



Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) is the systematic denigration by one parent of the other with the intent of alienating the child against the other parent. The purpose of the alienation is usually to gain or retain custody without the involvement of the father. The alienation usually extends to the fathers family and friends as well.

Dr. Richard Gardner in his book 'The Parental Alienation Syndrome' states (P.74)

"Many of these children proudly state that their decision to reject their fathers is their own. They deny any contribution from their mothers. And the mothers often support this vehemently. In fact, the mothers will often state that they want the child to visit with the father and recognize the importance of such involvement, yet such a mothers every act indicates otherwise. Such children appreciate that, by stating the decision is their own, they assuage mothers guilt and protect her from criticism.

Such professions of independent thinking are supported by the mother who will often praise these children for being the kind of people who have minds of their own and are forthright and brave enough to express overtly their opinions. Frequently, such mothers will exhort their children to tell them the truth regarding whether or not they really want to see their fathers. The child will usually appreciate that "the truth" is the profession that they hate the father and do not want to see him ever again. They thereby provide that answer -couched as "the truth" - which will protect them from their mother's anger if they were to state what they really wanted to do, which is to see their fathers. It is important for the reader to appreciate that after a period of programming the child may not know what is the truth any more and come to actually believe that the father deserves the vilification being directed against him. The end point of the brainwashing process has then been achieved.

HOW COMMON IS IT?

Nearly every National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights member will have some experience of it. We have cases where children as young as two year old 'claim' not to want to see their father again, and cases where all children of one family will all decide that they do not wish to see their father again. It comes up to some degree in virtually every case where the father is attempting to get or extend contact, and most appeals will include aspect of PAS being a factor in the stopping or disruption of access.

WHY IS IT SO COMMON?

It is a very effective legal device for getting custody. There are two reasons for this. First the Children Act of 1989 took more consideration of 'the child's wishes', and secondly the Child Support Agency separated the issues of court orders for maintenance and contact. A mother who stops or disrupts contact 'defined by a court order' is in contempt of court, and may be fined or jailed. There are no cases of this actually happening because the courts will state "it is of no benefit to the child for the mother to be punished", but it does mean she may be repeatedly brought back to court for being obstructive. To overcome this she will state "The child does not wish to see the father". A Court Welfare Officer will then interview the child and report that the child has confirmed that it does not wish to see the father. The 'child's wishes' will then be taken into consideration and the court will stop the fathers contact. The mother will be in the clear, the CWO will have reported the matter accurately, and the court will respond accordingly. The father will have lost contact, probably for several years until the child is old enough to become independent of the mother. In the majority of cases the child will then return to the father. Interviews with adults who have been through this experience as children make the common statement that 'they did not know-how to cope with the situation, so avoided the father rather than hated him'.

WHY DON'T CWO'S RECOGNIZE THE SITUATION?

They do, but a National Association of Probation Offers spokeswoman stated "NAPO has no policy on PAS" meaning that though recognised, there is no clear cut action to be taken. If the CWO recommends Family Therapy it is expensive and time consuming. CWO do not have the time, the experience, or resources to do what needs to be done. They should interview the child out of the vicinity of both parents, and better, in the company of each parent separately. Though they are authorized to do this, they rarely choose to do so. A common complaint of National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights members is that the CWO's interviews are not carried out with the intent of getting the facts, but merely to go through the motions. Most Court reports will be drawn up with the intent of getting the result the CWO chooses rather than as information for the court to decide upon.

IS IT OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED?

There are two distinct aspects of PAS; medical and legal. Medically PAS is a form of emotional child abuse. Parents in hostile separations typically suffer depression, anger, and aggression. The expression of these feelings takes on the form of withdrawing love and communication. This extends to the children via the custodial parent. As a medical problem it is closely related to 'False allegations of sexual abuse' used to stop the father having contact; and to the 'Stockholm Syndrome' which describes the children as 'hostages' afraid of the mother, and obeying her as a means of survival. There are also aspects of 'False memory syndrome' whereby the child may be instilled with false memories of the father.

Legally PAS is recognized as a behavior pattern but often goes under other names such as 'Coaching, Prejudicing, Rehearsing' and synonyms of brainwashing. Although recognized by the courts it is rarely acted upon because as a form of emotional abuse it is very difficult to define, and would require bringing in Social Services. The other forms of child abuse are Physical, Sexual, and Neglect, and are easily identified by expert witnesses. Emotional abuse can only be registered as part of these. Some courts will act upon it, but do so by simply ignoring the mothers claims of 'the child's wishes' and indicate that she is being obstructive. The more enlightened courts will order family therapy, and ensure that visitation rights are kept. Anyone claiming PAS should always look for Family therapy as a way forward. Although PAS currently recognized but not acted upon it is actually a crime to 'incite hatred on the basis of colour, religion, or creed' . Also the government is considering making 'Stalking' a crime on the basis of 'emotional abuse'. In the USA one father had maintenance suspended on the grounds that his daughter 'hated' him even though he had made every reasonable effort to form a relationship with her. Such an approach by the courts here would prevent PAS being used as a loophole in the law.

OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON PAS

A spokeswoman for the Home Office 'Probation Service Division states: "Both the Home Office and the court welfare service are also aware of the fact that parents may seek to manipulate their children and encourage them to make statements designed to lessen the chances of the absent parent being granted contact with the child. Where an officer suspects that such coaching or manipulation has taken place, he or she will take this into account when preparing the welfare report and ensure that it is brought to the courts attention".

A spokesman for the Dept. of Health said: "The potential for alienation by feuding parents is a commonly recognized problem"

A spokeswoman for the Inst. of Family Therapy said: "With one parent gone, their fear is that they will be abandoned by the other, so they say whatever the present parent wishes to hear", and "When children under twelve are forced to choose, they tend to align with the parent they are living with".

A leading Child Psychiatrist states: "...a child states that they do not wish to see the non-custodial parent happens far too frequently as a result of the bitterness between partners after the breakdown of their relationship".

WHAT IS THE BEST LEGAL APPROACH TO PAS?

