

CHAPTER XIII

THE ALIENATED PARENT

Alienated parents generally find themselves in a double bind situation: if they pursue a relationship with their resistant children, they are labeled aggressive or insensitive to their children's feelings. But if they do not pursue their visits, they are accused of abandoning their children. Alienated parents must frequently make a calculated decision about whether to appear for visits because of the risk of arrest due to being falsely accused of by the alienating parent or their children of menacing or threatening. And then there is the concern of how to relate to their children out of fear that a gesture of affection will be misinterpreted as inappropriate sexual contact, should there have been a history of fallacious sex abuse allegations. Alienated parents are accused of showing no interest in their children when they do not appear at their games; but when they have appeared, they are humiliated by being ignored or advised to leave or labeled as a stalker. Another dilemma for alienated parents is to resist responding in kind to their children's hostility and deprecation. It is often a no-win situation, and that creates frustration and anger and a helplessness in deciding the best course of action in these very convoluted situations.

Major (2006) sums up the targeted parent's double bind situation as follows:

It is common with PAS that alienated parents are in a chronically defensive position.

They are continuously defending themselves against one wild accusation after another.

Instead of being proactive, they are most likely to become passive.

In the face of

overwhelming hostility from the other parent, target parents cope by trying not to rock

the boat. Tension builds. Something snaps and people react.

Families with PAS are

volatile families. (p. 281)