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## **Unadulterated Arrogance: Autopsy of the Narcissistic Parental Alienator**

DAVID M. SUMMERS and COLLETTE C. SUMMERS

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*This article guides professionals to recognize and gain insight of the inner dynamics and profile of the narcissist and the chronic parental alienator. It covers and exposes the commonalities of both their modus operandi and characteristics. Parental Alienation stems from intolerance, denigration, prejudice, and deep-seated dysfunction. In like manner, narcissistic abuse is caused by malignant self love and unadulterated arrogance. The deception of the Narcissistic Parental Alienator (NPA) is a cruel act. It often has many players on different stages that corrode the soul. The NPA is one who systematically deceives and turns their own children into little abuser proxies. Narcissists lie, manipulate, and speak in mixed messages. They cannot part with their illusions, and if their illusions are gone, they may still exist, but they have ceased to live.*

*All too often mental health and legal professionals and judges do not listen to the target parent and they are fooled or tolerate NPAs out of faith, trust and a sense of fairness. The NPA's deceit and defiance must be recognized and seen for what it is. Evaluators, courts, and therapists, at that point, should consider this danger directly and act swiftly. The quote by François de la Rochefoucauld; "The most deceitful persons spend their lives in blaming deceit, so as to use it on some great occasion to promote some great interest," is strikingly similar to the conception of a divorce or custody dispute among NPAs, within the context of this topic. It is discouragingly common to see how few people are not shocked by deceit and how many are shocked by honesty. Educating, exposure, accountability, and resolve are the threads of the tapestry of this article on what these authors have coined the "Narcissistic Parental Alienator."*

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Twenty-five hundred years ago, Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu authored *Art of War*—the oldest military “how to” treatise on deception. Tzu candidly recommended: “In war, practice the art of deception and you will succeed,” (Cantrell, 2003, p. 29). Such a tactic has become a norm in litigious divorce and custody wars. A commonality between a narcissist and parental alienators is that they *both* use a deceptive code of conduct.

To uncover their deceptive code of conduct and speech, the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli, the fourteenth-century Italian diplomat can also provide unique insight. His fame as a political philosopher is best known for “the end justifies the means.” Cunning, ruthlessness, subordinating morals, and privilege for personal goals is a core theme with both Machiavelli and Tzu.

The power of Machiavelli’s statement: “The only solution is to overpower the emotions of the enemy, as no enterprise is more likely to succeed than one concealed from the enemy until it is ripe for execution” (Machiavelli, 1521), runs maliciously inside the sordid mind of the narcissist and often parental alienators.

In harmony with these ancient writings, the fundamental principal links, commonalities, and characteristics of the narcissist and the parental alienator’s complexion follow the politically correct mantra “if the target parent does *not* have a problem, then create one for them.” Hence, we have combined these characteristics and used the term narcissistic parental alienator or NPA. In every divorce, alienation can occur to some extent; but for the purposes of this article, we are referring to stage three, or severely alienated children and the chronic and willful alienator. In protracted divorce or custody cases, NPAs often desire to “divide and conquer” by drawing in as many third parties as possible to be “witnesses” in order to collectively lay blame on the target parent for committing any alleged abuse. As a master of spin, the NPA often proves exceptionally adept at delegating blame. If something is worked out, then by virtue, it was their idea. If it does not fulfill their needs to their liking, it was somebody else’s fault.

As ruthless as Machiavelli’s and Tzu’s works appear to the faint of heart, the only way to uncover chicanery is to wait until there is enough evidence gathered to reveal revengeful motives without question, thus quashing any false and damaging allegations and actions with precision and articulation.

In severe parental alienation cases, the NPA (who may be the custodial parent) frequently outright refuses the target parent any access to information or the child(ren). The purpose is twofold—obviously to sever the parent-child(ren) bond, while simultaneously stopping the target parent from gathering evidence of alienation and innocence of any false allegations. The child who is severely alienated can be prepped to sound very *convincing* to anyone who is not aware of the real evidence or what goes on behind the scenes.

## NARCISSISTIC BEGINNINGS AND CHILDHOOD

The term “narcissism” is interpreted as an all-consuming unbalanced self-absorption or self love. The onset of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) generally starts in infancy, childhood, or early adolescence. Many specialists believe that it is commonly attributed to psychological childhood abuse and trauma inflicted by parents, family, or other authority figures. Individuals with NPD often “display snobbish, disdainful, or patronizing attitudes” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 659).

Just as it is normal for little children to be egocentric at an early age, feeling important or even invincible, the NPA becomes locked into that stage and never grows out of it. When the NPA allows their child to feel too important, giving them too much control, that child will inevitably maintain their infantile fantasy of power to control their parents, thereby hindering their ability to stand alone in later years. These children learn how to hone their skills by scanning their environment, seeking out others who can fulfill their own narcissistic supply, eventually becoming an alienator themselves. This way, the child(ren) can share the household parental power, usurp and maintain control at the expense of the target parent, and, at the same time, cater to the needs of the infantile NPA who gains their internal gratification from the child’s or teen’s behavior and the pain caused to the target parent.

People who tolerate bad boundaries and the subsequent violations are very much like the narcissist and parental alienator, as they have not developed a strong perception of Separate Self. These individuals have grown in families where intrusions were accepted and were not given the support for autonomy. Nevertheless, alienating abusers are not very likely to seek professional help, as they are shame-intolerant, salted with the inability to recognize their own narcissism. Many therapists ignore or miss the possibility to diagnose NPD, as it is not amenable to health insurance companies who pay for patients and favor a short-term treatment approach.

Children who become severely alienated from a once-loved parent and who have developed Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS), frequently become brutally narcissistic and cruelly abusive during adolescence. As Aristotle remarked “Youth is easily deceived because it is quick to hope.” Their intensity to hate the people they once loved grows, sometimes to the point of violence or threats thereof, kleptomania, and in some instances, teens may commit suicide or parricide.

The threat of parricide/suicide by a severely alienated adolescent teen toward a target parent is not that uncommon. When the target parent brings a threat or an act of self-harm such as “head-banging” or self-mutilation by the child to the attention of the alienating parent or to a therapist, all too often the target parent is undeservedly accused of lying or exaggerating. And frequently no genuine therapeutic intervention is afforded the child due

to deceptive NPA manipulation. Thus, in these families, “the normal love and respect that children naturally feel for a parent appeared to be insufficient to satisfy the narcissistic demands of the alienating parent. What they wanted from their children was a level of adulation and exclusivity typically reserved for cult leaders” (Baker, 2005).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports in the study *Murder in Families* (Dawson & Langan, 1994), that “1.97 percent of murder victims were killed by their children. This translates to about 300 cases per year.” In a review of 10 studies that examined adolescents who had killed their parents. It was pointed out that: “. . . ascertaining the driving force behind a parricide is complex, but factors in the family that often contribute to the homicides include a pattern of violence. . . and that adolescent offenders expressed helplessness in coping with stress in the home and feelings of isolation and suicidal ideation. . .” and “failed in their attempts to get help with little (if any) adult intervention” (Crime Victim Services, 2006).

In order to function, a narcissist, whether they are an adult or child needs “narcissistic supply.” Narcissistic supply is the things, people, emotions, or situations that internally generate strapping feelings of self-importance and grandiosity. These feelings can start at an early age and are commonly found in the narcissist’s exaggerated version of their life achievements or talents to the point of pathological lying. Narcissists are categorized as either Cerebral or Somatic. Cerebrals derive their narcissistic supply from their intelligence, academic achievements and so forth, whereas Somatics derive their narcissistic supply from their physique, exercise, physical or sexual prowess, and “conquests.” Not unlike the sociopath, narcissists without proportionate successes will demand (either overtly or covertly) to be recognized as superior. With striking similarity to the narcissist, the sociopath is nearly always male and they “place self-interest above all other considerations and are masters at rationalizing their actions, the responsibility for which they often attribute to someone else” (Nance, 2003, pp. 85–86).

