

The Domestic Violence of Parental Alienation:
The Narcissistic Personality in High-Conflict Divorce
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Domestic violence occurs within the broader interpersonal context of power, control, and domination, and these qualities of interpersonal power, control, and domination are evident in the narcissistically organized personality disorder traits of the “alienating” parent that achieve expression within the “parental alienation” process. The pathology traditionally called “parental alienation” involves the expression of the narcissistically organized personality disorder pathology of the “alienating” parent (Childress, 2015), and this pathology represents a variant of domestic violence. Instead of using physical fists to batter the targeted victim, the abuser in “parental alienation” uses the *child*; instead of using physical violence, the abuser in “parental alienation” uses emotional violence. The abuser in the domestic violence of “parental alienation” viciously exploits the love of the targeted parent for the child as a weapon to inflict immense and severe emotional and psychological suffering on the victimized spouse. The pathology of “parental alienation” is a form of domestic violence.

The Psychological Process of the Narcissistic Alienating Parent:

“How dare you leave me (narcissistic injury). How dare you not appreciate my wonderfulness (narcissistic grandiosity). You'll be sorry (narcissistic rage and revenge). I'll make you suffer for rejecting me, using what you most love in all the world, the love you share with your children.”

“I won't be the abandoned and rejected spouse (a primal fear of abandonment and rejection), you'll be the abandoned one (a projected fear of abandonment onto the other parent), you'll be the rejected person/parent.”

“You'll be abandoned and rejected by your own children --- you'll suffer for divorcing me (narcissistic rage and revenge). But I will never be abandoned, because I'm the *ideal* parent/person (narcissistic grandiosity).”

“The children belong to me. They're my possessions (narcissistic objects). You divorced me so now you have nothing.”

“You'll be sorry you left me. You'll suffer. And you deserve to suffer (narcissistic revenge) because you didn't appreciate my wonderfulness (narcissistic grandiosity).”

The “alienating”/narcissistic parent's complete absence of empathy for both the suffering of the targeted-rejected parent and for the child's love for the other parent (absence of empathy is a key symptom feature of narcissism – DSM criterion 7) allows the narcissistic parent to use the child (manipulate and exploit the child;

Themes:
Narcissistic injury
Narcissistic grandiosity
Emotional battery
Fear of abandonment and rejection
Projection
Narcissistic retaliation
Narcissistic rage
Narcissistic grandiosity
Narcissistic objects
Narcissistic rage and revenge
Narcissistic grandiosity
Absence of empathy
Manipulation
Exploitation

exploitation of other people is another key symptom feature of narcissism- DSM criterion 6) as a weapon to emotionally and psychologically batter the targeted-victimized spouse in the most brutal of ways; by taking away the love shared between the other spouse and the child, by metaphorically killing the other parent's child. This is the most horrific of psychological violence. To take from the other parent that parent's beloved child. To psychologically kill that parent's child in revenge for the narcissistic injury of the divorce is a human abomination of the highest order. Before the divorce, the other parent had a beloved child. But after the divorce, the narcissistic parent kills the child's love for the other parent, kills the child's relationship with the other parent, as a means to inflict an immense and lifelong suffering on the other spouse for having the temerity, the effrontery, of divorcing and rejecting the narcissistic spouse.

Most heart wrenching of all – the narcissistic spouse accomplishes the “murder” of the other parent's authentic and loving child by using the very child who is beloved of the other parent as the murder weapon, inducing and manipulating the child who is beloved by the other parent into rejecting their shared love. The malevolence of the narcissistic parent psychologically manipulates the allied-child into killing the authentic-child of the other parent. In manipulating the allied-child into killing the authentic-child of the other parent, the narcissistic parent is expressing the domestic violence themes of (parental) power, control, and domination over the the child in order to enact the rejection and abandonment of the other parent; who is the targeted *spouse* brutalized by the domestic violence.

