

Isolation and Gatekeeping

The problematic coercive parent prevents the child from having any contact with the rejected parent, extended family, and supportive friends, acting as a barrier to their relationships.

Manipulation including gaslighting

The problematic coercive parent distorts reality, crafting false narratives about the rejected parent and making the child question their own memories and perceptions.

Exposure to Coercive Control by the Problematic Coercive Parent

Deprivation (emotional and/or physical)

The problematic coercive parent withholds affection, attention, and potentially necessities, contingent on the child complying with the coercive campaign against the rejected parent.

Intimidation and Reward-Punishment Conditioning

The problematic coercive parent employs threats, verbal abuse, or other forms of aggression, coupled with a system of emotional rewards and punishments, to control the child's behaviour and opinions about the rejected parent.

Microregulation

Even limited interactions with the rejected parent are heavily monitored and controlled by the problematic coercive parent, stifling the child's autonomy and freedom.

Degradation

The problematic coercive parent denigrates and belittles the rejected parent in front of the child, cultivating contempt and disrespect.

Intense Attachment Despite Abuse

The child displays a strong emotional attachment to the problematic coercive parent despite experiencing emotional abuse, manipulation and intermittent reinforcement. This is a hallmark of trauma bonding.

Fear of Losing the Problematic Coercive Parent

The child fears repercussions, such as withdrawal of love, approval or abandonment, if they express positive feelings or desires to connect with the rejected parent, leading to compliance and loyalty.

Resistance to Reunification

The child actively resists attempts to reconnect with the rejected parent, demonstrating loyalty to the problematic coercive parent and their distorted narrative, a key manifestation of the trauma bond.

Internalised Blame

The child may feel responsible for the conflict and believe they are the cause of the separation from the rejected parent, further strengthening the trauma bond.

Cycles of Abuse and Reconciliation

The relationship with the problematic coercive parent may involve cycles of abuse followed by periods of affection or appeasement, reinforcing the trauma bond.

Powerful Dependency on the Problematic Coercive Parent Fuelled by Trauma Bonding

Idealised Authority

The child develops an idealised view of the problematic coercive parent, seeing them as a perfect and all-powerful authority figure. This perspective leads them to overlook the parent's flaws and believe they are always right

Adapted Narrative Adoption

The child internalises the problematic coercive parent's negative narrative about the rejected parent, accepting it as their own reality. This masks the manipulation and is reinforced by the trauma bond.

Shift in World/Self View Identity Disruption and Dissociation

Justification of the Rejection

The child actively participates in denigrating the rejected parent, often echoing the problematic coercive parent's criticisms and justifications for the relationship breakdown, a behaviour driven by the trauma bond.

Denial of Positive Memories

The child may struggle to recall or acknowledge positive aspects of their relationship with the rejected parent, aligning with the problematic coercive parent's fabricated narrative.

Parent-Child Trauma Coerced Attachment and Alienation

Infographic by
Amanda Sillars BPsycSc