

**JO FROST, Global Parenting Expert, Child & Family Advocate**

*Parental Alienation is self-explanatory.*

*As a parental expert, coach, and child advocate who continues to navigate through much family dysfunction; it's absolutely deplorable we don't recognise such behaviour in some courtrooms. Those who have the power to change the laws, turn a blind eye.*

*Parental alienation is a form of domestic abuse inflicted on the victimised parent by the 'use' of their children, diligently calculated and the kids are used as pawns on the chess board of life. This abusive behaviour needs to be recognised and laws need to change to protect these children from emotional and psychological abuse.*

*Children are torn emotionally, gaslighted mentally and repeatedly put in a position which betrays their own genuine heartfelt emotions. To "survive" and stay "safe", they reject their other loving parent and extended family, as a coping mechanism.*

*This behaviour over months and often years, leads to detrimental mental health issues and trauma for the child that will, and does, have an adverse impact on their entire lives.*

*The narrative at present is polarising, creating a gender war to distract from where the focus should really be... the child.*

*Just because we can't see it physically, it doesn't mean it's not happening. I ask those who deny its reality to re-evaluate their mindset on this urgent issue.*

**ERIN PIZZEY, Founder of the first domestic violence shelter for women and children and global expert on domestic abuse**

*My definition of parental alienation is where one parent puts their needs, or in this case their hatred of an ex-partner, and wish to destroy them, on the shoulders of their very fragile children.*

*Of course, there are different degrees because it depends how vengeful the parent is, but at the end of the day, the message to the child is their other parent doesn't love them and there's no degree in that. It's the most devastating thing any parent can do.*

*The concept of intergenerational family violence and dysfunction is a very long, well evidenced one and we can see, if we track down those family generations, where the dysfunction originates.*



*It affects every single aspect of a child's life. It's not just child abuse; it's almost like child murder. It kills that hopeful loving child because they've been turned against a parent and the child is left absolutely bereft.*

*This is an issue of extreme urgency; it's damaging yet another generation of children and we have to make it our absolute priority to address it.*

*We have to stop hurting our children.*

***The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS England) definition of parental alienation is: "when a child's resistance or hostility towards one parent is not justified and is the result of psychological manipulation by the other parent."***

***UK expert witness STUART GRAHAM uses attachment and neuroscience principles to assess and resolve parental alienation, referencing Professor Dan Siegel's work, which shows securely attached children develop higher cognitive functions, such as "empathy, insight, response flexibility, emotion regulation, body regulation, morality, intuition, attuned communication, and fear modulation."***

*Evolution equips and programs children and parents to stay close. Attachment neurocircuits are hard wired into our nervous and threat responses. Pleasure neurochemicals (i.e. oxytocin and dopamine) are released within secure attachments. Toxic stress chemicals such as cortisol are released when attachments are insecure, disrupted by threat of, or actual loss via separation, or there's otherwise too little time together to satisfy mutual needs.*

*Separated children may experience fear and trauma from irresolvable loss, compromising their healthy brain development. Things may stay that way until their predicament is resolved by effective and lasting reunification between attachment figures.*

*Meanwhile, higher cognitive functions are likely undermined in children alienated during painful separations, enabling psychological deterioration, and denying self-resolution. Alienated children seem unlikely to be securely attached to alienating parents.*

***DR CRAIG CHILDRESS, a leading clinical psychologist, in his testimony to the Government of Puerto Rico who've recently made Parental Alienation illegal said: "There is no worse pathology in the attachment system than a complete severing of the parent-child bond. When a child rejects a parent, half of their attachment system is entirely devastated. The attachment system is developing its patterns for love and bonding during childhood. This is exactly the wrong time to see the worst attachment pathology possible."***



**DSM-5995.51** *“Non accidental verbal or symbolic acts by a child’s parent or care-giver that result, or have reasonable potential to result, in significant psychological harm to the child”.*

**DR KIRK WEIR, a consultant child, adolescent and family psychiatrist, who dealt with innumerable cases in the UK involving children in both care settings (i.e. public and private law cases), identified the difference:**

*“I realised I had assessed many children who had been victims of serious parental abuse in care cases, who did not react like this (i.e. alienated children) at all. The main problem was the children retained a strong wish to be with those who had abused them and it was their continuing bond of affection to their abusers which put them at risk”.*

**DR JENNIFER J. HARMAN, Ph.D, Associate Professor said:**

*“Despite affecting millions of families across the world, parental alienation has been largely unacknowledged or denied by legal and health professionals as a form of family violence.*

*This complex form of aggression entails a parental figure engaging in the long-term use of a variety of aggressive behaviours to harm the relationship between their child and another parental figure and/or to hurt the other parental figure directly. Like other forms of family violence, parental alienation has serious and negative consequences for family members, yet victims are often blamed for their experience”.*

**The Honourable LADY JUSTICE PARKER, High Court Family Division**

*I regard parental manipulation of children, of which I distressingly see an enormous amount, as exceptionally harmful. It distorts the relationship of the child not only with the parent but with the outside world. Children who are suborned into flouting court orders are given extremely damaging messages about the extent to which authority can be disregarded and given the impression that compliance with adult expectations is optional.*

