-Deception-ebook/dp/B0071NOJ9W): "Spy the Lie" (written by former CIA agents)
11. **Base Rate Neglect** - Probability that something is true before looking at evidence
    1. Base rate for getting truth out in a 2-3 day trial is RARE!!!
    2. Judge can't learn this much science in just 2-3 days
    3. Cannot win case without describing PA science
    4. Cannot win without mentioning child abuse, using opening arguments, etc.
    5. Cannot win without having expert witnesses
12. When you encounter with a strong emotional argument, generally not a good idea to respond with an analytical argument
    1. Instead, respond with a stronger emotional argument
    2. Example: Only thing worse than removing the child from the AP, is leaving the child with the AP
    3. [Gerd Gigerenzer](https://scholar.google.com.au/citations?user=iw7cepUAAAAJ&hl=en)