Regarding the narcissist, San Diego State University psychology professor Jean Twenge found: “Americans born after 1970—including the so-called Generation X and Millennial Generation—have become ‘an army of little narcissists’.” Twenge well documents this view in her new book: *Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled and More Miserable than Ever Before* (2006). During an interview with the *Washington Times*, professor Twenge explained:

Unlike their parents and grandparents, ‘GenMes’ have never known a world that put duty before self . . . Instead, they were raised in a culture obsessed with self-esteem and feel-good mantras . . . They expect to go to college, to make lots of money, and perhaps even to be famous . . . but when reality hits, and they don’t get the coveted college placement or high-paying job, or they discover the high-costs of housing

and healthcare, many members of Generation Me crash emotionally. (Wetzstein, 2006, p. 10)

In 1999, *Time* magazine reported in an article about the Columbine shootings that “parents spend 40 percent less time with their kids now than 30 years ago” (Cloud, 1999, pp. 34–43). *Newsweek* also weighed in:

In survey after survey, many kids—even those on the honor roll—say they feel increasingly alone and alienated, unable to connect with their parents, teachers, and sometimes even classmates. They’re desperate for guidance, and when they don’t get what they need at home or in school, they cling to cliques or immerse themselves in a universe out of their parents’ reach, a world defined by computer games, TV, and movies, where brutality is so common it has become mundane. (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1999, p. 10)

NPAs frequently create and raise: “Arrogant, entitled teenagers who are a law unto themselves push a lot of people’s buttons . . . It is tempting to blame society, the schools, the government, the politicians, the media, your ex-spouse, or any number of other factors outside your control, but that won’t help you find solutions” (Hotchkiss, 2003, p. 100).

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS AND BEHAVIORS OF SEVERELY ALIENATED CHILDREN

The scholarly work *Divorce Casualties: Protecting Your Child From Parental Alienation* (Darnell 1998), leading author and child psychologist Dr. Douglas Darnell listed some of the clustering signs of commonalities that form what has become known as Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS). PAS has striking similarities to NPD and the Stockholm Syndrome (Rawlings et al., 1994, pp. 401–417), where the “victim sees world from abuser’s perspective” and “denies or rationalizes violence by the abuser.” The following are adapted from Darnell et al in relation to Parental Alienation (Syndrome):

- They have a relentless hatred for towards the targeted parent(s)
- They parrot the obsessed alienator
- The child does not want to visit or spend any time with the targeted parent
- Many of the child’s beliefs are enmeshed with the alienator
- The beliefs are delusional and frequently irrational
- They are not intimidated by the court
- Frequently, their reasons are not based on personal experiences with the targeted parent, but reflect what they are told by the obsessed alienator. They have difficulty making any differentiations between the two

- The child has no ambivalence in their feelings; it's all hatred with no ability to see the good
- Victim identifies, enmeshes and aligns through the abuser and the abuser's allies. Seeing things from the perspective of the perpetrators
- They have no capacity to feel guilty about how they behave towards the targeted parent or forgive any past indiscretions
- They share the Obsessed Alienators cause. Together, they are in lockstep to denigrate the hated parent
- The children's obsessional hatred extends to the targeted parent's extended family without any guilt or remorse
- They can appear like normal healthy children until asked about the targeted parent that triggers their hatred (Darnell, 2003, 33–34)

These signs not only assist us in understanding Parental Alienation, but also help therapists identify children whose narcissistic and alienating parents drive them to a campaign of hate. Sandy Hotchkiss, author of the book on this most prevalent personality disorder: *Why Is It Always About You? The Seven Sins of Narcissism*, sums up a root cause of this mentality in America:

The 'pseudomature' child is the one who seems to have skipped right over childhood. Both the 'pseudomature' child and the 'entitlement monster' are bi-products of narcissistic parenting. The latter is held captive in a parent's narcissistic bubble, while the former is forced out prematurely and forms a false Self that appears more competent than it actually is. Both fail to separate from their emotionally bankrupt mothers, and they become what Mother, or Father, needs them to be rather than whom they truly are. (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 56–57)

In his scholarly work *Divorce Poison: Protecting the Parent-Child Bond from a Vindictive Ex*, Dr. Richard Warshak eloquently listed the areas like "corrupting reality," which the NPA is especially renowned: "... To intervene effectively in a campaign of denigration, we must understand exactly how the child's view of reality is being manipulated. Below is a summary of some of the most common strategies for distorting the child's perceptions, beliefs, and memories of the target" (Warshak, 2001, pp. 202–203).

- Manipulating names to disrupt children's identification with the target
- Repeating false ideas until: they are assumed to be true and are embedded in memory
- Selectively directing the children's attention to negative aspects of the target while ignoring positive aspects
- Dropping the context of a target's behavior
- Exaggerating the target's negative behavior
- Telling lies about the target



- Revising history to erase positive memories of the target
- Claiming that the target has totally changed
- Suggestions that convey in a covert manner negative messages about the target
- Encouraging the children to exploit the target
- Projection of the brainwasher's own thoughts, feelings, or behavior onto the target
- Rationalizations that hide the perpetrator's real motives and make the target look bad
- Self-righteous tones intended to ward off careful scrutiny of the programmer's reality distortions
- Denunciations cloaked in religious dogma
- Associating the label "the truth" with the programmer's implanted scenarios
- Overindulging the children with excessive privileges, material possessions, and low expectations for responsible behavior to buy their allegiance
- Encroaching on the children's time with the target and sabotaging their enjoyment of special activities
- Instructing children to keep secrets from, spy on, and lie to the target
- Conspiring with others to reinforce the programming
- Programming the children to resist attempts to undo their indoctrination

Narcissistic children often become like their narcissistic alienating parent, but one should wisely keep in mind that "narcissistic traits may be particularly common in adolescents and do not necessarily indicate that the individual will go on to have Narcissistic Personality Disorder" (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 660).

For some therapists, identifying a NPA is beyond their skill-set and may themselves join in the bad-mouthing of target parents whom they have never met. Some uninvited therapists become involved as the NPA's activist and go so far as to write inflammatory and/or defamatory letters to courts containing fictitious claims, diatribes and false histories based upon the NPA's fabrications and those of a disturbed child.

NPA's often do not perform background checks, and may even knowingly choose some individuals to represent them or the child, because of their naivety and easiness to be manipulated, or their reputation as a hired-gun. NPA choices for legal and mental health representation, for example, may include individuals with previous warrants, or who willfully commit perjury in court, or who misrepresent their case histories on a website, or even live with a cross-dressing partner with gender issues while allowing their own children to remain in such an environment. It is imperative for target parents to complete a thorough check with the state licensing board, the courthouse or the bar association before agreeing to an attorney, therapist, or evaluator to represent their child which can often save thousands of dollars in the long run.

Regarding chronically alienated children, it is estimated that up to 40 percent develop an alignment with the alienator and have no problem over and over again to denigrate and outright reject the other parent and everything they say. These children tend to lose the spirit and soul that once nurtured a love for the NPA's target as they refuse to bite the hand that feeds them by nurturing unwavering hatred. These children are psychologically abused by the alienator and inanely believe the target parent to be evil and horrible, when in fact; it is the NPA who qualifies for that status.

Research studies should be performed regarding NPAs, to assist unskilled therapists to identify the real abuser instead of inadvertently advocating NPA deception and blaming the target parent. Even an experienced or renowned therapist is quite capable of being bamboozled to breach ethical standards and professional objectivity by treating and performing a custody evaluation with the child simultaneously.