If you are getting a solicitor there are now solicitors who specialise in this field. Find one that works in this field rather than one who simply claims to know about it. Get advice from National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights on this. Magistrates courts tend to be dominated by lady magistrates. Experience has shown that they are less sympathetic to the fathers case than judges in the higher courts. If possible, avoid a magistrates court and go for a county court. You can refuse to have a CWO who you feel is not reporting your case correctly or not dealing with essential facts. Don't assume they will ask you the right questions. Write down the questions you would like them to ask, and prepare the answers. When you meet up with the CWO then have that information ready for them. If it is not included in your court report then question it. Also make sure you know the date when you can expect to receive the report, as some CWO's don't bother telling you. It is essential that you question ALL ERRORS AND OMISSIONS AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE TIME. Notify the CWO of these before your case, and notify the court of the reply (or lack of one). Have a listing of the errors and omissions available at the court.

Some CWO's will accept and report PAS. You should keep a diary and copies of all communications between yourself, the mother of your children, and your children as evidence. Recognized evidence is typically:

- a) The mother obstructs all attempts for you to communicate with her or the children in spite of saying 'she is not stopping the children seeing you'.
- b) The children will suddenly start making excuses for not seeing it. They may say they do not want gifts from you. Gifts sent will not be acknowledged or even returned, signed by the child.
- c) Though the child supposedly doesn't want to see you, it will also suddenly stop seeing anyone connected to you. This will include close relatives, friends, etc. They will even stop talking to your neighbours and anyone who might be in direct contact with you. The mother will also stop contacting anyone connected to you in spite of outwardly claiming not to be involved in the child's attitudes. All such instances should be recorded as it

is an indicator that the child is frightened rather than hateful. d) The mother will pursue the strategy of obstructiveness by going to the school, clubs, and places where your children regularly visit, and state to the authorities that you are not to contact your children there. e) You will find that others close to the mother will not communicate with you.

In all, the mothers strategy will be to totally isolate you from the children by gradually breaking every line of contact you might have with her or the children.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Your strategy has to be the opposite, and to create every possible line of contact with your children, the mother, and anyone connect with them.

There are no rules as everyone's case is unique, but there are many common sense actions you can take.

1. Work on the assumption that your child might turn up tomorrow. Ideally they will find you happy and leading a full life. They will want to see you as the father they knew. They will not want to be reminded of the past or of conflicts you have with the mother. Your first priority is to make sure you are not destroyed or undermined by the situation.

2. You will go through a period of grieving for your child. It will be similar to someone who has lost a child through death. It will occupy all your waking moments and dreams. This will last until you can 'let go' of your child. You can best do this by keeping yourself as fully occupied as possible. If you have contact with other children such as relatives, or can be involved in children's activities, this helps. Retain and develop your fathering skills.

3. Openly discuss the problem with anyone who will talk to you about it. You may be surprised to find how many other people have similar problems and have learned to cope. It will relieve the inner tension. Don't brood on it. Regard it in the way of men separated from their families during the war. Think positively.

4. Try to play an active part in National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights. The worst feeling is of helplessness. Doing something, anything, gives a feeling that you have some control over the situation.

5. Make yourself knowledgeable about the situation. Collect articles, letters, etc. that deal with this problem. What initially is seen as a confused situation will soon be seen as a predictable pattern that helps you to assess your own situation. Having a plan gives you direction.

6. In spite of some women being the perpetrators of this problem, most women will be very sympathetic and supportive of your case. They will often be able to give you a good idea of why the mother of your child acts as she does. It is a great help to have women friends to discuss this with.

7. Try to form contacts with other National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights members. Don't just come to a few meetings or assume that there are clear cut answers. We find that each case has some new insight. It is only by becoming aware of new attitudes in the courts, government, etc. that we can look at new directions. Your case is important to us all. Make sure it is known, discussed, and reported. Your comments are valuable. Write to papers, write to your MP, write to National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights.

Back to top

WHY DOES THE MOTHER WANT TO GET RID OF THE FATHER?

There is no clear cut answer to this. In some cases it is done with intent by the mother to get rid of the father, while in other case the situation just gets out of hand and drifts to the point where PAS just becomes one more step in the wrong direction. A survey of National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights members showed the following variety of reasons. In many cases there will be several different reasons combined.

There are many reasons why a mother should want the children to hate the father.

Some of these are listed below.

1. The mother wants to start a new life and wants the father out of the way. She may be more successful than he is. He is seen as an encumbrance.
2. The mother wants money/property from the father and uses the children as bargaining pawns.
3. The mother hates the father and uses the children as weapons.
4. The mother is possessive and wants all the children's love.
5. The mother is jealous of the love/gifts the father gives the child but not to her.
6. The mother cannot cope with her own life. Contact with the father in any form is difficult for her. It is a common statement by fathers that the mother suffers from depression. Sometimes PMT, when rows are likely to flare up over minor incidents, and lead to greater hostility.

7. Disappointment. She feels he is unworthy to be a father and doesn't deserve the children.
8. The mother is egged on by other women hostile to men. Typically if she is in a group of single mothers.
9. The mother uses access to control the children (if you don't behave then you can't see daddy).
10. The mother can't compete with the father who may be able to give the children more treats in the short time he sees them. The children may boost him at her expense, and typically demand more from her.
11. The children may be the only aspect of control the mother has, so uses it to boost her own esteem rather than for the interests of the children. This is the power motive more commonly seen in men.
12. The mother may still like the father and uses the children as a means of controlling him.
13. The mother may be punishing the father's new partner indirectly as the father may know that he could see the children if it wasn't for the new partner.
14. The mother may be independent and never wanted a man around anyway apart from fathering her children (entrapment). Or she may have gained independence during the marriage and now wants to exploit it.
15. As often quoted, the mother may see children as a way of getting a house, welfare money, and other benefits. The father was always incidental in the matter.
16. Some women actually believe that men are not interested in their children.
17. The mother assumes hostility by the father towards her is also towards the children, so 'protects' them by keeping him away.
18. The mother has a different lifestyle to the father, and does not want the children to copy his way of life.
19. The mother may have no family of her own (typically foreign wives), whereas the father may have a family. The mother regards the child as 'her family'.

