

## **FOREWARD - BY A DAD IN GUERNSEY**

The purpose of this document is to provide a succinct primer for any person who may have a suspicion that some form of 'child programming' is active - this would include fathers, mothers grandparents, and sadly, even members of the 'system' - the judiciary, child services, education, mental health personnel and so on.

I say 'sadly' for it is my experience that few if any of the people who should have a thorough knowledge of Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) have ever even heard of it. But things are changing.

I have tried to make this work reasonably short and concise - in doing that I have omitted tomes of relevant examples and material - my hope is that in reading through the texts the reader who identifies with their own experiences will turn to the list of reading and other sources given for fuller and more professional information than I am able to provide.

Throughout the document I am primarily concerned with Mothers who Alienate Fathers - for this is most often the case, but the mechanisms are just as valid and are practiced by some men - this is not intended to be a sexist view, and I apologise to those women who are suffering at the hands of Fathers - and urge them to read the text substituting role where necessary. Some use the terms 'Alienator' and 'Alienated' - but in my opinion this becomes unwieldy - and can distract from the text.

I have borrowed heavily in making this précis of PAS from Professor Richard A Gardner, MD (The Parental Alienation Syndrome, original proponent of the term) Professor L. F. LOWENSTEIN MA, Dip.Psych, PhD and works from S Hayward - Research Officer of Families Need Fathers. I thank them all for their excellent articles - and apologize if I have misrepresented any of them - or failed to live up to their excellent standards.

This is a non-profit publication, you are free to use it with the proviso you acknowledge the works of the above professional persons. I hope it helps.

### **What is it?**

The Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) is characterised by the systematic denigration by one parent by the other with the intent of alienating the child against the other (usually non-custodial) parent (NCP). Some purposes of the alienation are: to gain or retain custody, for financial or property reasons - or for the purposes of 'punishing' the alienated parent. This alienation usually extends to the NCP's family and friends. As the primary custodial parent, it is most often the mother who indulges in PAS - although it is known to occur in cases where the father has been given primary custody.

### **What is the trademark of PAS?**

It is vital to realise that PAS is characterised not only by a campaign of deliberate alienation of the targeted parent - but crucially it is combined with the child's own scenarios of denigration of the allegedly hated parent. Without the child's apparent hatred of the father - PAS does not exist. Of course where there is true cause for the child to hate the father - such as severe emotional, physical or sexual abuse, then PAS is not relevant.

I have reproduced here an excerpt from Dr. Richard Gardner's book - it is a very important paragraph.

"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 mother's every act indicates otherwise. Such children appreciate that, by stating the decision is their own, they assuage mother's 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."

### **What is the process?**

PAS - a process of programming or brainwashing involves exploiting a child's natural desires to please its primary carer, and its fears of abandonment. There are many direct as well as subtle ways in which the process of programming and brainwashing is carried out. Here are some of them. (Lowenstein)...

1. Encouraging the child to disobey and show a lack of respect for the alienated parent.
2. Promoting an alliance between the child and alienator against the other parent.
3. Showing opposition to the alienated parent's child-rearing methods and communicating this to the child.
4. Bribing and overindulging the child to create comparative poverty of enjoyment with the alienated parent, when they are with that parent.
5. Suggesting and actually changing the surname of the child to reduce the influence and memory of the other birth parent.
6. The programmer playing the part of a "martyr" claiming how badly they were treated by the alienated parent.
7. Making the child afraid of the alienated parent.
8. Encouraging the child to hate being with the alienated parent.

9. Showing the other parent to be bad.
10. Instilling in the child the view that the other parent wants to take the child away from the programmer and even to kidnap the child.
11. Making the child feel anxious, rejected and insecure if the child does not comply with the programmer.
12. The programmer encourages the child to keep secrets while spying and reporting on the alienated parent.
13. Moving away or living some distance from the alienated parent.
14. Sowing the seeds of not obeying the alienated parent.
15. Showing negative non-verbal communication such as turning the body away when speaking of the alienated parent or making derogatory faces about the alienated parent, when speaking on the telephone.