When narcissistic parents are too absorbed with their own preoccupations to spend time with their kids, they often raise narcissistic children, or at least children with profound narcissistic vulnerabilities, such as shame-sensitivity and the inability to manage intense negative feelings or to control their own aggressive impulses. Several years ago, a study of elementary-school-aged boys showed that those who were already identified as aggressive were less skillful than their more docile peers at accurately interpreting the behavior of others their age and were more likely to read intentional hostility into an ambiguous situation and respond with a preemptive strike. (Hotchkiss, 2003, p. 99)

Often, years pass with exploitative and repetitive brainwashing, denigration, and manipulation of the child against the target parent, and that, as the child matures into a teenager or adult, they become truly incapable of making sound and healthy choices, because irreversible damage has occurred. Few parents maintain the financial and psychological endurance against narcissistic abuse or have the skills to uncover the pettifoggery, before the child's mind is completely altered and initiated into the alienator's cult of parenthood. Experts and courts need to appreciate that time is of the essence.

Inexperienced therapists, evaluators, and often judges do not take into account when a child or teen has been subjected to years of poor behavior by an NPA prior to divorce or custody disputes and who have imposed such unbalanced and warped ideas on their offspring. When a teen claims to take their own stand on making mature adult choices, such a thought pattern needs to be addressed and corrected. Haven't we all seen enough parental and juvenile dysfunction increase in the news over the last decades?

The rates of teen violence and peer crimes are on the rise because so many NPAs are never home to parent (often out on "business" dates, using drugs or alcohol) and they refuse to allow the target parent to assist. Often

these types of NPAs will veil their paramour under the guise of being a friend or babysitter and then further deceive their former spouse and professionals by remarrying that individual with the hidden intention to cause further hurt to the target parent through the purchasing of the “synthetic replacement.” It is not uncommon for the NPA’s extended family to contribute to the alienating process by participating in concealing such facts.

### TRADEMARKS OF THE NARCISSIST

Sam Vaknin authored the book *Malignant Self Love: Narcissism Revisited*, which is a telling personal story of his own struggle with this problem. Describing the narcissist, Dr. Vaknin notes:

They are plagued with fantasies of unlimited success, fame, reputation, fearsome power or omnipotence, unequalled brilliance (the cerebral narcissist), bodily beauty or sexual performance (the somatic narcissist), or ideal, everlasting, all-conquering love or passion. Firmly convinced that he or she is unique and, being special, can only be understood by, should only be treated by, or associate with, other special or unique, or high-status people (or institutions) (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 20). This requires excessive admiration, adulation, attention and affirmation—or, failing that, wishes to be feared and to be notorious (narcissistic supply) (Vaknin, 2003b). [They suffer with:] A life-long pattern of traits and behaviors which signify infatuation and obsession with one’s self to the exclusion of all others and the egotistic and ruthless pursuit of one’s gratification, dominance and ambition. As distinct from healthy narcissism which we all possess, pathological narcissism is maladaptive, rigid, persisting, and causes significant distress, and functional impairment. (Vaknin, 2003b)

Dr. Vaknin maintains: “It is important to distinguish between the traits and behavior patterns that are independent of the patient’s cultural-social context (i.e., which are inherent or idiosyncratic)” and “reactive patterns, or conformity to cultural and social morals and norms. Reactions to severe life crises are often characterized by transient pathological narcissism. But such reactions do not make a narcissist” (Vaknin, 2003a, pp. 369–373).

The narcissist does emanate faint, almost invisible warning signs (or symptoms)—usually present from the initial or the casual encounter, similar to that of a parental alienator. Such signs are having “haughty body language, entitlement markers, idealization or devaluation, the ‘membership’ posture, bragging and false autobiography, emotion-free language, seriousness and sense of intrusion and coercion from others.” Hotchkiss (2003, p. 3), lists other characteristics or “trademarks” of narcissism as “shamelessness, magical thinking, arrogance, envy, entitlement, exploitation and bad boundaries.” Brief overviews of each characteristic serve as warning signs not only for

the target parent, but also to the therapist who needs to proactively act with appropriate measures against these emotional terrorists who are riddled with paranoid insecurity and sworn enemies of the family.

*Shamelessness* is a hallmark because shame is so excruciating to the narcissist that they have developed and installed an internal defense mechanism so as not to ever have to deal with it (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 3–6). Shamelessness means to be without conscience, they nurture their denial through blame, lack of feeling or anger. Because an internal malfunction exists or their “compassion” mechanism is lacking entirely, the narcissist uses projection so that it is never “my fault.” When shame slips past the barriers, meaning, when the unmasking occurs exposing the narcissist for what they really are—a quick flare of insincere pain and hurt, will be followed by blame and “embarrassment” anger. The alienator’s “bad-mouthing, bashing and brainwashing only compounds the child’s problems, and will in turn increase the perpetrators guilt” (Warshak, 2001, p. 94).

A continuing dilemma for the NPA is their immature need to avoid embarrassment no matter what the price. Mature people understand that life has an uncanny way of regularly serving us with humbling events that cannot be ignored through indifference. We grow to understand that there is always somebody else who is healthier, brighter, more attractive or more flourishing than ourselves. The reality that we live in an imperfect world is of little comfort to the NPA, because they perceive themselves as an exception to mandated rules, and frequently, including the law. The “my way or the highway” mentality is a sordid festering complement to the pathological narcissistic personality.

Dealing with NPAs is baffling and even confounding—they will always have their reasons for what they do and their reasons are not the same as normal reasons. If truth be told, treating them as normal people by appealing to their better qualities through expecting them to “have a heart” or “conscience,” or giving them the opportunity to make amends will unconditionally make matters worse. The best advice is to avoid these abusers at all costs and sever contact with them wherever possible, as they will inevitably suppress or destroy a healthy mind in order to feed their narcissistic supply.

*Magical Thinking* is the result of the methods (like illusion and distortion) narcissists, like alienators often generate irrational beliefs or unbalanced thinking and when they do not receive preferential treatment; they may place themselves above the reaches of the law (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 7–10). They reside in a world of fantasia created through self-deception and underlying rage. They see themselves as the centerpiece of their show and if that is not feasible or they despise the attention, they will do what they can to “bask in the glory” of another’s luminescence, by connecting to someone who they can pump up through the art of flattery. This feeds and maintains their unwavering “grandiosity and omnipotence” in their own mind—thereby believing that they have achieved this same status in the mind of

those around them. Magical thinking, exploitive idealization or devaluation through projection is just some ways the claptrap NPA resists feeling defective, inadequate, or peon-like. In the severest of cases of parental alienation with well-documented evidence, one cannot deny that the child(ren) are alienated, but narcissists will spin their claim that the alienation was the result of “abuse” and/or “neglect” by the target parent to which the child(ren) were “subjected,” when in fact the NPA is the perpetrator of such abuse.

In his article to the *Florida Bar Journal*, “Treatment Considerations with Children Diagnosed with PAS,” Dr. Robert A. Evans states:

Sometimes the alienating parent has rigid, paranoid thinking that severely limits the child’s ability to differentiate and mature in other aspects of life. The paranoid thinking leads to choices of with whom the child may play and when. The paranoia may be projected onto the targeted parent who is perceived to be a threat to the alienating parent and ultimately the child. This delusional thinking is transmitted to the child who develops a shared delusion toward the targeted parent. (Evans, 2006, p. 69)

*Arrogance* is viewed by others as a “superiority complex” (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 11–14). However; beneath the mask is a delicate bubble of self-esteem that cries; “if I am not better than you, then I’m worthless.” Equally, if the bubble shrinks, the farcical narcissist reinflates it by diminishing, demeaning, or humiliating another, thereby refueling their narcissistic supply. This is why these individuals are frequently domineering, hypercritical, megalomaniac, and perfectionistic—through these qualities they distance themselves from fault and shame. Narcissists use competition to “reconfirm their superiority,” and usually will only compete when they have calculated an outcome in a chosen arena that would require minimal risk or effort.

In protracted child custody litigation, often friends, colleagues, and family will only believe the NPA’s side thereby extorting their narcissistic supply through the ignorance of others not willing or able to hear both sides. These NPAs depend on petty games to sustain narcissistic supply in order to maintain a sense of superiority. These individuals are status seekers, bigots, bigheads, patronizing, and “sore losers” as they cannot tolerate to be less than the best—if they cannot be “at the top,” they believe they are nothing, embracing nothing in-between. In like manner, the parental alienator and the narcissist hold this unbridled arrogance dear, which carries within its source memories of a critical and shaming parent that is to be avoided like the plague. One should not equate this arrogance with pride, because it is a deep and irrational fear of worthlessness, and the only way to quell the fire is to generate feelings of importance.