20. The mother may become emotionally dependent upon the child, and regard any affections the child has for the father as depriving her.
21. The mother simply regards the child as her property, and sees the father as making a claim on her 'possessions'.
22. The mother dislikes the fathers new partner, who she sees as a rival 'mother', so prevents the child seeing the father.
23. The mother's new partner is the one who is preventing contact because he wishes to be seen as the 'daddy'.
24. She fears the children will leave her for him.
25. She wants to prove to her new partner that he is the only man in her life.
26. She may have come from a broken family, and not be able to sustain a relationship.
27. The father is a constant reminder of the failed relationship that she prefers to forget.
28. She may be starting a new involvement, or having difficulties with the existing one, and doesn't want the children to tell the father about her affairs.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING WHY THE MOTHER DOES IT.

If you know why the mother behaves as she does then you are in a much better position to deal with the situation. A mother who has another partner will want the father out of her life for the simple reason that it makes her life complicated to have him around. The child's needs are secondary. On the other hand a mother who lives in a house owned by the father and relies on his goodwill for extras over and above maintenance, might be alienating the children as a means of getting the property or getting more money. In such a case the situation might be open to negotiation.

WHAT ARE THE FACTORS TO CONSIDER?

As the main aim of the mother is to stop all contact, while the main aim of the father is to gain all contact there are a number of factors that can be assessed to give the father an idea of his chances.

1. The age of the children. The older the better.
2. The locality of the children. The nearer the better.

3. The number of children. The more the better.
4. The independence of the mother. The less the better.
5. The friends and relatives of the mother and father. The more the better.
6. The resources of the father. The more the better.
7. The mobility and availability of the father. The greater the better.

It is a mistake of many fathers to assume that the matter is in the hands of the court, and decisions made there are the essential ones. The reality is that the courts decisions are only one aspect of the situation. The mother has her own life to live, and she will have the same problems as most people, probably more, so she will not want to add to those by devoting her life to being obstructive. She will only do it so long as she can get away with it without too much effort. The children also have their own lives to live and they will not want to give up the father just to please the mother. They may obey or reflect her wishes, but only so long as they have no choice. Experience has shown that in most cases where the father has kept in contact with his children he will see them again. The fathers own situation will change. What seems to be an insurmountable problem today may seem solvable in a years time.

HAVING A PLAN IS IMPORTANT.

When a father first realises he is going to lose contact with his children his feelings go from disbelief, through despair, anger, depression, confusion, and a total sense of injustice. It is based on the assumption that 'everyone' knows how important it is for children to have the support of their father, and that he obviously loves them, and they love him. Such notions are unfortunately naive. The law is itself very confused. A court that refuses to send a single-mother to jail for stopping contact will send that same mother to jail for refusing to pay a parking ticket or her TV licence. Such inconsistencies will be found throughout the law, and even when the law is clear, experience shows that its interpretation and application is more suited to the beliefs of the judiciary than the children.

Having a plan means looking at the situation logically rather than emotionally. You have to write out all the advantages and disadvantages of yourself, the mother, and the child.

YOUR ADVANTAGES:

- a) You are highly motivated, and where there's a will there is way.
- b) You will be in the company of many other fathers who can offer advice and support.

c) There is a growing recognition by the courts and society generally of the importance of the fathers role.

d) The situation is changing to your advantage as the children grow up as in almost every case known the child wishes to have contact with the father.

YOUR DISADVANTAGES:

a) You will miss out on the childhood years of your child.

b) Other aspects of your life will suffer in many ways due to your distress.

c) You will be unable to plan for the future in any way that will include your child.

d) Much of your time, money, and resources, will be spent on the problem without much to show for it.

THE MOTHERS ADVANTAGES:

a) She has the children and the law backing her.

b) She is probably able to get legal aid and other forms of financial support.

c) She will be in contact with numerous other single-mothers who will support her actions.

THE MOTHERS DISADVANTAGES:

a) The nature of PAS is itself the behavior of someone who is distressed, so she will not be a happy person.

b) She will know that the children will be mixing with other children who have fathers, and that her children will be aware of this.

c) She will not be able to offer the experiences and support of a father. The children will have a higher than normal chance of suffering educationally, emotionally, and socially. She will have to compensate for this in some way at the expense of her own life.

d) She will know that when the children reach an age of independence they will almost certainly try to contact the father, and she may even lose them altogether.

THE CHILDRENS ADVANTAGES:

a) There are no advantages for a child to have its parents separated, or if separated, not to have free access

to both, but children get older, and with time question the mothers behavior.

b) The disadvantages are losing one half of its family and all the support and experiences that represents. A higher than average chance of suffering from many social problems, which may include repeating the cycle over again.

OUTLINING A PLAN.

1. The first stage is looking for direct contact with the mother and child. Can you meet, write, or phone. If you can, then each instance should include some aspect of continuity. Give your child stamped addressed postcards to send before your next meeting. If the child is old enough give them a phone card. You can even get a 'family' phone card so your child can phone you from anywhere in the world. If the mother allows it, pay for comics and magazines to be sent to your child so that they are reminded of you regularly. Give your child a couple of phone numbers of people they trust who they can contact if they want to speak to someone.

2. If you are not allowed to contact your child, ask friends and relatives to do so on your behalf. Get them to send invites and gifts (even if you have to pay for them). If the mothers friends and relatives are still in contact with you, see if they will give you news of the situation. Try to retain good relations with them.

3. Apart from friends and relatives, the mother and child will have contacts at school, clubs, playgroups, and various local places where the mother and child go. There will be people who make contact with the mother and child and may be able to give you information about them. Remember, the mothers strategy is to block off all information to you. If you are aware that your child plays in the local football team on Saturdays at the park then this will give you some satisfaction from both seeing your child and not being controlled by the mother.

4. Can you participate in your child's activities? If you are not actually banned from seeing your child, or from seeing only on certain occasions, then you might be able to be a school or club helper. In spite of some mothers choosing to interpret 'defined contact' as the maximum, in fact it is the minimum. You would not be breaking a contact order if you went to a school play or sports event on days outside of your contact providing you went for the event and not to have a one-to-one contact with your child. The same applies if you were a helper in your child's school.