*Parents who obstruct a relationship with the other parent are inflicting untold damage on their children and it is, in my view, about time that professionals truly understood this.*

**The legendary powerhouse behind the Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation (DMM), DR PATRICIA CRITTENDEN stated at an NSPCC Child Neglect conference:**



*“A society that values its children, must cherish its parents. Parents are the only resource who are wholly committed to each specific child and the only resource not subject to Government cutbacks and, in hard times especially, we cannot afford to lose this resource”.*

**LINDA GOTTLIEB LMFT, LCSW-R**

*“Children do not have the emotional and cognitive abilities to evaluate for themselves what is in their best interests. And children do not have the emotional wherewithal to contradict the alienating parent – if that parent is the resident parent – as they are wholly dependent upon them”.*

**Parental responsibility is a legal concept defined at Section 3(1) of the Children Act as;**

*“all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and property”.*

**DR. STANLEY S. CLAWAR, PH.D., C.C.S. AND BRYNNE V. RIVLIN, M.S.S., L.C.S.W., M.S.M.**

*The effects of losing not only the intact family, but also a parent, hang heavily over children, touching them in ways that can wreak havoc in many realms of life both in the present and future.*

*As adults, many victims of bitter custody battles who had been permanently removed from a parent... still long to be reunited with the lost parent.*

*The loss cannot be undone. Childhood cannot be recaptured. Gone forever is that sense of history, intimacy, lost input of values and morals, self-awareness through knowing one's beginnings, love, contact with extended family, and much more.*

*Virtually no child possesses the ability to protect him or herself against such an undignified and total loss.*

***“Blaming the person who described the disorder is equivalent to blaming the Wright Brothers for airplane fatalities” (Gardner)***

**SIR JAMES MUNBY, Former Head of The Family Division**



*We know that people game the system. The classic example of that is you get Legal Aid if there's an allegation of domestic violence.*

*What is needed, and it's apparent that this is now urgent if the family court is not to suffer further damage to its already gravely diminished standing, is enhanced training for judges at all levels in relation to all aspects – legal, procedural and psychological – of domestic abuse, including, in particular, sexual abuse and parental alienation.*

**HIS HONOUR STEPHEN WILDBLOOD QC**

*Until you address the emotional, psychological or psychiatric difficulties that are leading to this complex dynamic, you're going to get nowhere.*

*The problem with parental alienation is that it's not about the child at all. It's about the adults. It's about adult issues. It's not child-focused. It's the process by which one parent's emotions dominates a child's relationship with their other parent. It's using children as an instrument of that parent's skewed emotions; it's in every sense wrong*

**SIR JAMES MUNBY, President of the Family Division and President of the Court of Protection at the Annual Conference of the Society of Editors 'Freedom to Inform' 11 November 2013**

*The workings of the family justice system and, very importantly, the views about the system of the mothers and fathers caught up in it, are matters of public interest which can and should be discussed publicly.*

*Many of the issues litigated in the family justice system require open and public debate in the media. It's important in a free society that parents who feel aggrieved at their experiences of the family justice system should be able to express their views publicly about what they conceive to be failings on the part of individual judges or failings in the judicial system. And the same goes, of course, for criticism of local authorities and others.*



## 2020 Study Quotes

### Attorney General SUELLA BRAVERMAN MP speaking at the House of commons in March 2017

Child Arrangement Orders are made by the court to regulate the contact and residence of children of divorce.

In the majority of divorces, the orders are complied with, but in many cases a defaulting parent – that may be the mother or the father – can generally act with impunity.

The courts are slow to respond and reluctant to penalise, sending the damaging message that court orders are optional, not mandatory; that the relationship with the non-resident parent is meaningless, rather than crucial; and that the system is inherently inequitable, rather than robust.

In the worst cases, a non-resident parent, can be denied contact with their child for several years. If they do not have a spare £10,000 to spend on legal fees, they are essentially erased out of their child's life, with no remedy whatsoever.

How can this be humane for a child, and how can it be fair to the parent?

The welfare of the child is paramount—that is an abiding and unassailable principle of family law and children are less likely to experience depression, teenage pregnancy and delinquency when relationships with both parents are safeguarded.

Children struggle to reach their full potential academically, socially and professionally, but the law does not reflect this because of the failure to crack down on intransigent parents, and because judges and social workers turn a blind eye to parental alienation.

Family courts make huge and life-changing decisions for parents and children, often on thresholds of proof that are far lower than those required to achieve enforcement, so it is no wonder that the criminal threshold for contempt is rarely met and that judges fail to assert their authority swiftly under the Children Act 1989, or subsequent legislation in 2006 and 2014, and attempts to bolster enforcement have not worked.



Data from the Ministry of Justice reveal that a mere 1.2% of the 4,654 enforcement applications were successful in 2015. Although the letter of the law sets out discretionary penalties for breach, they are rarely applied in practice.

The rise in the number of unfounded allegations of domestic violence as a defence against enforcement is worrying. We need to remove the cloak of secrecy and open up our family courts.