Dr. Richard Warshak clarifies: “Hoisted with their own petards, parents who try to poison their children’s affections in order to win custody expect the courts to sympathize with their position.” And some parents “know

exactly what they are doing and are counting on the court's naïveté about such matters. They think they can pull the wool over the judge's eyes" (Warshak, 2001, p. 114). The warning stands when "truth, honesty and integrity get lost in the woven nest of vindictiveness and anger, so is self-respect and often the ability to enter post divorce relationships" (Summers, 1999, pp. 44–49).

*Envy* is a malicious virus buried deep in the subconscious registry infected with cognitive dissonance (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 15–18). What weapon of choice does the NPA utilize to quell the tremors of envy? No doubt the answer is contempt and "we won't worry what others think," as that "low-life" does not have "the skills that I do." Like mutterings surface in unison through behavior of the NPA and of those close to them with complete awareness or with the incongruous ignorance of a cockroach that trespasses where it pleases. These narcissistic distortions purge forth akin to projection and frequently are at polar disconnect to reality. NPAs keep a laundry list of faults (usually created ones) and have no qualms about getting down and dirty. Although often unconscious, the intent is to soil their opponent enough to restore their ego to its "rightful" throne, as feelings of envy are dismissed, denied and buried alive. Envy is such a common human shortcoming—it even made it to number 10 on the biblical obedience chart.

*Entitlement* is not the worthiness any narcissistic alienator feels when they claim "I deserve the kids," as this has nothing to do with bonafide self-esteem (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 19–22). Bonafide self-esteem comes from true accomplishment and being true to one's Self. Narcissistic entitlement does not return respect—rather it wants the "trophy" without playing the game. Entitlement seeks a comfortable life without reality and drowns any power the person processes to shape their future. Narcissistic alienators who claim "sole ownership" of a child as "their right" to the exclusion of the target parent in a joint custody situation, is nothing less than demanding to live in an infantile and mythical fantasy world of dreamland by stealth, marred by eternal ignorance of the proverbial ramifications. Ramifications that leave the victim child and target parent emotionally devastated and abused.

Such feelings of entitlement are often so overpowering that NPAs habitually expect unreasonable or exceptionally favorable preferential treatment. They automatically demand and ignorantly anticipate full compliance with their expectations. These personalities are "interpersonally exploitative"—in other words they will relentlessly and perniciously scapegoat others to accomplish their own ends in many aspects of their life.

*Exploitation* is where NPA's empathic abilities are stifled, leaving them inept to accurately grasp or comprehend how another person feels or to move with a compassionate response (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 23–26). Empathy requires us to momentarily step outside of ourselves and feel the feelings of another—something an alienator is inept to do. When this is done we assist with bridging the gap between beings. Narcissists are difficult to read

accurately, because they have yet to identify themselves in terms of belonging and self-security.

Serial NPAs are repeat offenders who fail to realize what they have done or how they act, particularly in regards to their children. In terms of maturity, these individuals are emotionally retarded, devoid of the wisdom of love, and remain around the age of five or six, forever displaying puerile attitudes and behavior. The target parent (or source of narcissistic supply) is seen not as a separate entity, but as an extension of Self, existing solely for the purpose of doing their manipulative bidding.

In custody litigation, these individuals will exploit a given situation, happenstance, custody report, or document against another to their own advantage. NPAs inevitably disrespect the court while en route via their “merry way,” oblivious to their own responsibility for their role in causing problems in the first place. Can they and should they be held accountable? Emphatically yes, severe sanctions or incarceration should be imposed on the chronic NPA offender, because their remorse or the ceasing to abuse is as unlikely as an apology from al-Qaida for the 9/11 attacks.

In addition, and applicable to NPAs, Dr. Vaknin continues his firm description of the narcissist and their exasperating behavior:

...lack of empathy, the aloofness, the disdain, the sense of entitlement, the constricted sense of humor, the unequal treatment and the paranoia—renders them social misfits. The narcissist is able to provoke in their milieu, in their casual acquaintances, even in his psychotherapist, the strongest, most avid and furious hatred and revulsion. . . To their shock, indignation and consternation, they invariably induce in others unbridled aggression. They are perceived to be asocial at best, and often, antisocial. This, perhaps, is the strongest presenting symptom. One feels ill at ease in the presence of a narcissist for no apparent reason. No matter how charming, intelligent, thought provoking, outgoing, easy going and social the narcissist is—they fail to secure the sympathy of others—a sympathy they are never ready, willing, or able to reciprocate. (Vaknin, 2003a, pp. 372–373)

*Bad boundaries* are *both* the alienator’s and narcissist’s redefined fence-line caused by the flagrant overstepping on meaningful attachments with others (Hotchkiss, 2003, pp. 27–31). Every human needs to belong to another outside of ourselves, yet we all have personal thoughts and feelings held private within us. From birth we are programmed to become an autonomous soul. Appropriate boundaries recognize this separation between people and sustain healthy relationships. NPAs nurture a grave character flaw that prevents them from recognizing that their boundaries and those of others are separate, different, and are not extensions of their own. Unless it is self-serving, they both *rarely* distinguish between their boundaries and those of others or their own children, because for the most part, boundaries are

non-existent. The foul-mouthing and lies to their children by those around them is a classic example and is irreprehensible.

Dr. Vaknin describes “haughty body language” as the “adoptive physical posture,” which either implies or exudes an “air of superiority, seniority, hidden powers, mysteriousness, amused indifference, etc.” and the fact that although the narcissist usually “maintains sustained and piercing eye contact”, they often refrain from physical closeness and appropriately described as “territorial.” In social settings they watch “condescendingly, from a position of supremacy and ‘faux magnanimity and largesse’” (Vaknina, 2003, p. 370). They expect others to comply with their every demand and to go straight to the top individual if they need to and will monopolize any given situation without waiting their turn. The narcissist who believes they are “‘above the law’ rages when frustrated, contradicted, or confronted by people he or she considers inferior to him or her and unworthy” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 661).

As narcissists need their supply, so to do NPAs who overtly perform their verbal “idealization or devaluation” on those they come into contact. With the skill of a microsurgeon the NPA “flatters, adores, admires and applauds the ‘target’ in an embarrassingly exaggerated and profuse manner—or sulks, abuses and humiliates” them (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 371).

Narcissists are very polite when they know that they can benefit from the encounter (gaining supply), but when there is little for them to plunder, they will quickly deteriorate losing perfunctory civility en route by brandishing their sword with a thinly veiled layer of hostility, and then when cornered or under pressure they will resort to verbal saber-rattling, violent abuse, seething attacks, or cold-hearted withdrawal. They have an abnormal sense to belong, yet, at the same time they “belong”; they psychologically remain in the back row as an outsider. As the parental alienator plays “grand protector” to the child to go against the target parent, so too does the “the narcissist seek to be admired for his ability to integrate and ingratiate himself without investing the efforts commensurate with such an undertaking” (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 371).

Both the parental alienator and narcissist project a False Self and play God by creating an imaginary concoction of their own inner being—unable to separate reality from their created Id—as are the narcissist’s victims unable to separate from them. Victims are frustrated with the ever-continuing illusive relief so often filled with helplessness and anger, because any effort to see through them was muddled by the narcissist’s tactics in the beginning of the relationship. In like manner, just as the *Art of War* is based on deception, so too is a pathological NPA a display of the art of self-deception personified.

## METHODICAL TACTICS

At given times during our lives, Narcissists and often parental alienators are all around us and they have the uncanny ability to really push our buttons.



To understand them, we must know how they use their cogitative skills in order to not be harmed by them.