5. You can create situations that help you without meeting anyone directly connected to your child. Participating in local events will often enable you to get seen and known by people who know the mother

and child. If you can involve yourself in activities that get the attention of your child, or children who know your child then the chances are that it will get back to them. School and club outings, Council sponsored events, charity shows, library exhibitions, and the like are all places that require helpers. Being helpful and seen can pay off in unexpected ways.

6. You can also get known by having letters published in local papers and forming groups of other fathers locally. If the mother knows you are presenting your case in a public way (without crossing legal constraints) then she will know it reflects on her. What she wants is for you to disappear. If you have a high profile in the community then obviously you are not going to disappear, and she knows that it is a problem best resolved by acting with more regard for the child.

7. Chance is a factor. It is quite common for National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights members to meet their children by chance in local places. You can increase the chances by being in the right place at the right time. It is not a good idea to pursue this line, but simply be aware of it.

8. Ultimately the answer is for better laws and a more enlightened court system. That will not come easily, but if it is to come at all then it needs every little help it can get. Most fathers finding themselves in this situation quickly learn that the 'legal path' doesn't lead anywhere most of the time. Some members have spent huge sums of money on legal fees without getting results. Just imagine that money being directed to advertising our case in papers, magazines, and letters to authorities. The results would be more significant. In spite of this it is easier to get most fathers to spend several thousand pounds on solicitors fees than to get them to write to their MP and complain. One of the best boosts you will get is knowing that someone in authority has read your letter and given it consideration. You can learn to write letters by reading what others have written. Even if your letter does not get published, the paper you write to will publish similar letters because it knows the subject is controversial.

Overall your plan is to do something. If you can do something that directly contacts your child then do that. If you can do something that indirectly contacts your child then do that. If you can do something that keeps up your fathering skills do that. If you can do something that promotes our cause generally, then do that. If you can do none of these, then at least keep yourself busy so that you do not get depressed or in a state that leaves you open to the criticism of not being a capable father even if given the chance.

BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF THE MOTHER.

The most common pattern of the mother is to show that 'she is in control'. She will do that in a variety of ways ranging from ignoring you to humiliating you. Paradoxically she is able to do it on the basis that you

love your child so much you will put up with it. If you didn't love your child you would walk away, she assumes you will not, so will push her control as far as she can. Here are common examples. In most cases the mothers do not take the children away with any clear cut strategy in mind, it is usually an extension of normal hostile reactions going through the sequence of :

- (1) Arguing
- (2) Hostile silence
- (3) Restricted communication
- (4) No communication
- (5) Hostile action.

1. To insist that you come and go exactly at the times she stipulates. If you are late or early she will make you suffer for it in some way.
2. She will insist that you detail where you take the child and under what conditions. She will not inform you of anything she does with the child.
3. She will make changes to arrangements you have with the child but not give you these changes until the last minute. If you complain you will lose the contact time. If you have to change arrangements she will simple refuse to accept the changes and you will lose contact time.
4. She will deliberately offer the child alternative events on your days and then say the child has chosen the alternative event. She will make you choose to insist on your contact time or allow the child to do the other thing so that you will appear mean to stop the child.
5. She will duplicate gifts you give the child to undermine the value the child puts on it.
6. She will hide, break, or deliberately be careless with things you give your child.
7. She will deliberately misinterpret anything you do or say to the point where you will think twice about doing or saying anything.
8. She may ask for extra money for the child, and present the request in such a way that it obviously implies you will lose out on contact if you don't make the offer.
9. She will write to inform you of changes in contact times but post the letter so that it cannot possibly reach you in time.

10. She will not keep you informed of the child's well being, education reports, activities or anything that you might expect as a parent.
11. If you do anything to help the child the mother may thank you in way she might thank a stranger doing a favour.
12. Should you buy the child clothes she will criticise your taste or understanding of the child's needs.
13. She will criticise your home, friends, and life style. She will use any of these as an excuse to stop contact.
14. She will tell the child that the court 'doesn't allow it to see the father more that on the court order' when in fact the court order only states the minimum contact time.
15. She will allow the child to miss homework during the week so that it has to be done in your contact time, so vying with anything else you will have arranged.
16. She will interpret you contact time as being the total amount of time available for all purposes.If your parents want to see their grandchild it will have to come out of your contact time.
17. If she sees you in the street when she is with the child she will ignore you and force the child to do the same.
18. If you participate in school/club events and see your child there she will tell your that you are not allowed to do it. She may well contact the school and inform them (incorrectly) that the court has banned you from such events.
19. If you have a new partner she will insist that the new partner is not involved in contact times as it distresses the child.
20. If you send your child gifts on special occasions they will get' overlooked' on the day.
21. If you phone your child and she takes the phone she will say the child is busy or out. If the child takes the phone she will listen in or interrupt the child.
22. She will constantly remind you of your shortcomings as a father in front of the child. Any replies to this will be regarded as 'rowing in front of the children'. In all, the mother will look for any way of undermining your position in the knowledge that if you retaliate in kind she can stop contact and use your

retaliation as evidence of your attitude towards her (not the child). It will be her intent to use such provocative behavior to push you past your limits and act in a way that can be quoted against you.

KEEP A RECORD OF THESE INSTANCES.

If she has a solicitor you might send it to him/her and ask for the mother to be reminded that such behavior is disturbing to the child as well as provoking unnecessary rows. You may have to arrange to meet up in a neutral territory so that the mother has less chance of doing these things.

reports sent to him by proving he has joint custody, but has had no further access.

As grandparents we have continued to write, send small presents at Christmas and birthdays but have no response whatsoever. We have sent all mail by recorded delivery and have kept the receipts to show to the children when they are old enough to understand that they have been kept apart from their natural father and paternal grandparents. There are over 160 of these for the past four years.

CASE 13.

My wife and I have been separated for 6 years. My son has been living with me for the past three years. Over the last 5 months my wife has been making remarks as "M. doesn't want to visit Birmingham". M., my daughter is nine and lives with her mother in Nottingham. I think she is content to do so but when I am on my own with M. she does ask if she can stay with me in Birmingham.

