

ALIENATING TACTICS IN

Parent-Child Trauma Coerced Attachment and Alienation

Parent-Child Trauma Coerced Attachment and Alienation is a profoundly damaging phenomenon where one parent manipulates a child's perception of the other, causing severe emotional and psychological harm. This includes denigration through negative comments and unflattering names, vilification with baseless accusations, interference with time spent together, eradication efforts blocking communication, information gatekeeping, and inappropriate disclosure. It involves pressuring the child to provide negative information about the other parent, damaging the loving connection, encouraging child defiance, forcing loyalty, promoting an unhealthy alliance, and emotional manipulation through threats of love withdrawal. These behaviours can result in lasting emotional scars for the child and strained relationships with the other parent. Here is an extensive list of examples (but not limited to):

Denigration associated with the targeted parent

- This parent makes denigrating comments about the other parent.
- This person is grudging in their acceptance of positive statements made by others about the other parent.
- This parent refuses to use the name of the other parent.
- This parent refers to the other parent using an unflattering name (e.g., Idiot).
- This parent struggles to admit that the other parent is capable of caring for the child(ren).
- The denigration of the targeted parent is implied rather than stated (e.g., "I suppose he does the best he can given his background").

Vilification of the targeted parent

- This parent makes allegations about the dangerousness of the other parent without adequate supporting evidence.
- This parent makes claims about the abuse of the child by the other parent without substantiation.
- This parent makes reference to the possibility of abuse of the child by the targeted parent without actually making the allegation.

- The timing of any claim of abuse of the child by the targeted parent is linked to legal events or parenting changes (e.g., upcoming court appearance, progression of more time for the targeted parent with the child).
- This parent makes sinister interpretations of normal events (e.g., the child sitting on the father's lap, the child getting into bed with the father in the morning).
- The child's reluctance to see the targeted parent is used as 'evidence' of wrongdoing by the other parent.

Interference with time spent with the targeted parent

- This parent puts obstacles in the way of the child spending time with the other parent.
- This parent offers the child alternative, favoured activities that compete with time they are supposed to spend with the other parent.
- This parent insists on repeatedly contacting the child while the child is with the other parent.
- This parent fails to produce the child so the child can spend time with the other parent.
- This parent keeps the child out of school or collects them early from school so that the other parent cannot collect the child to spend time with them (if the other parent is to collect the child from school).
- This parent schedules medical, dental, counsellor or other appointments for the child during time they are scheduled to spend with the other parent.

Eradication of the targeted parent from the child's life

- This parent fails to pass on gifts, cards or letters to the child from the other parent.
- This parent makes it difficult or impossible for the other parent to maintain contact with the child by telephone or other electronic means.
- This parent refuses to mention the other parent when talking with the child or around the child.
- This parent insists that the child call his or her new partner 'Dad' or 'Mum' even when the relationship is very new.
- This parent encourages the child to call the other parent by their given name rather than 'Dad' or 'Mum' (or some other title, such as Papa, that indicates the parent's role in the child's life).
- This parent acts to prevent the child from spending time with the extended family of the other parent.

Information gatekeeping

- This parent fails to inform the other parent about important events for the child that the other parent could attend (e.g., school plays, sports carnivals).
- This parent fails to inform the other parent about the child's medical appointments or about matters relating to the child's health.
- This parent fails to inform the other parent about the child's counsellor or psychologist appointments.
- This parent limits the information that is provided to professionals working with the child (e.g., counsellors, psychologists).
- This parent fails to provide the other parents with information about the child's school performance.
- This parent withholds information from the other parent about the child reaching developmental milestones.

Interrogation of the alienated child

- When the child returns from spending time with the other parent, this parent wants to know what occurred in detail from the child.
- This parent questions the child about the other parent's potential wrongdoing after the child spends time with the targeted parent.
- This parent questions the child about the time they spend with the other parent despite being told not to do this.
- It is your view that the child is feeling pressured to provide information to the questioning parent.
- The child tends to change their story about their other parent to a more negative one if this parent questions them enough about the targeted parent.
- This child avoids or would avoid spending time with the targeted parents to avoid having to be questioned by this parent.