NPA's use similar abusive tactics as "Invalidators," a term coined by Jay Carter Ph.D. in his book *Nasty People: How to Stop Being Hurt by Them without Stooping to Their Level*. These individuals have a burning desire to control every aspect of the target parent's relationship with their child(ren) and employ underhanded methods: uncertainty, projection, generalization, judgment, manipulation, sneak attack, double entendre, cutting off communication, buildup, tear down, and double binding.

Like the parental alienator, the "narcissist will keep their victims in a constant state of uncertainty" (Carter, 2003, pp. 7–9). They will rarely give you an answer—just a vague response minus commitment. This generates uncertainty for long periods of time, until the victim's ability to adapt starts to wane. They will build up trust and through insinuations or verbal abuse, they will tear you down and thereafter inquire: "what happened, is something wrong? I don't know what you are talking about." Should requests be made by the target parent, rarely will the NPA respond—one will be lucky to receive only the minimum out of many basic requests, should they comply. The victim is never sure what is coming up next, until the narcissist repeats their own comment in a sarcastic or mocking way. The narcissist will destroy trust through blame, and then again build it up over a period of time—only to smash it at their appointed time like the Berlin Wall.

In colloquial terms, these individuals, stack the deck, pass the buck, deny, blame the target parent, play victim, minimize, and use projection and enmeshment—disaffecting themselves from their deception as it suits. What mental health professionals call "projection," recipients call shame-dumping, a common phenomenon in narcissists.

Using projection, the narcissist is an expert (Carter, 2003, p. 9). Projection is also a favorite weapon of parental alienators. The chicanery of projection is accomplished, by simply taking their own feelings and dumping their responsibility onto someone else, as if these feelings or problems originated from their target in the first instance. They use questions that put the attention on the other person, thereby never "incriminating" themselves. When these people attack you for something you did not do, it actually tells more about the attacker rather than the victim. It is imperative for evaluators, therapists, and courts to recognize such circumstances.

Generalizations are the stones in the narcissist's sling and forget not that a half-truth is a whole lie. Generalizations are usually small "truths" spiced to suit the narcissist's pallet regarding the issue at hand. Name-calling and cut-downs are common generalizations used by the calculating NPAs married to the expectation that the individual, who has just been called the names, is miraculously going to awaken, agree, and thereby grow a brain in an instant based upon the abuse. The way to deal with individuals who are addicted to making cut-downs, allowing the child to call the target parent by their

first name, denigrating them in front of the child, is to either agree with the remarks or throw it back (in a polite and diplomatic manner) and hit it square on the mark. It is common that what NPAs dish out, they can't take themselves.

A polite and firm explanation to the child that the name calling is inappropriate of the other parent and the bad-mouthing is not true or justified is not parental alienation as the NPA would have one believe. On the topic of parental alienation, NPAs are usually very ill-informed and retain as always, only what they can use against their target. A surefire sign that the child has been taught a warped understanding of the subject is when the child starts to vigorously accuse the target parent of alienation while that parent is trying to explain their feelings about the behavior of the NPA.

Judgment is often in situations where third persons are within earshot. The narcissist will use generalizations or judgments in such a tone to attack their target's self-esteem and/or that of third parties to make the third party agree with them or feel awkward if they don't. These situations are generated by "a mastery of verbal manipulation and deception; through word choice and sharp language skills" (Carter, 2003, pp. 10–11).

Manipulation is nothing short of bad control (Carter, 2003, pp. 11–13). Good control is honest and ethical and includes pleasant respectful exchanges of "please," "thank you," and "you're welcome." When a NPA loses good control, they inevitably resort to bad control, which will include all the sneaky methods of manipulation to outright methods of domination—salted with threats of punishment to the target parent. For instance; NPAs who have primary custody and consistently make threats can be the most difficult. Threats to a target parent can be as mild as "if you get the cell phone number of our son; I'm going to cancel it," to extreme threats designed to brandish unbridled power and control. Another example: "I don't give a #@\*^! about THE kid, because YOU won't be around! You're loosing YOUR parental rights and you're never going to see MY child again . . . so YOU can just vanish as you're no longer required!" Statements like these show distancing, motive, intention, and plain evility—hard-core themes on the NPA's roster.

Sneak Attacks are the subtle: "I don't mean to interrupt . . ." (Right!), to "I don't mean to insult you, but . . .," (here comes the insult), (Carter, 2003, p. 13). These narcissists will be soft voiced and sweet, with a sharp tongue as forked as a cobra's. A target parent may ask to be supplied with any information they are legally entitled to and receive a response like: "No...when you *pay* your child support, then we'll talk about your complaints. All YOU are is somebody creating vexatious litigation and you're going to get what's coming to you . . . and then I'll let you know about MY child!" These attacks are dually designed to hurt and deflect the issue that the target parent desires to communicate or be informed about the child, and simultaneously maintain (perceived) control of the target parent and the child.

Double en tendre (double messages) is when the narcissist verbalizes words to their target in something of a “guttural” tone—the voice of disgust (Carter, 2003, pp. 13–16), usually accompanied by a snorting snicker and a smirking red face. Narcissists are masters at blowing their own trumpet with boastful and flagrant false tunes of “I’m honest and you’re not!” as they stand unaware that they have been caught being deceptive.

Cutting off communication is another valuable tool of the NPA. They will ask a question and cut you off before answering (Carter, 2003, p. 16). They are masters of leading innuendoes, suggestions, and questions like: “do you still fight with your wife?” or with preemptive strikes prior to the question: “It doesn’t matter . . . , YOU had the child support, but you never supported MY child with it, you supported YOUR deadbeat husband with it . . . Now what do you want?” Or, MY child “never wants to see YOU or YOUR new husband again!”, even though the child enjoyed many previous years with these persons, until the NPA campaigned and sunk in their manipulative claws.

Buildup, tear down, and double binding are the final scalpels in the chest. If the victim depends on the narcissist for their self-esteem, be warned as they will attempt to dissect their victim piece by piece. The narcissist will build one up, and once they notice that the target shows the smallest inkling of self-doubt, they will draw attention and exaggerate and exploit the smallest negative quality (Carter, 2003, pp. 16–17).

Double-binding is probably the meanest and dirtiest tricks of parental alienating narcissists. No matter how clearly one sees the problem, only a deep awareness by the target parent or expert will resolve it. The victim can learn to “take the stick away,” but this still leaves a relationship with the narcissist standing before them. The victim can also “walk away.” The problem with this situation is that it cuts off communication that could be valuable knowledge to you or the child. It is a “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t,” situation—a “Garden of Eden” for the alienator with Narcissistic Personality Disorder. The best thing a target non-custodial parent can do in such a double-bind is to remain calm and document every word the alienator utters and bring it to the attention of the court. Children should never be involved in the alienator’s war, but as an adult may choose to look at the evidence when they have developed a very mature mind and experience their own school of hard knocks. Target parents should keep up a determined effort not to stoop and reciprocate to the alienator’s level of abuse (Carter, 2003, pp. 17–23).

It is not uncommon for the narcissist to pretend that they know little about a subject and after a brief exchange or experience they become an “expert” in the field. Initially, the narcissist will emphatically relate to you that they have never studied subjects like parental alienation and then ensue to illustrate their theory in ambiguous “professional terms,” consequently, signifying that they have “mastered the discipline” nonetheless, which “shows”

that they are “exceptionally intelligent or introspective.” To effectively depict a NPA, a therapist or expert must delve deeper. Dr. Vaknin appears quite correct when he states: “the narcissist is shallow, a pond pretending to be an ocean. He likes to think of himself as a Renaissance man, a Jack-of-all-trades. The narcissist never admits to ignorance in any field—yet, typically, he is ignorant of them all. It is surprisingly easy to penetrate the gloss and the veneer of the narcissist’s self-proclaimed omniscience” (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 371).