I learnt from my son that my wife spends a lot of time running me down in front of M. and suggesting to her that once monthly access should be reduced to once every two months and no holidays.

CASE 14.

(from a grandmother)

I am writing in response to your request for information from anyone who has suffered from 'Parental Alienation'. We certainly have. Parental Alienation exactly describes our position as regard our eldest grandchild. After our son and ex-daughter-in-law's divorce our son fought for custody of his little daughter, which we fully supported. The mother was not a very stable person and an unsatisfactory mother.

However after framing our son for alleged sexual abuse against his barely 3 year old daughter and taking the matter to court with the aid of Social Services she was awarded custody.

(Our local Social Services were completely biased on the mother's side from the outset and failed to make a thorough investigation into the case despite our having proved the mother to be an utter liar).

Our son and ourselves were granted access rights by order of the court, and limited supervised access did take place for a few years but this eventually broke down, mainly because of the unnaturalness of it, and insensitive approach of the Social workers.

Our son did remarry and has 2 other children - a boy of 5 and a girl of 4.

All three children used to play so happily together during access periods, but that was 3 whole sad years ago. Our little grandson was heartbroken for quite sometime after the access breakdown. In fact we adults still are - fortunately children eventually forget.

Basically blaming the Social Services we put out a Complaints procedure against them, which reached stage 3. The investigating panel were very sympathetic towards us and told the Local Authority they must resolve the matter back in court. Unfortunately the Local authority left it far too late and permission for another court hearing was refused them. Only ourselves or our son would be allowed to do so.

Since our granddaughter who is now 10 years of age, refuses to see any of us, or even accept letters or presents, obviously by the cruel instigation and alienation of the mother, we have refrained from doing so - acting upon the advice from our solicitors, who state it would be a 'hopeless' situation and a complete waste of money.

CASE 15.

(from a grandmother)

I have read 'Alienation within the family' in this months newsletter. You might like to get in touch either with us, the grandparents or our son. since the divorce about 8 years ago his ex-wife has totally alienated the children from the whole family and we have had no contact with them for years, in spite of numerous court orders and conciliation efforts. The children are now 11 and 13 and have been completely cut off from half their family. Please write if you would like to know more.

[Back to top](#)

[Back Home Page](#)

CASE 16.

I left my ex-wife and four children in 1987 to commence a new relationship with my present girlfriend. My ex-wife immediately sued for divorce. Despite my having a wonderfully open and loving relationship with each of my children during my marriage, my relationship with my daughters started to deteriorate

significantly after I left home, and I believe that their minds were poisoned against me. Indeed for the first year my ex-wife categorically refused to allow the children to have staying access with me and wouldn't permit them to meet my new girlfriend.

The Family court welfare service were instrumental in bringing about a reconciliation and for two years I enjoyed regular access with all my children included two wonderful holidays with them and my girl friend.

My ex-wife never appeared to be comfortable with this and eventually one by one the girls stopped seeing me until by 1991 they refused to have any contact with me at all.

They wouldn't speak to me on the phone, they never answered my letters and they ran away from me when I visited their house. During that time my son remained in contact and I continued to have regular staying access visits on alternate weekends and holidays. In October 1992 I was hit with the bombshell that my ex-wife intended to emigrate with the children to New Zealand (she was by this time living with a New Zealander) I initially contested her application through the court on the grounds that the children were being denied a loving relationship with their father through the mothers efforts to alienate them from me.

The court welfare service was again involved and interviewed the children independently but this time they had become so badly alienated that they expressed quite openly a desire to go and live in New Zealand and in the face of this I withdrew my opposition providing certain safeguards could be agreed upon. These measures were agreed to and formed the basis of an

Undertaking which my ex-wife entered into with the court in March of this year. Despite these safeguards my worst fears were realised when my ex-wife failed to comply with these terms which resulted in my going out to New Zealand in September of this year and tracking down the family and spending two very happy weeks with my son.

I have recently learned that the family have moved house again and I have effectively lost touch with them. It is quite evident to me that my ex-wife has no intention of complying with the terms of the Undertaking to the court and her game plan seems to be to exclude me completely from her own and their lives and to act as if I had never existed in the first place. I am effectively back to square one.

I am about to make contact with the lawyers in NZ with a view to getting the UK Order registered with the NZ courts in an attempt to persuade my ex-wife the game for the benefit of the children.

In summary I consider that my ex-wife has been active in alienating my children away from me and that from her point of view it was probably a necessary precursor to her plans to emigrate with them to New Zealand. What disappoints and infuriates me is that in spite of my agreement to her plans and of my openly expressed desire for continuing contact as demonstrated by my journey to New Zealand, she is continuing the alienation from a distance of 12,000 miles.

CASE 17.

In 1988 I separated from the then wife of 10 years. We had three children. P. the eldest boy from her first marriage was 20 years old. J. from her second marriage was 11 years old, and D. was my natural son and was 8 years old. I treated all the children as my own and J. knew me as her natural father because she had been a baby when we met, so she only knew me because her natural father did not keep in touch with her.

The reason I left in 1988 was because I had strong suspicions that my then wife was seeing the best friend of her son who was only 19 years old. She was 40. My suspicions were proved correct that Christmas when he moved in with them and the following year they were married. From the time that I left in 1988 up to October 1990 I had regular contact with J. and D. and once I had my own flat in the 1990 they would stay with me every weekend from Saturday a.m to Sunday night. I was then living with my girlfriend (now wife) and the four of us got on very well and had a fine time together.

When it was time for them to go they always say that they wanted to go later or could they stay longer. I also took them to Pontins for a week in 1989 and my girlfriend and I had them for a week in Autumn in 1990.

As you can see things were going really well until one weekend in October 1990 there a mix up over arrangements for the children, and when my girl friend and I went to the house to collect them my ex-wife argued with us and subsequently told us to clear off and we couldn't have the children.

We went back two weeks later when it was my turn to have them again and we were met at the front door by my ex-wife, her husband and my two children lined up in front of them. The children were told in turn to say their piece which they did parrot fashion, and what they said was that they have never been happy visiting me, I don't listen to them and they never want to see me again.

