



**MARTHA
McCARTHY
& COMPANY**

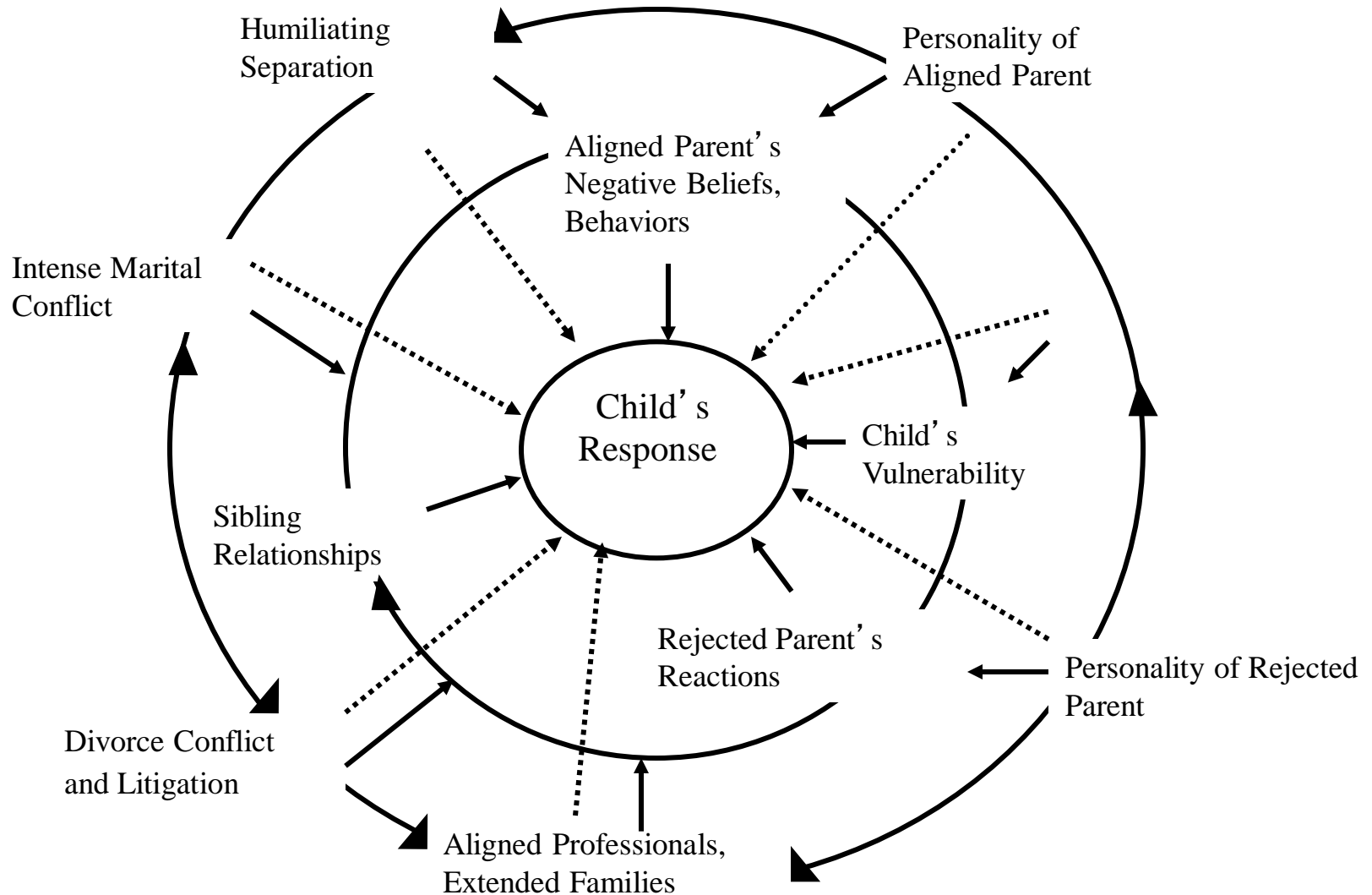
Managing High-Conflict Clients in Separation & Divorce: Parental Estrangement

**October 21, 2016
2016 AFFC-O Conference**

Martha McCarthy
146 Davenport Road
Toronto, ON M5R 1J2
Tel 416.862.6226
Fax 416.862.9001

Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
One Washington Street, Suite 203
Wellesley Hills, MA 02481
617-527-2173

Kelly & Johnston Multi-Factorial Model (2001)



Alienation: Typical Behaviours Exhibited by Child, Favored Parent, and Rejected Parent (Fidler et al, 2008)

Typical Behaviors Exhibited by Alienated Child

Typical Behaviors Exhibited by Alienated Child:

- Opinion of parents is one sided, all good or all bad; idealizes one parent and devalues the other
- Vicious vilification of rejected parent; campaign of hatred
- Trivial, false, and irrational reasons to justify hatred
- Reactions and perceptions unjustified or disproportionate to parent's behaviors
- Talks openly and without prompting about rejected parent's perceived shortcomings
- Extends hatred to extended family and pets of rejected parent (hatred by association)
- No guilt or ambivalence regarding malicious treatment, hatred, etc.
- A stronger, but not necessarily healthy, psychological bond with alienating parent than with rejected parent
- Anger at rejected parent for perceived abandonment; blames that parent for divorce
- Speech about rejected parent is brittle, a litany; obsessed; has an artificial quality; affect does not match words; no conviction; uses adult language; has a rehearsed quality
- Stories are repetitive and lacking in detail and depth
- Mimics what siblings report rather than own experience
- Denial of hope for reconciliation; no acknowledgment of desire for reconciliation
- Expresses worry for preferred parent, desire to care for that parent; or, defensive denial that child is indeed worried about parent