As a “shallow pond,” their “bragging and false autobiography” is intertwined as the narcissist brags magniloquently without displaying an inkling of falsehood. Their use of speech, peppered with *I*, *my*, *myself*, and *mine* as they speak of their intelligence, family, their children, their career, their past, their college grades, their football team, their material possessions, and of course their wealth or at least what they used to own. NPAs will use terms like *my* child instead of *our* child. When angry or trying to control, they will use “I’ll take *your* son away.” Note the term *your*. Used here with emphasis it becomes a distancing word designed to hurt as it implies that they are going to get very personal and attack or take something that means the most to the other person, which is a key sign of domestic abuse.

Just like the narcissist’s verbal manipulation or the use of physical force, is part of a cycle of behavior used to establish and maintain power and control over another, the contrast between “Power and Control” and “Equality” is evident. This author’s article *Domestic Violence: A Living Hell for Millions* maintains: “Abusers employ intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, use children, threats and male privilege” (Parsonage & Summers, 1996, pp. 11–15).

These “stories” and “verbiage” are forever interconnected with the NPA’s biography. Frequently, these individuals will lie or their kaleidoscopic fantasies are not so simply evident. To cater to their ego and insecurities, they are frequent name-droppers—a master of guilt or prestige by association and inevitably last-worders—sporting no difficulty in correcting another’s myopic mind, minimizing another’s valued experience or feeble accomplishment. Using “emotion-free language” they will talk about themselves and show little interest in others, unless they can be used to feed the ever-hungry ego. These selfish alienating personalities are easily bored, impatient, condescending, even irate, and often develop paranoid cogitations that others are trespassing onto their turf, thus, abusing them. The NPA:

... intellectualizes, rationalizes, speaks about himself in the third person and in a detached ‘scientific’ tone or composes a narrative with a fictitious character in it, ‘suspiciously autobiographical,’ Being such serious individuals, narcissists manifest a ‘sense of intrusion and coercion’ with a ‘subtle, wry, and riotous sense of humor, scathing and cynical, but rarely is he self-deprecating’ (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 372).

Often NPAs “assume that others are totally concerned about their welfare” and are “often contemptuous and impatient with others.” Frequently these people are “oblivious to the hurt their remarks may inflict.” When acknowledged, the “needs, desires, or feelings of others are likely to be viewed disparagingly as signs of weakness or vulnerability.”

If the narcissist is an attorney; they’re always in the throes of the greatest case ever. If they are a corporate executive; they are about to make the biggest deal in company history. If they are a filmmaker, they are on their way to pick up their Oscar at the Academy Awards (Vaknin, 2003a). If narcissists are consistent in anything, it is the verbal “one-uppers” with meager emotions, easily hurt and insulted and then thriving on their own narcissistic injury. Even the most innocent observations or acts are “interpreted as belittling, intruding, or coercive.”

Organized religion (or the niche market Cult) is often a safe haven for the NPA as their idealistic and overblown expectations are inexorably catered to. As the NPA goes through their cycle of abuse with the target parent so too does the narcissist go through a similar cycle in their relationship with the almighty quintessential authority figure—God. Even when disenchantment and iconoclastic dejection sets in, the NPA myopically continues to pretend to love and obey God. They maintain this pharisaical facade because their continued proximity to God confers on them spellbinding authority, which is where God comes in very handy.

Religious tradition and pretentious dogma sanction the NPA to exercise abuse without conscience and thereafter perform a ritual of penance or confidential confession. This “forgiveness,” clears the conscience so one can continue the abuse for the rest of the week. The congregation or parish is the NPA’s audience—always a loyal and stable source of Narcissistic Supply. NPAs often use religion (and their own hypocrisy) against the target parent, including placing the child(ren) into a heavily religious school of their choosing, rather than a practical and more contemporary environment complemented by a higher quality of scholastics. At the same time, NPAs often create allegations that the target parent is “anti” whatever the NPAs religious claim to fame is, rather than look at their own hypocrisy.

Religion for the NPA is about being a part of a “bigger thing.” It becomes an authoritarian port where the NPA becomes God and Savior vicariously through proxy. NPAs ritualistically perform the classic narcissistic play that even God *cannot* escape. The ancient biblical writers were quite correct when they described misogynistic NPAs and their narcissistic children:

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power. And from such people turn away! . . . For of this sort are those who creep into households and

make captives of gullible women. . . . (New King James Version of the Holy Scriptures, 1982)

These words were meant to describe the “last days of this world,” but often describe the last days of the NPAs marriage or the beginning of the target parent’s nightmare.

These poignant descriptions unravel the mystery of NPA’s pathetic behavior. The fact that “any suggested help, advice, or concerned inquiry are immediately described by the narcissist as intentional humiliation, implying that the narcissist is in need of help and counsel and, thus, imperfect . . . and less than omnipotent.” Nevertheless; “any attempt to set an agenda is, to the narcissist, an intimidating act of enslavement. In this sense, the narcissist is both *schizoid* and *paranoid* and often entertains ideas of reference” or “created events and generated fears” based upon shaky or unfounded projected deviations (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 372).

More or less every person has some narcissistic and alienating traits, but being conceited, argumentative, or selfish from time to time (or even all the time) does not enumerate as a personality disorder. NPD is a long-standing pattern of highly abnormal thinking, attitude, feeling, and dysfunctional behavior no matter what the circumstances. Simply, conscious alienators or abusers are also narcissistic. Not everyone means to be narcissistic, nor do they mean to abuse. As we mature, we tend to lose our narcissism—yet we will always retain some vestige of it, even within the most exemplary human beings.

## DIAGNOSTICS FOR THERAPISTS AND FORENSIC EVALUATORS

As with most literature on the topics of narcissism, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association, shows the diagnostic criteria for 301.81 Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). This bible for the mental health profession clearly shows us that narcissists expect to be “catered to” and are “puzzled or furious” when this does not happen.

In the fourth edition of the DSM-IV-TR, NPD has been recognized as a separate mental health disorder and not just a symptom of the personality problems of a handsome Greek boy named Narcissus who rejected the romantic advances of the nymph Echo. According to the manual, up to 75% of narcissists are male and an estimated 0.7–1 percent of the general population has this disorder. NPD is one of a “family” of personality disorders (formerly known as the Cluster B group) (DSM-IV-TR, APA2000, pp. 658–661). “Members of this group include: Borderline PD, Antisocial PD, and Histrionic PD. Individuals who have NPD are often diagnosed with other mental health disorders such as co-morbidity and frequently have a history of substance abuse, or impulsive and reckless behaviors—dual diagnosis” (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 21).

NPD is also associated with Anorexia Nervosa and Substance-Related Disorders (such as cocaine and opiate use). Just as Anorexics will hide their disorder, so too will NPAs conceal from a mental health professional past illicit drug use, associated medical records, criminal background, their histories of sexual infidelity, perverted pornography, or minimize any verbal and physical abuse they have perpetrated in the past toward the target parent or others during a divorce or post-divorce litigation evaluation involving children.

There is a surefire disparity between having a narcissistic personality and style and being diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder. The *DSM-IV* meticulously explains NPD and adheres to strict criteria and differential diagnoses:

Narcissism is regarded by many scholars to be an adaptive strategy ('healthy narcissism'). It is considered pathological in the clinical sense only when it becomes a rigid personality structure replete with a series of primitive defense mechanisms (such as splitting, projection, Projective Identification, or intellectualization)—and when it leads to dysfunctions in one or more areas of life. (Vaknin, 2003a, pp. 369–373)

For example, narcissists and parental alienators recurrently mislead the inexperienced professional with erroneous false statements that the target parent or their new spouse has threatened to do some harm to the child(ren). As severely alienated child(ren) often willfully confirm alleged “abuse,” after experiencing *both* subtle and overt long-term repetitive negative indoctrination by a NPA. These children and the alienator’s brainwashed family may allege abuse or threats that did not occur with little or no remorse and at the expense of the innocent victims, thereby adding to the perverted glory of the alienating parent, so often viewed as a “savior.” An alienator set on destruction eventually forgoes the protections of their position. It is widely regarded that “falsely accusing parents were much more likely than were the other two groups to have a personality disorder such as histrionic, borderline, passive-aggressive, or paranoid” (Underwager & Wakefield, 1990).