### **Signs to watch for from a mother's behaviour**

A common technique is provocation; to make the father to do or say something that will be used against him. If the father can be made to lose his temper then a charge of violence or threatened violence can be brought. Here are a few examples commonly quoted...

1. The mother will impose very strict and often impractical conditions for the father to pick up, care for, and return the child on his Contact day. Any deviation from these is used against him. Even being a few minutes late in picking up a child might result in him losing the day's Contact.
2. The mother will arrange alternative activities for the child to coincide with the father's Contact day and say "The child wants to do something else on that day, and not with you. Can you give up your contact day, or will YOU tell the child that you are stopping it doing the alternative event". This puts the father on the spot. The mother will then tell the child that it must miss the event because "daddy says so" or state that "daddy wants you to go to the other event and not see him". She will do similar things for events by the father's family, so the child will share celebrations of birthdays, Christmas, etc. with his side of the family.
3. The mother will duplicate presents the father buys, or put the father's presents out of sight, comment on them unfavourably, etc so that his gifts are ignored by the child.
4. If the father has holiday time with the child the mother may change arrangements at the last minute so bookings by the father cannot be easily changed.
5. The child will often be ill or sick on the Contact day, and the mother will assume that the child should stay at her home at such times. The father will not be invited to stay or help.
6. The father will not be informed of the child's educational progress or medical welfare, etc.
7. The father may be asked for extra money to buy such things as clothes for the child, but will not be allowed to buy the clothes for the child directly.

8. The mother will write to the father of changes in Contact times when a phone call could just as easily be made.
9. The mother will ignore or misinterpret any questions the father asks her about her intent regarding Contact and other issues related to the child.
10. The mother will use any excuse regarding the father's lifestyle, attitudes, friends, competence in child minding and the like, to deprive him of Contact time.
11. Anything the fathers says in questioning the mother will be interpreted as "Trying to start a row". This will often be done in front of the child.
12. Toys or equipment meant for the child's daily use such a bicycle, will not be allowed left at the mothers house for the child's use, making it virtually useless for the child. Or is left there, might get 'accidentally broken, yet the father will not be allowed to fix it.
13. The father will not be allowed to buy the child a pet to be left at the mother's house.
14. If a child requires something like a computer for school work, and the father is computer literate while the mother isn't, he will not be allowed to help the child or give the child access to his computer other than on Contact days, irrespective of the child's obvious need.
15. The mother may use the child to send messages to the father but not allow the father to send back messages via the child.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. If you do anything to help the child the mother may thank you in way she might thank a stranger doing a favour.
19. Should you buy the child clothes she will criticise your taste or understanding of the child's needs.
20. 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.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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.

24. If you participate in school/club events and see your child there she will tell you 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.

25. If you have a new partner she will insist that the new partner is not involved in contact times as it distresses the child.

26. If you send your child gifts on special occasions they will get 'overlooked' on the day.

27. 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.

The above are typical. Anyone who have been through the alienation process will recognise the pattern. The overall strategy is 'bloody mindedness' by the mother who will take every opportunity to make life difficult for the father whether or not it reflects upon the child's happiness.

The mother is showing 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. The pattern of behaviour follows the usual steps of...

(1) Arguing

(2) Hostile silence

(3) Restricted communication

(4) No communication

(5) Hostile action

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 behaviour to push you past your limits and act in a way that can be quoted against you.

As stated at the start of this article - PAS is recognised by the combination of programming, and the resultant 'apparent hate' of the child for the alienated parent.

### **Examples of how PAS is programmed into a child**

Gardner refers to programming as the process whereby an alienating parent uses indoctrination along a continuum from the conscious to unconscious. Its also important to note that what may start out as a conscious fabrication may become so ingrained as to develop into a delusion - the programmer actually believes her own spin. This mechanism develops over a period of time where conscious denigration moves ever onwards to the automatic and unconscious. Gardner uses the term 'programming' to describe the manoeuvres by which the alienating parent seeks to alienated the child from the despised spouse. It is a deliberate attempt to alter the thinking of the child, and

involves repetition of an unrelenting campaign of denigration of the alienated spouse - exploiting the fears and vulnerability of the child.

