

**IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO ERADICATE THE PA**  
**By Linda Gottlieb, LMFT, LCSW-R**

It Would be So Easy to Eradicate the PA----were it not for the PA-unaware professional rescuer in the mental health and matrimonial law communities and but for a segment of these professionals who are motivated only by their bottom line. Here go the examples in support of my reasoning.

I was coincidentally contacted for help this past week by two targeted mothers, each of whom is being alienated from her 15-year-old son. These divorced mothers shared legal custody with the boys' fathers and had further freely agreed to a physical custody arrangement that approached 50-50. Each mother had generously allowed her son to reside with his father beginning sometime early in June in recognition of a teenage boy's need for meaningful input from his male role model and to have his father participate in the end-of-the-school year activities.

Six weeks after each mother's generosity, there has been absolutely no contact, no visit, no phone call, no text message from the boys, who further do not respond to numerous attempts at contact by each respective mother.

Despite the requirement of each respective divorce agreement for joint decision-making, each father unilaterally enrolled his son in therapy with an individual therapist. (Family therapy had actually been ordered by the court.) Each mother received only one contact from her son's therapist and that was to convey to her that she has been a horrible, abusive parent to her son and that the therapist therefore supports the boy's decision to sever the relationship with his mother. Neither mother was offered the opportunity to meet with the therapist and share her side of the story. Instead, the therapy sessions are used by each boy to deprecate and bash his mother. These therapists are guilty of malpractice, according to this humble family therapist.

One mother had become bankrupt after paying her legal fees resulting from an extremely hostile, adversarial divorce proceeding; she is not sure how she will obtain the funds to again pursue her parental rights. The other mother now retained an attorney in order to enforce her divorce decree's provision for family therapy. That had been her initial purpose for contacting me. In my role as a family therapist, I contacted the father immediately after meeting with the mother in order to comply with the requirements of the divorce agreement and the standards of my profession to obtain a full picture of the child's life and to involve both parents. I explained my desire to support a shared parenting relationship and help the family resolve any issues and difficulties. The father hostilely declined my services. Three days later, the father's attorney sent a letter to the mother's attorney reprimanding the mother for violating the court order by seeking therapy without first consulting him. Imagine that! The mother had met with me alone, while the father had unilaterally entered the boy in therapy that had been proceeding for five weeks. The father's attorney enclosed the Amazon description of my book and stated that I was clearly

an unacceptable choice for therapist as I would be premeditatedly biased against him. (Well obviously, it is only when a parent is engaging in alienation that a PA-aware therapist should be feared! If one is innocent of engaging in alienation, you would think you would want a PA-aware therapist so that PA can be ruled out.) The attorney, instead, suggested that the boy's individual therapist, the one who had formed a negative opinion of the mother without ever interviewing her, was the better choice for family therapy. The mother was further threatened with court reprisals for violating the joint decision making provision.

So what does everyone think of a therapist who treats a child as if they had been conceived of the Immaculate Conception? A therapist who thereby forms an opinion, makes an assessment, and develops a treatment plan with input from only one parent?

And what does one think of an attorney who fails to counsel his/her client about the responsibility of the custodial parent (in these cases the de facto and not de jure custodial parents) to facilitate and encourage the relationship between the other parent and their child? Matrimonial attorneys are required to counsel clients against dissipating marital assets as well as many other immoral and illegal behaviors. Why are they not expected to counsel their clients about engaging in alienating behaviors, which are almost universally grounds for change of custody---- although rarely enforced?

If therapists and attorneys refused to support the alienating parent, then alienation would never get off the ground. This is such a simple remedy to enforce! And this travesty is creating a generation of children out of control and suffering serious emotional issues.

I am becoming sickened by the immoral, indifferent, uninformed, and sometimes selfish self-interested motivations of all too many in my profession and in the other professionals who impact child custody issues.