Domestic Violence: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Power• Control• Domination

The narcissistic spouse feels no empathy for the suffering of the targeted parent, but instead takes a perverse satisfaction in the immense emotional suffering inflicted on the other spouse who, according to the narcissistic parent, “deserves” to be rejected for other parent's supposed “parental failures” (spousal failures). While the superficial justification for the child's rejection of that parent is that the other parent failed to be an adequate parent for the child, the actual underlying theme is that the other *spouse* failed as a *spouse*; failed to appreciate the magnificence of the narcissistic spouse during their marriage, failed in their spousal obligation to provide constantly devoted attention and continual “narcissistic supply” to the the narcissistic spouse, and, worst of all, the other spouse rejected the narcissistic spouse, exposing the core pathology of narcissistic inadequacy. This rejection of the narcissistic spouse represents the primal *narcissistic injury* leading to the domestic violence response of narcissistic retaliation and revenge.

The narcissistic *spouse* is seeking revenge on the other *spouse* for the rejection of divorce. But the narcissistic spouse cannot lash out directly anymore, now that they are divorced and are physically separated from each other. Verbal abuse and degradation of the other spouse is no longer available because the other spouse is no longer physically present. The only weapon available to inflict emotional battery on the other spouse is the child, they still share the child and the child has access to the other parent. The other parent loves and values the child. Taking the child away from the other spouse is a means to inflict retaliatory suffering on the other spouse for the divorce. The child becomes the surrogate weapon of the narcissistic parent's revenge. The family pathology of “parental alienation” represents a form of domestic violence involving the emotional battery of the

targeted spouse by a psychologically violent narcissistic spouse and parent, who uses the child as the weapon for the battery.

Even more importantly, the narcissistic parent feels no empathy for the child. Empathy is a characterological impossibility for the narcissist (DSM diagnostic indicator 7). The narcissist's fundamental and inherent absence of empathy is the key feature that allows the narcissistic parent to first manipulate the child and then to exploit the child as a weapon of revenge and retaliation. The narcissistic parent cannot comprehend that the child actually loves the other parent, because the narcissistic parent lacks empathy for the child. The narcissistic parent has no empathy or concern for the child's stress of being placed in the middle of the the spousal conflict. The narcissistic parent has no empathy for the child's damaged love for the other parent in creating the child's hostile rejection of the other parent. In the mind of the narcissistic spouse, the other spouse "deserves" to suffer for their inadequacy as a spouse, the other spouse "deserves" to suffer for their rejection of the narcissistic spouse. The child is an object, a narcissistic object, a means to an end, a means to inflict immense retaliatory suffering on the other **spouse** for the narcissistic injury of the divorce.

Power, control, and domination are the central features of domestic violence, and are the hallmarks of the "parental alienation" process. In the pathology of "parental alienation," the narcissistic parent uses power and control over the child as a weapon to inflict far more brutal suffering on the other spouse than the physical violence of a beating; a *lifetime* of irrevocable pain, and loss, and suffering, inflicted on the victimized spouse-as-a-parent, inflicted by the weapon of the victimized parent's own beloved child. The family pathology of "parental alienation" is an emotional-psychological variant of domestic violence inflicted on the targeted victimized spouse by the brutality of the abusive narcissism of the "alienating" spouse.

The "parental alienation" process is most definitely a variant of domestic violence, expressing themes of power, control, and domination. The pathology of "parental alienation" is the manifestation of the narcissistically organized psychopathology of the "alienating" parent who is using the child as the weapon of spousal battery to inflict immense emotional and psychological suffering on the other spouse as revenge for the narcissistic injury of the divorce. The pathology of "parental alienation" is among the most extreme forms of domestic violence, killing the child of the other spouse as a means to inflict suffering on the other spouse for having the effrontery of divorcing them. "How dare you divorce me. I will kill your beloved child as revenge. Aren't you sorry now that you left me." The pathology of "parental alienation" is domestic violence in the most extreme.

References:

Childress, C.A. (2015). An attachment-based model of parental-alienation: Foundations. Claremont, CA: Oaksong Press.