### PAS & THE DSM

According to the literature, Parental Alienation, like narcissism is well recognized within the mental health field and among many experienced professionals, Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) is accepted as well. The *DSM-IV* does not currently include PAS because the term was introduced as the *DSM-IV* was being written for publication. It takes years of data before it can be introduced, considered and accepted. A syndrome is a pattern or cluster of symptoms indicative of some disease.

At this point, *DSM-V* is scheduled for publication around 2011 and it appears promising that it will acknowledge PAS because of the extensive professional literature and clinical findings now available. DSM requirements

are quite stringent, and justifiably so. In his article, “Denial of the Parental Alienation Syndrome, Also Harms Women,” Richard Gardner explains why PAS has not made the pages of the *DSM-IV* at this time.

Gille de la Tourette first described his syndrome in 1885. It was not until 1980, 95 years later, that the disorder found its way into the DSM. It is important to note that at that point, ‘Tourette’s Syndrome’ became ‘Tourette’s Disorder.’ Asperger first described his syndrome in 1957. It was not until 1994 (37 years later) that it was accepted into DSM-IV and ‘Asperger’s Syndrome’ became ‘Asperger’s Disorder.’ . . . DSM-IV states specifically that all disorders contained in the volume are syndromes, and they would not be there if they were not syndromes . . . Once accepted, the name syndrome becomes changed to disorder. However; this is not automatically the pattern for non-psychiatric disorders . . . Often the term syndrome becomes locked into the name and becomes so well known that changing the word syndrome to disorder may seem awkward. For example, Down’s syndrome, although well recognized, has never become Down’s disorder. Similarly, AIDS (Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome) is a well-recognized disease, but still retains the syndrome term. (Gardner, 2002a, pp. 191–202)

### ALIENATION AND THE NARCISSISTIC TOXIC MIX

A NPA may exonerate their version of “shared parenting,” but in reality, they practice sole custody with near or total termination of target parent contact and rights with the children. If the alienator has physical custody (especially long distance) of the child or teen and the alienation has hit an acute level, it may become a danger for the target parent to have the child anywhere near them. Frequently, the target is forced into supervised visitation on frivolous grounds of “interfering” with the narcissistic alienator’s manipulative relationship with the children. NPAs often fuel their own behavior by falsely complaining to the world about the target parent and often conceal the truth that most of them have joint custody, but mislead others to believe it is sole custody. If the target parent is upset or reacts angrily at the alienator’s behavior, this equates in their narcissistic mind as “proof” that the target parent is lying. The reality is often that the NPA lives by the motto that former General Alexander Haig once so eloquently stated: “That’s not a lie; it’s a terminological inexactitude and a tactical misrepresentation.”

Liz Richards author of the *Washington Times* commentary on April 23, 2006 and headlined as: “The Other Side of Fathers’ Rights Controversy” reported:

Many professional statistical studies show high win rates for fathers accused of family abuse along with low rates of false allegations against fathers, while little is said about the known fact disputing fathers are the most vicious false accusers. (Richards, 2006, p. 26)



Richards expands on the fact that in their 1996 report “Domestic Violence and the Courtroom,” the American Judges Association in Williamsburg, Virginia, noted that:

...wife batterers and child abusers convince family court officials that their ex-wives are ‘unfit’ or ‘undeserving’ of sole custody in roughly 70 percent of contested custody battles. Since then, at least 23 states have conducted gender-bias studies; all with similar findings. (Richards, 2006, p. 26)

While it is true that most violent narcissists are men who will often request a protective order or file assault charges against their female victims. Unfortunately, the courts have paid very little attention to the high rate of dismissed complaints against mothers and stepparents, initiated by fathers, because we live in a world where justice can be radically lopsided and narcissists will use the system to the maximum.

Researcher Joanna Ashmun, whose work *Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD): How to Recognize a Narcissist* reveals:

The most telling thing that narcissists do is contradict themselves. They do this virtually in the same sentence, without even stopping to take a breath. It can be trivial (e.g., about what they want for lunch) or it can be serious (e.g., about whether or not they love you). When you ask them which one they mean, they’ll deny ever saying the first one, though it may literally have been only seconds since they said it—really, how could you think they’d ever have said that? You need to have your head examined! They will contradict FACTS.

They will lie to you about things that you did together or about what opposing counsel and judges state. They will misquote you to yourself. If you disagree with them, they’ll say you’re lying, making stuff up, or are crazy. (Ashmun, 2004)

For comparative demonstration, it is interesting to consider Ashmun’s chart and compare puerile-like characteristics of the NPD and the NPA with normal six-year-olds.

Normal six-year-olds	Narcissists
amoral/conscienceless	hyper-sensitive to criticism
authoritarian	impulsive
care only about appearances	lack sense of humor
contemptuous, cruel	naïve
critical of others	passive
disappointing gift-givers	pessimistic
don’t recognize own feelings	religious
envious and competitive	secretive
feel entitled	self-contradictory
flirtatious or seductive	stingy
grandiose	strange work habits
hard to have a good time with	unusual eating habits
hate to live alone	weird sense of time

Furthermore, Joanna Ashmun accurately, and yet provocatively reminds us that:

Narcissists lack a mature conscience and seem to be restrained only by fear of being punished or of damaging their reputations—though, again, this can be obscure to casual observation if you don't know what they think their reputations are, and what they believe others think of them may be way out of touch with reality. Their moral intelligence is about at the level of a bright five- or six-year-old; the only rules they recognize are things that have been specifically required, permitted, prohibited, or disapproved of by authority figures they know personally. Narcissists can't be counted on not to do something *just because* it's wrong, illegal, or will hurt someone, as long as they think that they can get away with it or that you can't stop them or punish them (i.e., they don't care what you think unless they're afraid of you). (Ashmun, 2004)

## FORENSIC ANALYSIS DETECTING DECEPTIVE STATEMENTS

Mark McClish, a former U.S. Secret Service Officer and author of an authoritative work: *I Know You Are Lying: Detecting Deception Through Statement Analysis* brings home the fact that “when we communicate with those around us we usually do so by vocalizing our thoughts and feelings” (McClish, 2001). Statement Analysis is the practice of examining words to determine exactly what an individual is saying or not saying because people's words will betray them. This includes the art of determining when and if an individual is being truthful or deceptive.

Statement Analysis will assist a custody evaluator with discovering additional information within a statement such as in a letter, recording or transcript and rings that inner bell, when a person is withholding information from the reader, listener or interviewer. This science is based on three things: (1) Definitions, (2) Grammar, and (3) Research. All of which help glean additional information from a person's statement.

It would be advantageous for therapists to be versed in statement analysis because in protracted litigation that contain false child abuse allegations—the fact that numerous written and verbal requests for information about the child(ren) by the target parent are made, will appear to the alienator as a “declaration of war.” These alienators inevitably leave behind a trail of evidence and frequently manipulate and hinder the release of any and all documents—especially telephone, therapy records, or other documents supplied to third parties. False accusations that the target parent “will defame” or “already have defamed” the alienator or the child are not uncommon. The NPA uses such allegations to justify themselves and block the truth from being revealed.

Sadly, and all too frequently, narcissistic alienators create some type of fictitious written history of their case with sordid versions about the target

parent and/or target stepparent. A well-trained custody evaluator could use statement analysis to review all allegations that have taken place during and post divorce. Unfortunately, the imputation of wrong doing or questionable behavior on behalf of the target parent without evidence is all too common—and is often successfully crafted with the dual intent to cause financial harm as well as emotional suffering to the target parent. Many target parents who suffered the physical and mental trauma of being abused during their marriage are forced again to relive the suffering, and often develop serious health issues after years of narcissistic and alienating abuse. It is imperative for therapists and court evaluators to first gain historical knowledge of the parents as this is often neglected.