This has been the case to date, whatever lies my ex-wife used to poison their minds must have put the fear of God in them because I have glimpsed both J. and D. only once on separate occasions. D. was on his

bike and when he saw me he went indoors, and J. was with a boy and when she saw me she ran off screaming at the boy to come with her shouting "we told you what he was like".

My ex-wife's vast experience of the divorce courts means that she knows how to successfully play the system. I believe that she always had the intention of pushing me out of my children's lives once she would be unable to give her new husband children, thus leaving my kids free to him for love and understanding and to fill my role. She knows that the way to convince the courts that I shouldn't be around is through the children, and being a very devious and manipulative person, has managed to guide them through their welfare report convincingly to the extent that the welfare officer even states in his report that he felt the children were greatly influenced by their mother. Her constant references to the children's wishes being 'not to see me' in the affidavits and in the court have led to my efforts to regain contact through the court to be fruitless.

My last effort at County Court ended up in the Judges chambers initially where I was told by a female judge that because of the evidence against me including letter of rejection from the children, a formal hearing would require the circuit Judge, which would be hideously expensive to me, and in her vast experience of these type of cases, my chance of any sort of result were virtually non-existent.

The only thing I came out of court with that day was the promise from my ex-wife that she would write and keep me informed of the children's well being.

That was over 7 months ago and I have received nothing yet.

I have questioned her in writing of this but the reply I got was the children did not want me written to, it disturbs them. I think what hurts the most is that, the way that something that was so good can turn bad so quickly, and the confusion this must be causing in my children's minds. I know they have got happy memories of me with them when married to their mother and afterwards for two years when I left, so what must be artificially implanted in them to make them hostile towards me or if the day comes or may have come when they do want to see me again, how do they approach the mother whose feelings toward me are so bitter and strong to seem contact once more. I feel gravely let down by the system.

CASE 18.

My girls are aged 8 and 10. I had a normal happy relationship with them before I left home 18 months ago. Initially contact was made difficult by the mother (she would only permit contact if she was present). For the last 9 months I have been denied access altogether. Initially she argued that our child had eczema

exacerbated by my visits (the child did have eczema up to the age of 3 but this is now virtually non-existent). In the July hearing she claimed that children did not wish to see me. The Judge ordered a Psychiatrist report. A rehearing in 6 months and contact in the interim if both parties agree (she hasn't).

Psychiatrist report based on interviews with me, the mother, and each child in essence states: Mother is clinically neurotic, children undoubtedly been influenced against me by the mother. I'm sane, balanced and cooperative, the children would derive considerable benefit from seeing me. Nevertheless he advises contact with both children on the grounds that upset to the mother might cause adverse reaction to eczematous child.

CWO believes that for children to now see me will cause them a great deal of upset. I agree that some upset will be caused but this is outweighed in my view of the benefits of seeing me, not least of which will be from helping them cope with living with a neurotic mother.

CASE 19.

I separated from my wife in 1990 following 5 years of gradually worsening marital disharmony. The first year of separation passed reasonably smoothly.

I found a flat about a mile from the family home, made generous and regular voluntary maintenance payments from the outset (far in excess of CSA levels) and had regular contact with the children. "daughters then aged 5 and 7. seeing them every weekend and one day during the week.

The children were obviously upset by the break-up, but I felt that towards the end of the year much of the emotional damage had been repaired and my relations with them was regaining stability. I felt that I had a very close relationship with both of them.

About June 1991 my wife's attitude changed abruptly and she stated that I could no longer see the children. The change was prompted by a marriage guidance session which the counselor gently suggested that the marital difficulties may have been triggered in part by her own actions. She could not accept this and refused to return for the further sessions, lodging a complaint against the counselor. She seem to have decided at this point that the marriage was definitely over and from that time worked to undermine and eventually destroy my relation with the children.

About a month after the upset with the counselor and following the first difficulties experience over contact, my younger daughter together with the other members of her class was reported molested in the classroom by a teacher. Immediately after the incident with the teacher my wife began writing letters to

me suggesting or alleging that my behavior towards the children was 'inappropriate'. I initially ignored these, but was obviously concerned about the purpose and the continuing difficulties with contact which although reinstated was now uncertain and vulnerable to sudden changes of plan by my wife. I managed to persuade her to attend meetings with another counselor in an effort to resolve this and to negotiate regular contact including weekends.

These meetings occurred from September 1991 but were fruitless and merely offered her an opportunity to express her suggestions about inappropriate behavior, giving justification for exerting control over access arrangements. No concerns had been voiced by the children. they still responded positively towards me, although they were evidently confused about the purpose of all the meetings which they were attending.

Following the incident with the teacher, my wife had my daughter referred her doctor to a psychiatrist for therapy. I subsequently learned about 6 months later when I was no longer able to see my daughters that in making the referral my wife had at the time expressed concerns regarding myself. These therapy sessions began in Autumn 1991, although I was not involved in these and wasn't informed about their nature despite repeated requests to my wife. The girls never spoke about the sessions when I met them and I did not ask.

In 1992, after I had taken the girls to stay with my parents during the Christmas break (after extensive negotiations and disappointments) my wife stopped contact altogether and had taken the children out when I called at the usual times to collect them. I can see in retrospect that she had already do much by this time to undermine my relationship with them.

At about this time my younger daughter began to echo in therapy sessions the fears expressed by her mother beginning 6 months previously from June 1991, and made mainly vague but nevertheless less untruthful allegations a relatively minor nature) against me. The allegations involved for example 'touching her bottom in the swimming pool' etc.

When contact was finally stopped in 1992, I immediately applied to the court for contact. Although no allegations were repeated by my daughter in 'disclosure interview' which was set up, the statements made in therapy were deemed sufficient justification to deny contact thereby causing a significant and traumatic break of a duration never previously experienced by the children. As soon as April 1992 both children were saying that they no longer wanted to see me and that they reportedly now 'hate' me.

Following this, one supervised access was arranged, but this was stilted and difficult. I have had no contact since then in spite of many meetings with various agencies involved, and in April 1993 I finally withdrew my contact application on the advice of my solicitor. Any letters which I have sent to the children are now returned unopened. I fear that the relationship has been successfully destroyed by my wife, and feel that the only hope lies in waiting until the children mature.

