



Parental alienation can occur when one parent, usually with residence of a child, turns the child against the other parent by way of psychological manipulation.

A child will then tend to side with one parent, taking on their views. It has become a common occurrence in disputes involving children.

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) defines it as being *'When a child's resistance or hostility towards one parent is not justified and is the result of psychological manipulation by the other parent.'*

The child will behave in a way that they believe will please the parent instigating the alienation rather than acting on the basis of their true feelings. They will pick up on the other parent's shortcomings and may try to punish them.

This can cause a previously close relationship to deteriorate and result in the child believing they would be happier without the alienated parent in their lives.

What behaviour can result in parental alienation?

Behaviour resulting in parental alienation can include:

- speaking negatively about the other parent, to include insulting them and belittling them
- undermining the other parent
- blaming the other parent for the breakdown of the relationship



- letting the child believe that the other parent does not love them or that they love a sibling more
- letting the child believe that they have to choose between parents
- refusing to discuss the other parent and insisting that the child does not mention them
- preventing contact or making contact difficult, to include not passing on telephone messages
- not passing on letters or gifts from the other parent
- not letting the other parent know about the child's activities and appointments such as parents' evening, sporting events and medical issues
- questioning the child about the other parent after contact and asking what they talked about
- making the child feel afraid of the other parent.

Dealing with parental alienation

It is important to deal with parental alienation as quickly as possible as it can be damaging to a child. An experienced family law solicitor will be able to discuss whether it is appropriate to make an application to the court to ask for an order setting out what is in the child's best interests.

On such an application, the court will consider what it believes to be in the child's best interests and can make fundamental revisions to the arrangements for the child if necessary. In the case of parental alienation, the court may order that the child go to live with the alienated parent.

How we can help

If you would like further information on parental alienation then please contact our expert [family law team](#) either by calling us on 01892 506191 or [get in touch](#) by completing our online form.

Written by