Although statement analysis is a relatively new science, and has its pitfalls like all other new fields, it still can be a valuable tool for the mental health professional looking to get to the bottom of family and mental health issues when evaluating for the court and for therapists in helping children. An example like; “all I can tell you” means all I “will” tell you or “I don’t know what you are talking about,” often means the NPA has perpetrated the act themselves.

### A MENDACIOUS MODUS OPERANDI

Commonly, false allegations are made in order to coach a witness away from any potential positive contact with the target parent and financially harm them as abuse allegations can be long drawn out battles in court and difficult to defend. False allegations made to the court usually include—abusive behavior, allegations of torture and violence, threats of violence, restraining orders, mental illnesses, criminal activity, allegations of extortion, and misuse of child support payments. “The alienating parent’s primary purpose for indoctrinating the child(ren)’s campaign of denigration against the target parent is to gain leverage in the court of law” (Gardner, 2002b).

According to William Healy, a deliberate liar knows he is lying. A pathological liar may not. In his work *Pathological Lying, Accusation, and Swindling: A Study in Forensic Psychology*, Healy explains:

Pathological lying is falsification entirely disproportionate to any discernible end in view, engaged in by a person who, at the time of observation, cannot definitely be declared insane, feeble-minded, or epileptic. Such lying rarely, if ever, centers about a single event. Lying is exhibited in very occasional cases for a short time, and manifests itself most frequently by far over a period of years, or even a lifetime. It represents a trait rather than an episode. Extensive, very complicated fabrications may be evolved. This has led to the synonyms: mythomania, pseudologia and phantastica (Healy & Healy, 1915).

Furthermore, Dr. Vaknin et al clearly documents that NPA are by their virtue “pathological liars.” Narcissists: “are either unaware of their lies—or feel completely justified and at ease in lying to others. Often, they believe their own lies and attain retroactive veracity. Their very essence is a huge, contrived, lie: the FALSE Self, the grandiose fantasies, and the idealized objects” (Vaknin, 2003a, p. 85). Such narcissists as parents contribute to the corruption of youth, the poisoning of young minds, and the attenuation and even destruction of the inherent and what many believe to be the divine parent-child(ren) bond. Certainly one would hope that by the time the orchestrated posse of the alienator’s enablers reach the courtroom that the judiciary would recognize what is going on and bring an end to this abomination, however, this rarely proves to be the case. Rather, the judiciary often gets drawn in and contributes immeasurably to the perpetuation and entrenchment of the alienation, resulting in children who become permanently alienated from a loving and kind parent, extended family and unfortunately become a problem in society, often ending up in criminal juvenile proceedings themselves.

Narcissistic parents play an important role in the etiology and development of parental alienation especially by claiming empowerment of children by leading others to believe that the claims they make are those of the child(ren) alone and that the child(ren) are mentally and emotionally mature for their age. They profess that they really respect what their children want (with the implication and persuasive suggestion that the other parent does not). Many target parents, however, are left in financial devastation and bankruptcy defending frivolous allegations and legal motions of pettifoggery and delays for years, because the NPA who refuses to speak or respond in writing with the target parent, allow themselves and their child(ren) to maliciously run their own families and if possible, the courtroom as well. These alienators frequently withhold any and all information, forcing the target parent to spend tens of thousands of dollars more obtaining information through attorneys and licensing boards. Schools, therapists, and other third parties also regularly refuse to cooperate due to slanderous defamation, horrifically inaccurate and biased diatribes supplied to them by the NPA.

Contributing to “pathological empowerment,” alienating indoctrinators know well that they can rely upon most therapists to empower their child(ren) in this way so that they are readily duped into joining the entourage of enablers and supporters who may unwittingly or without conscience, support the narcissistic alienator’s cause. The NPA is an expert operative in the coup d’état of the human mind.

NPA targets do well to remember Aristotle “Anybody can become angry—that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody’s power and is not easy.” The “everybody’s power” that Aristotle refers to can certainly be applied to NPAs who are often deliberately “clueless” as the wheels of their conscience grind to a halt, when

their dysfunctional mind is deprived of a much-needed psychologically unbalanced supply.

Without professional help and court ordered enforcement, whether it be hefty fines (which many are not phased about paying) or incarceration, these alienators will still harbor delusionary elements of power, control, and revenge. Meanwhile, their personalities remain as unbridled tools to enact an ultimate reprisal for the separation, divorce, or custody—with a malicious narcissistic agenda devoid of any morals, conscience, or remorse. Certainly this is child abuse.

## THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

Technically “psychotherapy” is not counseling. Psychotherapy is designed to alleviate psychological disturbances. An experienced therapist skilled in parental alienation and narcissism “can bring a neutral perspective to family conflicts and can challenge distortions of reality and encourage more realistic thinking . . . If allegations of abuse accompany alienation, avoid therapists who believe that all such allegations must be true. You can recognize such therapists by their opinions that ‘children never lie’ or ‘where there’s smoke, there’s fire.’ Either they are unaware of the professional literature in this area, or they have a personal axe to grind” (Warshak, 2001, pp. 247–259).

Much of the literature regarding parental alienation recommends legal and therapeutic interventions. This largely depends upon the category of the alienation mild, moderate, or extreme. The categorization or extreme extent of the alienation also depends on psychopathology of the loved parent, that is, narcissism. Most therapists recommend for mild parental alienation cases:

...that court orders for visitation are the only intervention necessary. These orders are assumed to reassure the primary caretaker and the child that their bond will not be threatened, that the order for visitation will alleviate the child’s guilt, and that clear and precise court orders will lower the conflict between the parents. The loved parent is not assumed to have any severe emotional problems. (Lund, 1995)

The best part of these cases fall in the “moderate” parental alienation group. In these cases Lund extrapolates:

... it is assumed that the loved parent gives verbal and nonverbal cues to the child that encourages them to act out angrily against the hated parent or to be afraid of that parent. In these cases, Gardner recommends a combination of orders for visitation plus therapy. Therapy is not designed to increase parents’ insight, but rather to structure the visitation. Therapy aims at helping the non-custodial parent become tough-skinned about the child’s rejection, deprogramming the child, and confronting the alienation tactics of the primary caregiver. (Lund, 1995)

In cases of chronic and severe parental alienation, which are very rare, therapists often recommend a change or reversal of custody (provided the child will not physically harm the target parent) or the child be removed from the alienator and placed in a neutral zone, where reintegration can take place without NPA hindrance.

Although this appears to be a drastic recommendation . . . typically, in these cases the primary caretaker has severe psychopathology, which also affects other aspects of parenting. For example, the loved parent has rigid, paranoid thinking that severely limits the child's ability to differentiate and mature in other aspects of life. The change in custody recommendation also assumes that the other parent is more emotionally healthy (Lund, 1995).

Lund pulls no punches when she explains the link between the narcissist and the parental alienator. She excoriates the behavior of both:

PAS usually involves a hated father and a loved mother . . . Rarely, the loved parent is the father and the hated one the mother. In this scenario, the child, usually a boy, identifies with the father who is contemptuous of the mother . . . The father is narcissistic, successful, and looks down on those not as successful or as righteous as he is. The mother has usually done something abandoning . . . , or has behaved in a way that the child labels as morally wrong (usually with help in labeling by the father). (Lund, 1995)

So where does the fault lie? In similar fashion to that of Adam, Eve, and the Serpent, NPAs deceive themselves and inevitably pass the buck by blaming the "Snake," or their former spouse, their family, the stepparent, their attorney, the court, and eventually even their own child. Nevertheless, for the target parent happiness is the best revenge, as the real fault lays with these emotionally devoid impedes who refuse to compromise and acquire the much needed therapy due to their unadulterated arrogance.

Advice for the abused, Robert Burns (1759–1796) once stated: "In idle wishes fools supinely stay; Be there a will,—then wisdom finds a way." Remember, "Deceit is in haste, but honesty can wait a fair leisure."

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