In the meantime both the children and myself are deprived of the possibility of a normal parental relationship during their formative years.

CASE 20.

When I had left home in 1993 and used to go and visit them (the children) on a Sunday my then wife would say to me "They don't want to see you".

She refused to let them leave the house with me, and if I tried to talk to them about the situation and to reassure them and tell them that I still loved them, the following week when I went to the house she would say to me, "How dare you upset them", this continued for some time, to the point where I would go to the house and the children would run away from me upstairs. I would follow them and after twenty minutes of the children would start relating to me again as if I had just popped out to the shops.

I started to find this situation artificial and unreal so I decided to apply for a Contact order and released a fresh can of worms. The statement submitted to the court by my former wife was untrue in parts and made complaints that my sons were taken to their grandparents against their wishes and that because of this were reluctant to go out with me and had by months later come to actively dislike me. She was not prepared to force them to embark on outings with me as I had remarried one of their friends mothers. These and other allegations ran to some ten pages of reasons why I should not have contact.

An interim report by a Family CWO was prepared and the children were invited to give their views to her. Undoubtedly they had been coached in the language of the replies by my former wife and the sad fact is that under the new Children Act the wishes of the children are taken into account, without benefit of counselling given to them to explore their feelings. On the basis of the CWO's report the Judge intimated to me that I would not get a Contact order to see the children. I withdrew the application for the order and now have not seen the children for some four weeks.

When I call at the former house I am not allowed in, and letters are passed through the window to me. I had thought that my former wife was unique in her reaction to me over the matter of seeing the children, and I could not put into words what had happened to me, thinking that other parents would think "Oh yes,

there's no smoke without fire". I shall now vocally point out to other parents that I know the reason why my former wife has stopped me seeing the children and try to explain the Parental Alienation Syndrome to them.

CASE 21.

Although I have not completely lost contact with my children, PAS has certainly been used and my daughters, aged 14 and 12 years are being alienated from me.

My wife and I have been legally separated since 1983 after a four and a half year marriage. During the earlier years after separate I saw the children approximately one a fortnight, but it was already becoming more difficult to arrange and consequently I consulted a solicitor in 1985.

It was agreed that I should have the girls for half their nineteen week holiday, but the Agreement was never signed and in fact the children spent 5 weeks in 1988, 6 weeks in 1989 and only 4 weeks with me in 1990. The dates and travel arrangements were constantly disrupted.

My wife and I then had four meetings with a member of the Family Mediators Association during 1990, but by January 1991 the mediator could help no further because my wife reneged on the points which had previously been agreed.

It was the first instance of my daughter being used, as my wife produced a letter written by my eldest daughter saying that she did not want to spend more than 3 weeks of the 9 week summer holiday with me. My solicitor advised me to apply for a Defined Access Order from the court.

The preparation of affidavits dragged on throughout 1991 and my wife's solicitor persuaded a judge to appoint a welfare officer to interview the girls (on the grounds that they did not receive proper care and attention whilst they were with me and my partner). In spite of daily telephone calls from their mother whilst the welfare officer was visiting the children in Spain, the children told him that they were quite happy to spend 8 weeks a year with me.

As the day of the court hearing approached, my wife started actively use and influence the girls to be on her side. My daughter blamed me for the way their mother behaved at home - because I was taking mummy to court. They told me that I would "win" in court and I heard the eldest girl secretly telling my wife where we were staying so that a subpoena could be served on me that following day.

The case was heard in November 1991 and I was awarded 8 weeks defined access per annum. It cost me

25,000 and my wife 15,000 in legal fees. My wife's reaction was to have her phone calls intercepted so I could not even speak to the girls, put them in boarding school and fly off to her sister abroad.

I had no idea where the children were and the headmistress of the school refused to allow me to speak to my daughters when I eventually found their whereabouts.

The girls were confused and becoming more alienated from me as though all the troubles and problems were caused by having such an obstinate father.

The disruption over dates and travel continued and the children have become less neutral with every visit. They are under terrible pressure as they live with their mother, naturally they don't want to upset her. The younger girl is often sick on the plane home, but never on the way out. If they enjoy themselves too much with me they are being disloyal to their mother. My elder daughter explained the terrible dilemma with which she is faced and said she her children will never have to suffer as she has.

The most recent examples of PAS are Christmas and Easter 1984. My wife is taking the girls to visit their cousin abroad for Christmas and I suggested that I postpone my time with the girls this holiday and make it up at Easter or Summer as two holidays abroad in four weeks seemed excessive. The children declined my suggestion for no logical reason - they can't explain why.

My younger daughter refused to come to join me on our boat in the Caribbean at Easter 1994. She gave her reason as having been there once last winter and the eight hour flight. My elder daughter refused to come alone to the West Indies and burst into uncontrolled sobbing when I pressed her for a reason. She realised the pressure under which she would have to live between October and next Easter. So I agreed to forego Christmas and Easter with my daughter, hopefully I shall see them in the summer holiday.

Prior to the court case it probably satisfied my wife's ill-will by not letting her see the children as much as I wished, but once the court case started she involved the children against me whenever possible. Although I contribute 40,000 a year toward the upkeep and education of my two daughters, the children have been persuaded that their mother is badly off and I am to blame. The girls and I have enjoyed a good relationship until recently (as observed and reported by the chief Welfare officer), but I am unwilling to fight their mother over access any more if they can no longer remain neutral and I cannot stand seeing the emotional strain and anxiety this causes them. Winning the case has in effect lost me my daughters.

SUMMARY

1. Fathers who can stay in contact with their children somehow or other will almost certainly

gain regular access to them again.

2. Fathers who can retain some form of communication with the mother will probably regain access.

3. Fathers who have some form of network, family, neighbours, friends, etc., who can keep in contact with the child or mother will probably regain access.

4. Fathers who rely on the court system to help them will certainly be disappointed.

This may seem an extreme action, but look at who is actually involved in your case.

1. Your Solicitor.

He will certainly have your best interests at heart, but it is still work for him whether he wins or loses.

