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5 Steps to Reversing Child Alienation

08/04/2019 / By [Joanne Law](#) / [Parents](#)

Child Alienation is a situation where a child rejects a parent and does not want contact with them. It usually occurs in the context of a family law battle over who the child will live with and how the child should be cared for.

It may be caused by Parental Alienation. Parental Alienation usually describes a situation where a child is deliberately turned against their other parent through a campaign of telling the child terrible things about them or deliberately undermining their contact.

Sometimes a parent who is causing alienation isn't fully aware of what they are doing.

Instead of protecting their child from their own upset emotions, they encourage the child to align with them against the other parent and often their family as well.



Is it the same as Parental Alienation?

Most of the articles about the issue focus on parents blaming each other but that doesn't really help the situation.

In this article we will share with you the practical actions that you can take to reverse the damage.

If your child had started to become alienated from you they have probably started to express strong negative views about you.

What happens is that they come to believe that the parent that they have become alienated from can't be trusted, doesn't love them or is incapable of caring for them.

They might have become frightened of you and believe that you are dangerous to them. If your former partner has become frightened of you or feels like you want to hurt them those feelings are likely to be communicated to your children.

In many cases where there is a deliberated campaign to alienate the child they may feel that they are rewarded by the other parent when they reject you.

If this is happening in your family we recognise that it is incredibly painful.

You might be feeling angry and vengeful and blame the other parent entirely.

That feeling that it is all their fault may or may not be justified but it won't help reverse the alienation.

Not all children become alienated due to deliberate action by the other parent.

Sometimes children can become alienated due to fear associated with witnessing family violence or the consequences of family violence.

Sometimes it is a reaction to the changes in the family and the child taking sides because they feel that the parent isn't doing well and needs their support.

In other situations your ex may indeed be deliberately undermining your relationship with your child.

How do children become alienated?

Alienating parents do some or all of the following things:

- They allow the child to speak negatively and disrespectfully about the other parent
- they set up tempting alternatives that would interfere with the other parent's time with the child
- They give the child decision making power about spending time with the other parent when the arrangements are already in place
- They act hurt or betrayed if the child shows any positive feelings towards the other parent
- They use the child as a courier, messenger or spy
- They ask the child to lie to the other parent or betray their trust in the child
- They share details of the property settlement and financial arrangements with the child
- They go without food or other essentials and say it is because the other parent didn't give them enough money
- They interrupt the other parents time with frequent messages and phone calls

I'm sure that you have some other examples of the sorts of things your ex has done.

What are some of the signs of Child Alienation?

Child alienation usually occurs when there is a lot of conflict between parents. When a child has become alienated it is much more than what could be seen as "normal" in terms of occasional resistance to changing between homes according to the parenting schedule.

Shared care can be difficult for everyone , your child included if it means that they miss out on other things they want to do sometimes.

Occasional resistance doesn't mean that they are alienated.

When a child is alienated you will experience the following type of behaviour:

1. They will denigrate you and say terrible things about you, refuse to do what you tell them, swear at you and show other extreme oppositional behaviour.
2. If you ask them why they are so angry with you they will say they don't know or offer weak, frivolous or absurd reasons for their anger. It is out of proportion to whatever provoked it.
3. They will be firm about their hatred for you. They don't show ambivalence (love you / hate you) they just say they hate you.
4. They deny that their other parent had anything to do with them forming their opinions and attitude towards you.
5. They support the other parent no matter how extreme their behaviour is.
6. They don't apologise or seem to feel any guilt about their cruelty towards you.
7. They use borrowed scenarios and vividly describes incidents that you know that they could not have experienced.
8. Their animosity spreads to anyone associated with you including former friends and/or extended family.

So how do you fight back and restore the love and respect that your child once had for you?



5 Steps to reversing child alienation

Here are the 5 steps you should take now to begin laying the path for a full reunification one day.

These actions are highly effective in reversing child alienation, whether the result of a deliberate campaign waged against you or due to your child's own feelings of distress over your separation. They are all things you can take action on now.

If the alienation is the result of programming and brainwashing deliberately done by your ex it won't get reversed in a few weeks. Unfortunately it will more likely take months or even years.

But by using these proven techniques you will be working towards reconnecting with your alienated child.

1. Stop Talking about Brainwashing

Your child won't respond well to any criticism of what you see as their programmed mental state regarding you. They don't think that they are brainwashed.

Asking them about the other parent "*Are Mum/Dad saying bad things / telling you lies about me?*" will get you nowhere.

They will just get angry at you for suggesting to them that they're not thinking for themselves.

Instead of trying to convince them with words show them through your behaviour that anything negative they may be thinking or being told about you isn't true.

That way they will realise for themselves that there is a huge disconnect between what they are being told in the alienating home and what their real life experience is with you.

