

THE SACRIFICE OF THE ALIENATED PARENT

It is with a heavy heart that I must write a post like this, but wishing that it be unnecessary does not make it so: the issue is how do deal with "Parentectomy," the term coined by Frank Williams for the severing of the parent/child relationship due to the PAS. And, regrettably, this suggestion MAY serve to help only the PAS child---someday. It may have no impact in facilitating the reunification between you and your child, at least not initially. This may offer only the hope that your legacy to your child will be awareness of the truth.

Many knowledgeable professionals about the PAS process have likened the PAS to a cult indoctrination. But the PAS is immeasurably more insidious: whereas victims of a cult indoctrination are not initially in a dependency relationship with the cult leader and therefore had the option to reject the indoctrinator, children are very much dependent upon their brainwashing parent. Because of the dependency needs of children, resisting the alienating parent, who is generally but NOT ALWAYS, the residential parent, is terrifying to them. So as despicably as these children treat their targeted/alienated parent, they have no good options for escaping this dysfunctional family dynamic. They are in a no win situation, a double bind, a catch 22. The PAS situation is crazy-making, which explains why the psychiatrists who eventually founded the family therapy movement in the 1950s first observed ON THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD the characteristic family dynamic of the PAS. Child psychiatrist, Murray Bowen, had labeled this dynamic as the "Pathological Triangle." He was so convinced as to the detrimental effects on children of this dysfunctional coalition between one parent and a child to the minimization and disengagement of the other parent, that, when he hospitalized the child, he also hospitalized the entire nuclear family! Yes, although it is accurate to credit child psychiatrist, Richard Gardner, to have first labeled this family dynamic as the PAS, the family dynamic has nonetheless been observed and systematically documented by psychiatrists/family therapists for more than 60 years. For the naysayers, like Janet Johnston, Joan Kelly, Stephanie Dallam of the Supervised Family Network, et. al, there should be no doubts as to the very real existence of the PAS. A rose by any other name is still a rose.

But let me return to a suggestion that I am making to alienated parents regarding how to deal with “Parentectomy.” In revealing the entire traumatic sagas of several of the alienated parents whom I wrote about in my book, I made a video recording of their interviews, and I provided the video of the interview to those parents who requested it. At some point, these parents are anticipating the opportunity to view the video with their alienated children. We all pray and hope that it will not be necessary to leave the video in their will for their children to view; but regrettably, many are resigned to this being the only possible amelioration.

The suggestion to make such a video is a very personal and painful decision, and there is no right decision to do so or not. But I offer it as one option to free your children from the “pathological triangle”—better known as the PAS. You do not need a therapist to ask you the following questions. Any trusted friend will do. The following are the questions I asked of these parents, and they should be adapted to your unique situation. Here goes:

Tell me how you first met your child's other parent.

Tell me about how the relationship developed.

What qualities did this person have that made you attracted to them? (This is an important question because it indicates to your child that you can be objective. I assume that if there was an initial attraction, there must have been some good reasons for it.)

Tell me about the decision to become a family.

Tell me what the pregnancy was like to you and the other parent.

Tell me about the birth of your child.

What were you feeling and thinking?

How did you adjust to taking on the responsibility for another human life?

What did it mean to you to be a parent?

Tell me about how you were involved in parenting your child?

Did the other parent support your involvement as a parent?

Did you have different parenting styles and if so, how were they resolved?

Describe the co-parenting relationship.

Describe as many positive memories and interactions you had with your child.

Discuss your feelings about these interactions.

Discuss any significant trauma that occurred in the family's development that affected your relationship with the child.

Talk about any difficulties you had with your child and any interactions with your child that have left you with strong memories one way or the other.

Tell me about how you and your child's other parent grew apart? (Be careful how this is worded because you do not want to deprecate the other parent to your child. Nevertheless, you should correct any lies, misperceptions, and fallacies with which you were slandered. Correct any misinformation about you but avoid as much as possible casting aspersions on the other parent. If this will be seen by your adult children, you can reveal a bit more about the transgressions of the of the parent if it is necessary to set the record straight about you. If you believe that you could have handled the separation from the other parent in a better manner, apologize for your mistakes. If you did make mistakes---as we all do---apologize. Your child will appreciate your objectivity but emphasize that when relationships fail, it is always 50-50. Request that your child also keep an open mind about the family's history.)

Once you and your former partner separated, what events occurred that interfered with your relationship with your child?

What efforts did you make to maintain a relationship with your child?

What role did all the professionals who intervened in your child

custody case play in the outcome of the legal situation and your rights to have a relationship with your child.

Describe the cost to you in time, money, and energy in pursuing a relationship with your child.

Describe any and all miscarriages of justices you were subjected to and any false cases of child abuse and domestic violence that were lodged against you.

Is there anything you would have done differently had you had the opportunity to do over? (Many alienated fathers expressed to me that they had decided not to file legitimate abandonment and/or domestic violence charges against the mother so as not to hurt their child by seeing their mother sent to jail. In the end, these mothers used the system to file fallacious allegations against them, and the alienation resulted and/or was deepened.)

Describe how the mental health, child protection, law enforcement, and judicial system perpetuated the alienation and interfered with your relationship with your child.

If you were to have the ear of the professional who intervene in child custody, including the lawyer for the child and the judge, what recommendations would you make to change how we adjudicate child custody?

What was your biggest regret during this entire trauma?

What are the fears and concerns that you have for your alienated child?

What has the loss of your child meant to you?

How is the loss of your child changed your life?
Do you know how your child is doing how and what is happening in their lives?

How has it affected you that you are not participating in these events with your child?

Do not hold back your tears as your children should know how

painful this experience has been for you.

I am sure that there are many more questions that could be asked which would convey to your child what this ordeal has been like for you. In fact, I would welcome anyone to make additional suggestions as to what could be asked. I will add your suggestions to this post on my website, www.endparentalalienation.com.

I hope this suggestion is helpful to some of you. Others will find it too painful to undertake. If that is the case, store away this suggestion for future reference. As always, anyone should feel free to e-mail me for counsel about any of their ideas.