2. The Court Welfare Officer.

She will doing at least one case a week. At most she will only have about three hours to discuss your case, and probably two days to write it up. It is likely that her decision will be made on her personal reaction to those involved rather than on the evidence. Court reports are notorious for being full of mistakes, misinterpretations, and omissions.

Also, even though CWO may be well-intended, sympathetic, and knowledgeable, in the end they carry no weight in court. The report may be completely ignored by the court. This hardly motivates the CWO to produce much more than an outline of the case. Apart from this, most CWO's take on the job as a second career. Many have very little experience or training in the area of child welfare. If they are women, then it is likely they have more experience at being mothers than being court officers. This is often reflected in their assessments. It is a very common experience for fathers to have the CWO tell him how well he can cope with his children, only to find the court report stating the very opposite.

A good CWO is probably your best friend. If they like you, and believe you have a good case they will give you better unbiased advice than anyone else. It is a pity that they have little power to help in a more practical way.

3. The Magistrate.

Family law magistrates are predominantly women, and likely to be mothers. Though well intended, they may well feel that what is good for the mother is good for the child. This is not malice on the part of the magistrates. A typical magistrate may well have been a legal secretary for thirty years prior to becoming a magistrate.

They have a background in legal technicalities, but not years of training that allow the broad interpretations of the law to be applied. Many apply the law, in the sense that a traffic warden applies the Highway code.

In all, you are better off if you can avoid having your case tried in a Magistrates court.

4. The Judge.

At County Court level you will get a mixture of Judges. The worst are those who feel it is beneath them to deal with the 'litigant in person'. It is well known that some Judges will always turn down a father who presents his own case. Others are simply out of touch with what is going on, or use the court for their own performance. Because the court is what it is, one cannot act and say as one would in other circumstances, but a just look through a book of aphorisms relating to Law and Judges will show that they haven't changed all that much over the ages.

Of course, a good Judge is one who can help. But as the above letters show, the Judges insistence that a mother obeys the court order is no guarantee that she will.

5. The Mother's solicitor.

He/she is your worst enemy. It is to his benefit if he can 'win' - by which we mean take your children away from you, or at least keep the matter going for years. The mothers solicitor represents the mother, not the child.

6. The Child Psychiatrist.

These generally agree the problem is between the parents and not the father and child. Most will advise mediation. Most mothers refuse.

Most Judges will not insist on counselling between the parents, though in the USA this is now a common approach and a successful one. Most child Psychiatrists and Psychologists agree that

the courts are a waste of time in resolving family problems.

IS THERE HOPE?

'Parental Alienation' is emotional child abuse. The Health department has no clear definition of what 'emotional abuse' is. This means that a 'emotional child abuse' is rarely - if ever - acted upon. It is only acted upon as an extension of Neglect, Physical, or Sexual Abuse when investigated by Social Services.

For the courts to accept 'emotional abuse' as evidence would require calling in Social Services. That is expensive and time consuming, so courts avoid it if possible, in spite of the evidence.

Also, the standard answer from the Lord Chancellor's department is that 'It would not be in the child's best interests if the mother was sent to jail for disobeying a court order'. This of course, implies that it is in the child's best interest to lose it's father forever.

In spite of that, the Criminal court will, and have sent several single-parent mothers to jail for leaving their children at home alone. They do so on the basis of the child being 'emotionally abused', but in terms of neglect.

IF YOU CANNOT GO TO THE COURTS, WHAT DO YOU DO?

In practice you cannot avoid the courts totally, but they should be used as a last resort.

If you consider your situation in terms of war then there are three possible outcomes:

1. One side wins.
2. Neither side wins or can win, but they stay in a state of hostility and fight a war of attrition.
3. Peace is negotiated. The problem here is that if the mother has been given custody she has no reason to negotiate. But there are two cases where she might.
 - a. If she wants something from you.

It is obvious if she wants money, property, etc. This is common enough, but she may want something that is not obvious, and she is not prepared to tell you. It could be a change in attitude towards her. The above list of 'Why mothers want to get rid of the father' will offer some clues

on this.

b. If it becomes too much of a problem.

This is where the courts can be useful. The nature of the system means that everything takes longer than it should. It will generally be inefficient - losing papers, adjourning hearings, sending the wrong forms, etc. This overall bumbling can be put to good use. If you have already lost your children, and effectively have nothing more to lose, then you can continually make new applications, query everything that comes along, send letters to her solicitor, demand ongoing information, etc. By keeping the issue going the mother will realise that you are not going to abandon your children. She may well feel that it is not worth the trouble, and eventually ease up on restrictions.

Also remember that her life is not plain sailing. She will have problems. She or the children might be ill, and you are the only person around who can help. If you make it clear in all your correspondence that you are open to putting the past in the past, then chance may well favour you.

THE LAST WORD

Tens of thousands of fathers lose their children every year. Those (most) that want to keep up meaningful relationships with their children fight an uphill battle due to inbuilt bias in the legal system, lethargy by Family support systems, confusion and ill-defined policies by government authorities.

This is offset by the fact that the media is increasingly highlighting the problems of broken families. The social problems that spin-off from broken families results in cost to the government, and indirectly, concern to solve those problems.

Fatherless families are now a political problem as well. Most of all, the increasing use of communications among National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights members, and allying ourselves with similar groups of both fathers and mothers separated from their children is now paying off. The recognition of PAS officially would in itself effectively block a major loophole in the law, with the subsequent benefits for children. This is the aim of National Brotherhood Of Fathers

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BEST BOOK AVAILABLE FOR LEGAL DEFENSE OF PAS

“A FATHERS DEFENSE GUIDE AGAINST FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE”

For Fathers that want to strike back against false allegations of sexual abuse/domestic violence. It gives the low down, no-nonsense, straight facts about women using children and false allegations of abuse to "get rid of you". It shows you how to FIGHT BACK! Information is presented in the form of short capsules that vary in subject matter including:

- * Case histories.
- * Techniques to prevent false allegations.
- * Sample pleadings of actual law suits against "X"s that falsely accuse.

Information in this manual will save you weeks of research & frustration.

Dennis M. Gac

The National Brotherhood Of Fathers Rights

17171 Bothell Way NE #297

Lake Forest Park, Washington 98155

(206) 650-0250