It might seem incredulous that a once loving child can be turned so far away from their natural love and relationship with their father - but examination of the mechanisms at work soon show how this is achieved - and give the astute observer the tools needed to detect such behaviour. A strong clue to this behaviour is seen when the child 'borrows' scenarios from the mother in their campaign of vilification. Inclusion of adult phrases like 'philanderer' 'adulterer', sarcastic paraphrasing of the mother's arguments - or even straightforward accusations as if it were your former spouse are all trademarks of a programmed child.

It should also be remembered that even in the situation of father leaving the home for entirely the correct reasons - perhaps there was unacceptable family discord - arguments, tension and so on, to the point where he feels it best to leave for everyone's sanity - he will still be viewed by younger children as the 'deserter' a factor often played upon by alienating mother: 'see how much your father cared - he walked out on us remember' this is a particularly cruel and subtle tactic - usually the father leaving because of his spouse, not his beloved children, but by using the word 'us' the mother manages to give the impression that it is they too who have been rejected.

The mother may play on the child's fears of losing her: Eg she may show the children documentation concerning custody issues - while selectively ignoring her own letters - 'see your father is trying to take you away from us' again the promotion of unity against the common enemy.

Some mothers will actively involve their children with scenarios of financial deprivation - "I can't afford to take you out - your father hasn't given me any money" sometimes to the point of falsely implying the children may even go without essentials like food or housing. This cruelty evokes the child's intrinsic fears of abandonment, creating a false insecurity directed squarely against the imagined shortcomings of the father. It isn't long after this before the hallmark of PAS shows when during a visit the father is faced with demands from the child for money.

A common manoeuvre is when a mother answers a father's phone call - but she remains silent. Meanwhile father is asking to speak with his children - but the silence continues. This is done in the presence of the children (who can only hear the mother) when after a minute or so she declares "Don't you speak about the children like that - I think they're wonderful, and I for one love them" and promptly hang up. Imagine the disbelief and feeling of impotence visited upon a father in these circumstances - her message to the children is that the call was made to criticise them, and that only their mother understands and loves them powerful stuff.

Very often a mother will 'run down' the father to the children, and encourage them to do the same - this again reinforces the unity against the father. She may use mocking voices or rude gestures, encourage bad behaviour with the father - encourage them to use his first name - a way of encouraging disrespect, indifference and dissociation.

Another example is where an excited child returns after a visit - full of the things they did together and the mother responds with "I don't want to hear about it" showing obvious distaste even hostility - this has the immediate effect of destroying the child's enthusiasm, and of course is likely to halt any subsequent recounting of good times with the father - the memories are not reinforced or

relieved by this suppression thus attenuating the child's bond with the alienated parent - and reinforcing the need to 'toe the line' with the mother's wishes.

The list is endless - I myself could add another dozen scenarios from personal experience; but the goal of the mother is to completely excise the father's standing in the children's minds - to play on their fears of abandonment and promote the idea that she is the 'martyr' and only one to be trusted, the only who cares about them.

An outsider might consider it strange that children can become so aligned. Remember that generally there is stronger emotional bond with whoever was the primary carer - usually the mother - and the child will instinctively want to protect and preserve that bond. He / She certainly will soon learn what jeopardises the love and support from Mother, and what does or does not please her.

### **EXAMPLES - CHILDREN'S HATE MAIL**

It is likely that you will get hate mail from your child. Children as young as five will send it, and if there is more than one child they will often send hate letters together. The following are examples...

Dear Phil

I do not want to go and see you on Friday the 9th in December. Here is a picture. Hope you like it  
(picture of a train and carriages)

(from A. aged 6)

From two brothers aged 5 and 6

To Peter I am not coming J.

To peter I do NOT want to come with YOU B.

From a 10 year old girl

To my so called "father" Listen, you know what you did. If you don't stop lying then I will never see you again. Now you tell the truth. Now I am telling the truth. I HATE you. And you say that I tell mother about things. Well what about you and Grandman. I hate U! You are a sick man.