This is huge.

If you are having trouble managing your emotions enrol in the [New Ways for Families Course](#) to learn how.

2. Maximise the time you spend with them

It's easiest for a vindictive ex to alienate your child from you when you're not around.

Especially if the gaps between seeing or talking to your child are weeks or months at a time.

Make use of Family Dispute Resolution Mediation to negotiate for time with your child. Seek as much time as is reasonably practical.

It is important that you are as reliable in the time you spend as you can be. If you say you are going to see them and cancel it is really bad. Even if you tell yourself that it doesn't matter because they are saying they don't want to see you, they will feel let down by you cancelling. It will help reinforce any negative messages your ex is giving them that they are your lowest priority.

It is better to get some time and build on that than hold out for more.

[Find out how Family Dispute Resolution can help to negotiate time.](#)

Waiting six months or a year for the court to consider your case without spending time with your child will not help to reverse alienation. It is likely to make it worse.

If you have a court order make sure you use the time that it allows.

If you can't negotiate an agreement for a reasonable amount of time you may have to go to court.

It is important to speak with a specialist family lawyer about the likelihood of being able to get more time by going to court. It is possible to spend a lot of money and time on a court battle that does not lead to much of an improvement in the situation but on the other hand it may be the only way to force the issue if your ex is severely restricting time with your children without any sort of valid reason.

[Legal Advice and Strategy Session Information](#)

Where possible try to get blocks of time during holidays so that your kids get plenty of time to get re-acquainted with you and can see that you are not the way you are being portrayed.



3. Give options, ask for their opinions.

Kid's don't like to be told what to do all the time.

Being ordered around, being told *"Do this!"* *"Don't do that!"* and leaving them without choices isn't going to help rebuild your relationship.

Instead of telling them *"this is what we're doing this weekend"* ask them. Give them some options to choose from or ask them what they would like to do with you.

Don't ask if they want to spend time with you or not. If they are alienated as they are likely to choose not! Give them a choice about what they do when they are with you.

That doesn't mean you have to buy their affection by making time with you a big production. You might offer a visit to the beach or pool, a visit with cousins or something else they used to enjoy.

Asking them is probably not something they are used to if their other parent is being controlling.

It makes them feel grown up and appreciated. Involving them will have some great long-term benefits for you and your relationship with them.



4. Be the opposite of your ex.

If your ex has a personality disorder such as narcissism one of the key characteristics is that they lack empathy. They usually can't accept that other people have different feelings to their own, even their children.

If they are angry with you, they will believe that the children are angry at you as well.

It is common for people to become high conflict during separation and divorce even if they don't have a personality disorder.

Your child is probably used to the other parent yelling and throwing tantrums, and blaming others (you) for everything that goes wrong in their life.

You need to do the opposite to them!

Where they spend their time wrapped in negative energy, you need to provide an abundance of love and positive energy.

When you get time with your children, you listen, you ask them questions about themselves, not about what they do with the other parent. Ask them how they are feeling. You never yell at them and you keep your emotions under control.

You don't badmouth and blame your ex to them.

Any child spending time with a drama free parent or in a drama-free home will, over time, really feel comfortable there. Imagine in three years how your child will feel when they know they're about to spend a week with you in your peaceful home... deep down, despite any level of brainwashing campaign, they'll look forward to it!



5. Listen empathetically

Parents who alienate aren't good listeners. It's hard for them to listen empathetically because they're so consumed with themselves and their feelings of being a victim.

So you need to start actively listening to what your child is saying.

Dig deeper and try to understand instead of getting offended and upset.

If a child doesn't want to do something, listen empathetically to what he or she is really telling you.

Then consider what they're saying before answering them.

You have to be the caring adult here. The result will be a son or daughter who feels a connection that doesn't exist in the alienator's home.



These 5 steps are just a start.

But they will do wonders for you and your alienated child's relationship over the coming months and years.

We'd love to feature some stories of Australian parents who have successfully helped their children back to a healthy relationship with them.

Can the court help?

Sometimes. If through the process the family report writer and other specialists your family will interact with form the opinion that there has been parental alienation occurring there may be orders to try to reverse the damage.

Parental Alienation is deliberate and negative to the child.

It is a campaign by one parent to prevent a close and loving relationship between the child and the other parent by constantly undermining that relationship.

In extreme cases the court may force the child to live with a parent they are alienated from in order to try and give them the opportunity to get to know them and rebuild the relationship. This can be traumatic for everyone involved so lets tackle alienation early and please consider your behaviour and whether you are through your words or behaviour forcing your child to choose.

Court Cases:

- This is an example from Canada but we will build on this post with Australian rulings as well. [Judge Orders the child to participate in a program to reverse alienation.](#)

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