Damage to the loving connection with the targeted parent

- This parent tells the child negative things about the other parent.
- This parent tells the child the other parent has a new family and does not want the child.
- This parent tells the child the other parent never wanted them.
- This parent tells the child the other parent is too busy for them.
- This parent tells the child the other parent does not care about them because they have not paid child support.

- This parent tells the child the other parent was unhappy about the pregnancy/wanted to terminate the pregnancy/was unsupportive during the pregnancy.

Inappropriate disclosure about the targeted parent

- This parent informs the child about negative events that occurred in the relationship that had nothing to do with the child or occurred before the child was born.
- This parent shows the child court documents or tells them about the content of court documents to reinforce the negative view being expressed about the other parent.
- This parent does not balance up negative comments about the targeted parent with positive comments.
- This parent does not filter what they say about the targeted parent when they are around the child.
- This parent discloses information about the targeted parent to the child as a means of strengthening the alliance between this parent and the child.

Encouraging child defiance

- This parent tells the child they do not have to obey the other parent.
- This parent tells the child they do not have to obey the other parent's new partner.
- The child is compliant with other people but not the targeted parent.
- There are complaints that the child has to comply with the parental demands of the targeted parent despite these demands being normal enough requests a parent makes of a child (e.g., doing homework, picking up their clothes, tidying the kitchen, not snacking before dinner).
- This parent makes the targeted parent's rules for the child seem unreasonable to the child.
- This parent rewards the child for noncompliance with the targeted parent's rules (e.g., letting the child know they are pleased, affection in the form of hugs, reinforcement of the alliance between this parent and the child).

Forcing loyalty to the alienating parent

- This parent pressures the child to take their side in the conflict between the parents.
- This parent insists the child tell others that they support this parent.

- This parent makes it clear to the child that positive feelings about both parents will not be tolerated.
- This parent makes it clear there will be negative consequences for failing to be loyal to the alienating parent (e.g., 'You can go and live with your father').
- This parent creates opportunities for the child to express their loyalty towards this parent.
- This parent has an expectation that the child will be loyal to them.

Encouraging an unhealthy alliance

- This parent talks about the child as if they are friends rather than having a parent-child relationship.
- This parent actively encourages the child to be dependent on them.
- This parent encourages the child to believe they cannot function without them.
- This parent plots with the child against the other parent.
- This parent encourages the child to lie to support their point of view.
- This parent talks about only needing the child to make them happy.

Emotional manipulation

- This parent withdraws or threatens to withdraw love and affection if the child disagrees with their view about the other parent.
- This parent withdraws or threatens to withdraw love and affection if the child acts in a way they consider to be disloyal.
- This parent withdraws or threatens to withdraw love and affection if the child asks to see the other parent.
- This parent sulks if the child talks about the other parent.
- This parent expresses displeasure or becomes angry if the child mentions the other parent.
- This parent threatens abandonment if the child expresses a wish to see the other parent.

Utilising outside forces

- This parent makes notifications to child protective services about the other parent.
- This parent seeks restraining orders or family violence orders claiming the other parent represents a significant threat despite no evidence to support this threat existing.
- This parent uses the legal system to punish the other parent.

- This parent seeks out counselling for the child to support their view that the child should not spend time with the other parent.
- This parent informs the child's school of the threat the other parent represents to the child despite no evidence to support this threat existing.
- This parent seeks out sexual assault support or family violence support for the child despite no evidence that the other parent sexually abused the child or perpetrated family violence.

But not limited to.

REFERENCE:

Haines, J., Matthewson, M., & Turnbull, M. (2020). *Understanding and Managing Parental Alienation: A Guide to Assessment and Intervention*. Routledge. pp 335-339

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