From your X daughter C.

I HATE YOU!

To Phil, I Just want to say I still don't want to see you. I haven't changed my mind since the last court case,

From Becky

From a 10 year old.

To John I don't want to see you because I live with my new dad in Germany. I was two and a half years old when you and mummy broke up and I am ten now. I have lived longer with my new daddy than I did with you. You are a stranger to me. I don't want to see you any more.

Peter does not want to see you any more. Just leave us alone please. I don't keep your letters or anything you send me. I rip up all your letter even if they have money in them, and any presents you send, like at Christmas I break up.

Miss Hume knows this. I have not turned up today because I just don't want to see you, and the man at the Court told my mummy that I didn't have to, and that no-one could make me come to see you.

From Roland Bush

All the names have been changed but otherwise shown as written.

The common element is that the children, even as young as six, put in correct times and dates, and often fairly correct spelling, so this indicates the letters are dictated or corrected. Some children will add "mummy has not asked me to write this letter".

The father is addressed as "To daady", "To John" and in some cases "To Mr Smith" making the letter impersonal.

Usually they sign off with just their first name, but some will sign off with their surname as though they are a stranger. They may even sign off with another name such as their mother's maiden name or her new partner's surname.

Quite often presents will be returned unopened, or opened and repacked. The child, if it can write at all, is often made to write the address of the father as though the child had actually packed and sent it back, though obviously it has not done so. In some cases the child will write something on the outside of the package like "I hate you".

The mentality of someone forcing a child to do this requires no further comment. The child having done this now feels they have cut off the father for good. How would they face the father again having written such a letter. This is all part of the mother's intent.

Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS)

L. F. LOWENSTEIN MA, Dip.Psych, PhD

There are many other direct as well as subtle ways in which the process of programming and brainwashing is carried out. Here are some of them...

16. Encouraging the child to disobey and show a lack of respect for the alienated parent.
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30. Showing negative non-verbal communication such as turning the body away when speaking of the alienated parent or making derogatory faces about the alienated parent, when speaking on the telephone.

It is vital that a professional such as a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist be involved as soon as possible to deal with PAS. This is to prevent the damage caused by PAS from becoming impervious to improvement. The professional must be aware of PAS, and also its origin.

The judiciary must realize that many potential litigious parents who have been the victims of adverse brainwashing of their children give up the fight. They do this for a variety of practical reasons including...

1. The feeling that they are doing more harm to their children than good by fighting over them.
2. Lack of financial resources.
3. The view that they simply do not think they can win against a determined, alienating former parent.
4. It takes much determination and is extremely time consuming, when one is already fully stretched in earning a living in order to provide for the children.

#### HOW COMMON IS IT?

It is common to hostile separations, and most non-custodial parents will have some experience of it. There are 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 court appeals will include aspects 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 the custodial parent to get rid of the other parent. There are two reasons for this. First the Children Act of 1989 took more consideration of 'the child's wishes'. That is, the child could state whether he or she wished to see the 'absent' parent. Oddly enough, though the Family court accepts the statements of such children, should that same child commit a crime, its statements would not be considered to be trustworthy as 'the child would be considered too young to appreciate the truth'.

Secondly, the Child Support Agency (CSA) separated the issues of court orders for maintenance and contact. Prior to the CSA the court issued orders for both Contact and Maintenance. Parents who defaulted on maintenance or contact were in contempt of court, but rarely was anything done about it. The CSA separated maintenance from contact. This allowed fathers defaulting on maintenance to be punished, but ignored mothers defaulting on contact. Whereas before, an illegal, but practical approach for some fathers, was to say, "No contact, then no maintenance". This was no longer an option for him as the mother would get maintenance anyway. She could stop contact claiming she was not stopping contact, but that the children no longer wished to see the father. Family courts generally accept this.

Parental Alienation offered this loophole in the law that has been commonly exploited.