I speak as an objective onlooker moved by stories of injustice, hopelessness and deep sorrow.

I hope the Government will take the opportunity to begin the work of creating a family law system fit for the 21st century.

**SIR ANTHONY DOUttLAS, FORMER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF CAFCASS**

"Alienation is one type of adult behaviour which causes adverse childhood experiences. At worst, it is **emotionally violent**. This is why I have suggested that alienation is a form of **child abuse**. It can have as devastating an impact as physical abuse and can lead directly to child or adolescent mental health problems"

**SIR JAMES MUNBY, FORMER HEAD OF THE FAMILY DIVISION**

"What is needed, and it is apparent that this is now urgent if the family court is not to suffer further damage to its already gravely diminished standing, **is enhanced training for judges at all levels in relation to all aspects – legal, procedural and psychological – of domestic abuse, including, in particular, sexual abuse and parental alienation**"

**THE HONOURABLE LADY JUSTICE PARKER, HIttH COURT FAMILY DIVISION**

"I regard parental manipulation of children, of which I distressingly see an enormous amount, as exceptionally harmful. It distorts the relationship of the child not only with the parent but with the outside world. **Children who are suborned into flouting court orders are given extremely damaging messages about the extent to which authority can be disregarded and given the impression that compliance with adult expectations is optional.** Parents who obstruct a relationship with the other parent are inflicting untold damage on their children and it is, in my view, about time that professionals truly understood this"



### ***HIS HONOUR STEPHEN WILDBLOOD QC***

"Until you address the emotional, psychological or psychiatric difficulties that are leading to this complex dynamic, you're going to get nowhere. Very often, one of my children will get up and say I don't want to go to school. Well just imagine if I say well let us do a wishes and feelings analysis. We do not do that. We tell them to get up and get dressed. So, what is the problem? The problem with Parental Alienation is that it's not about the child at all. It is about the adults. It is about adult issues.

It is not child-focused. **It is the process by which one parent's emotions dominates a child's relationship with their other parent. It's using children as an instrument of that parent's skewed emotions; it is in every sense wrong"**

### ***DR JENNIFER J. HARMAN, PH.D***

"Despite affecting millions of families around the world, parental alienation has been largely unacknowledged or denied by legal and health professionals as a form of family violence. This complex form of aggression entails a parental figure engaging in the long-term use of a variety of aggressive behaviours to harm the relationship between their child and another parental figure, and/or to hurt the other parental figure directly. Like other forms of family violence, parental alienation has serious and negative consequences for family members, yet victims are often blamed for their experience"

### ***DR CRAItt CHILDRESS, Psy.D***

"This is a severe form of emotional-psychological domestic violence perpetrated on both the targeted parent and the victimised child. It is the most brutal and savage form of abuse. The pathology is a shared persecutory delusion (ICD-10 F24) created in the child by the pathological parent who is weaponizing the child into the spousal conflict. Creating a delusional disorder in the child that then destroys their attachment bond to their other parent, which is child psychological abuse (DSM-5 V995.51)"

### ***DR CRAItt ELLIOT, PH.D***

"Parental alienation is a destructive family pathology. It attributes a quality of evil without cause or foundation to a parent who once nurtured and protected the same child that has now turned against her or him"



**DR RICHARD WARSHAK, Psy.D (White House consultant)**

"A particularly pernicious expression of inter-parental hostility, when the behaviour of one parent conveys to the child that their other parent is unworthy of the child's love, respect and loyalty"

**DR SUE WHITCOMBE, Psychologist and expert witness**

"A parent who engages in alienating behaviors has often been triggered by divorce or separation. It can trigger previous life trauma which they have not dealt with.

When things are going well, they can manage and don't need to deal with

the trauma but when something happens to them – when they feel abandoned or rejected – that can trigger the earlier life trauma and they engage in these behaviors as a safety behavior to take care of themselves. We see this with both mothers and fathers"

**SIR JAMES MUNBY, when President of the Family Division, even admitted to it:**

*"We know that people game the system. The classic example of that is you get Legal Aid if there's an allegation of domestic violence"*

**ELLEN PENCE, debunked her own theory when she said:**

*"Somewhere we shifted from understanding violence as rooted in a sense of entitlement to rooted in a desire for power. We created*

*a conceptual framework that did not fit the lived experience of the men and women we were working with"*

*"We engaged in ideological practices and claimed them to be neutral observations"*

**Recorded by LOUISE DESPERT, a leading French child psychiatrist and psychotherapist in 1953.**

*"It is a sharp temptation for the parent who remains with the child, to break down their love for the one who has gone. This may be a temporary relief to the parent who does so, but it can only do harm to the child"*



***ERIN PIZZEY, the legendary campaigner who dedicated her entire life to protecting victims and children and who opened the first refuge in the world, explains it well;***

*"This is not a numbers game. The roots of domestic abuse lie within inter-generational family violence and dysfunction"*

*Conclusion...*

***The Framework was introduced in 2017 by the organisation's CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SIR ANTHONY DOUGLAS who stated:***

*"Parental alienation is a public health issue. Early help is crucial"*