Alienation: Typical Behaviours Exhibited by Child, Favored Parent, and Rejected Parent (Fidler et al, 2008)

Typical Behaviors Exhibited by Favored (Alienating) Parent

Typical Behaviors Exhibited by Favored (Alienating) Parent:

- Insists that the child has the right to make decisions about contact
- Rarely talks about the other parent; uninterested in child's time with other parent after contact; gives a cold shoulder or silent treatment, or is moody after child's returns unless child expresses dissatisfaction about the contact
- No photos of rejected parent in the home; removes reminders of the other parent
- Refusal to hear positive comments about rejected parent; quick to discount child's good times as trivial and unimportant
- No encouragement of calls by child to other parent between contacts; rationalizes that child does not ask
- Tells child fun things that were missed during the child's time with other parent
- Indulges child with material possessions and privileges
- Sets few limits or is rigid about routines, rules, and expectations
- Refuses to speak directly to parent; refuses to be in same room or close proximity; does not let rejected parent come to door to pick up child
- No concern for missed time with other parent
- Makes statements and then denies what was said
- Body language and nonverbal communication reveal lack of interest, disdain, and disapproval
- Engages in inquisition of child after time spent with the other parent
- Rejected parent is discouraged or refused permission to attend school events and activities
- Telephone messages, gifts, and mail from other parent to child are destroyed, ignored, or passed on to the child with disdain
- Distorts any comments of child that might justify the accusations about abusive parenting or negative behavior
- Doesn't believe that child has any need for relationship with other parent

Alienation: Typical Behaviours Exhibited by Child, Favored Parent, and Rejected Parent (Fidler et al, 2008)

Typical Behaviors Exhibited by Favored (Alienating) Parent (ctd.)

Table 4.2 (Cont'd)

-
- When child calls during contact with other parent and is quiet or noncommunicative, parent wrongly assumes pressure from rejected parent, or that child is not comfortable with rejected parent; evidence of bad parenting as favored parent does not appreciate that child is uncomfortable talking to alienating parent in presence of rejected parent
 - Portrays other parent as dangerous; may inconsistently act fearful of other parent in front of child
 - Exaggerates negative attributes of other parent and omits anything positive
 - Delusional false statements repeated to child; distorts history and other parent's participation in the child's life; claims other parent has totally changed since separation
 - Projection of own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors onto the other parent
 - Does not correct child's rude, defiant, and/or omnipotent behavior directed toward the other parent but would never permit child to do this with others
 - Convinced of harm, when there is no evidence
 - False or fabricated allegations of sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse
 - Denigrates and exaggerates flaws of rejected parent to child
 - Says other parent left "us," divorced "us," and doesn't love "us"
 - Over-involves child in adult matters and litigation
 - Child required to keep secrets and spy or report back on other parent
 - Child required to be messenger
 - Overt and covert threats to withdraw love and affection from child unless other parent is rejected
 - Extreme lack of courtesy to rejected parent
 - Relocation for minor reasons and with little concern for effects on child

Alienation: Typical Behaviours Exhibited by Child, Favored Parent, and Rejected Parent (Fidler et al, 2008)

Typical Behaviors Exhibited by Rejected (Alienated) Parent

Typical Behaviors Exhibited by Rejected (Alienated) Parent:

- Harsh, rigid, and punitive parenting style
- Outrage at child's challenge to his/her authority
- Passivity or withdrawal in face of conflict
- Immature, self-centered in relation to child
- Loses temper; angry, demanding, intimidating character traits, but not to level of abuse
- Counterrejecting behavior
- Lacks empathic connection to child
- Inept and unempathetic pursuit of child, pushes calls and letters, unannounced or embarrassing appearances at school or activities
- Challenges child's beliefs or attitudes and tries to convince him or her otherwise
- Dismissive of child's feelings and negative attitudes
- Attempts to induce guilt
- May use force to reassert parental position
- Vents rage, blames alienating parent for brainwashing child, and takes no responsibility

Note. Reprinted by permission of Carswell, a division of Thomson Reuters Canada Limited.

Selected Bibliography: Articles, Books, and Cases

Articles:

Bala, N., Hunt, S., & McCarney, C. (2010). Parental Alienation: Canadian Court Cases 1989 – 2008. *Family Court Review*, 48, 162-177.

Warshak, R.A. (2015). Ten parental alienation fallacies that compromise decisions in court and in therapy. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, Vol 46(4), 235-249. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pro0000031>

Books:

Fidler, B.J., Bala, N., & Saini, M. (2013). *Children resisting contact post-separation and parental alienation: An evidence-based review*. American Psychology-Law Book Series, Oxford University Press.

Judge, A. & Deutsch, R.M., Eds. (2016). *Overcoming Parent-Child Contact Problems: Family-Based Interventions for Estrangement, Rejection, Alienation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cases:

S(C) v S(M), 2007 CarswellOnt 1267 (Ont SC), aff'd 2010 ONCA 196.

A(A) v S(N), 2007 BCCA 363.

L(AG) v D(KB), 2009 CarswellOnt 188 (Ont SC).

Fielding v Fielding, 2013 ONSC 5102.

W(JC) v W(JKR), 2014 BCSC 488.

X v Y, 2016 ONSC 545.

X v Y, 2016 ONSC 5551 (decision on costs).

JMG v LDG, 2016 ONSC 3042.



**MARTHA
McCARTHY
& COMPANY**

Managing High-Conflict Clients in Separation & Divorce: Parental Estrangement

**October 21, 2016
2016 AFFC-O Conference**

Martha McCarthy
146 Davenport Road
Toronto, ON M5R 1J2
Tel 416.862.6226
Fax 416.862.9001

Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
One Washington Street, Suite 203
Wellesley Hills, MA 02481
617-527-2173