

In her book – **Breaking the Ties that Bind** – Dr Amy Baker studied the outcomes for 40 adults in the US who identified they had been manipulated to reject one of their parents in childhood. She found that they experienced:

- **Low self-esteem.** Stemming from the denigration of the targeted parent. When a parent bad-mouths someone who is half of the child's identity, the child **internalises this as criticism against themselves** (65%).
- **Guilt.** For having betrayed the targeted parent (% not documented).
- **Depression.** For the irreplaceable time they lost with the targeted parent, extended family members and friends (28%).
- **Lack of trust.** In themselves and others. When they realise that what they believed about the alienating parent was actually not the case. Therefore, they do not trust themselves to be good judges of other's motives and character (40%).
- **Drug and alcohol problems.** Adult children were drawn to substance abuse to escape the pain of their loss (35%).
- **Alienation from their own children.** They subconsciously chose partners who were like their alienating parents and so brought about alienation in their own children (50%).
- **Divorce.** Many said their marriages failed because of their lack of trust in their partner, their inability to be intimate and problems with depression and substance abuse (57.5%).

## Effects on children

Young children who are manipulated to cut off all ties with a parent may experience:

- Feelings of extreme pressure to reject a parent and extended family members that they love.
- Anxiety
- Strong anger for the once much-loved parent. When this is allowed to develop it can spill over to other authority figures such as teachers or the police, leading to exclusion from school or a criminal record.
- Guilt for rejecting their parent and treating them with hostility.
- Psychological harm.
- Those severely affected may adopt “splitting”. One parent is seen as all good, the other all bad. They are unable to manage the reality that there is good and bad in both. This has implications for all future relationships.
- Sadness because, deep down, they want a relationship with their parent.
- Suppressed and repressed memories of time spent with the rejected parent.
- Sleeplessness
- Agitation
- Inability to think critically or to describe their emotions.
- Lack of focus.
- Loss of ability to play and learn.
- A restriction on personal relationships with half of their family, identity and cultural background.