For the mother to state 'The children do not wish to see the father' is not in itself sufficient for the court to stop contact. Evidence of the child's wishes must be confirmed by a Court Welfare Officer (CWO). A CWO will 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 usually 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. 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'.

The father has another disadvantage in that the majority of those involved in child welfare tend to be women. These include the Family Court magistrates, CWO's, Court Clerks, Social Workers, Teachers in lower schools, etc. In general they will identify with the mother. Also, family problems are more likely to be covered in the media by women journalists/reporters, and subjects of women abusing children are not likely to get the most coverage. This falls under the 'Feminists against Fathers' category. On the other hand women carry out most studies on Family Policies, and their work has made major contributions to bringing the plight of fathers to the public.

Parental Alienation also effects the fathers' family. The defining characteristic of PAS is that the mother will alienate the child against everyone the father has close contact with, including his family, friends, and regular acquaintances. This is different from situations where the father has

abused the child in some way and the child actually does hate the father. In those cases the mother will often seek the help and support of the fathers friends and relatives.

A common device used by mothers is to actually initiate mediation proceedings. Though outwardly this looks like she wants to resolve the problem, in fact she will use it to publicly state all the faults she finds in the father. He either lets her do this without much comment, in which case he effectively agrees with her, or he spends time denying it, in which case the mediator sees him as someone who is difficult to get on with. Either way the mediation will not lead to any resolution to the problem of him seeing his child.

### **BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS OF THE MOTHER**

Another technique is provocation; to make the father to do or say something that will be used against him. If the father can be made to lose his temper then a charge of violence or threatened violence can be brought. Here are a few examples commonly quoted.

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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 behaviour to push you past your limits and act in a way that can be quoted against you.

### **What The Mother Will Profess**

#### **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.

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

The Court Welfare Officer. She will do 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, many CWO's take on the job as a second career. The 'no win' aspect of the job does not attract high flyers.

Many have very little experience or training in the area of Family law or child psychology. 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.

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. A typical magistrate may well have been a legal secretary or similar occupation 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.

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 many know, the Judges insistence that a mother obeys the court order is no guarantee that she will.

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.

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.

The situation is basically that the father will have great difficulty in seeing his children unless...

1. The mother stands to gain by letting him see them.
2. The mother stands to lose if she doesn't let him see them.

Though the legal situation may not change, the circumstances do. Children grow up, want more, become independent, argue with the mother and feel deprived of the father and what he can offer. A father deprived of his children has lost more than can be put into words, but he is in a better position to start a new family (and very many do). He has more chance of following a career, more chance of development in his interests.

The mother has the children, and initially all the benefits, but without the father she has to devote all her time to the children, and in many cases this totally occupies her. Once the children are in their teens she may lose them and have little else in life. Even if she has another partner, the children rarely accept the new father totally. Put another way, a mother who alienates the children against the father has a short-term gain against a long term loss. She will never regain her children's confidence when they are adults, and many are bitter when they realise they lost the father due to the mother's attitude to father rather than the father's attitude to them. There is also the aspect of the father's Will. The mother aware that she will not inherit anything from the father may dismiss his resources, but the children who find they have lost their inheritance from him due to her may feel cheated by her, not him.

There are no rules as everyone's case is unique, but there are 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. If you are, then the mother has achieved her purpose.
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 at local schools or clubs 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 FNF or similar self-help organisation. Helping others helps you. The worst feeling is of helplessness. Doing something 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 FNF 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.

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

There is no clear-cut answer to this. In some cases the mother does it with intent 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 FNF members showed the following variety of reasons. In many cases there will be several different reasons combined.

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. She feels he is unworthy to be a father and doesn't deserve the children.
8. Other women hostile to men egg on the mother. Typically this occurs 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 line 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, or even getting him back.
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. This is common when he may be violent towards her but not the children, but she claims the children are also hurt.
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 father's 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. The mother fears the children will leave her for him if they have too much time with 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.
29. She may have children by other fathers and be a 'serial mother' not seeing any of the fathers.
30. Her family may not like the father and encourage her to leave him.

### **HAVING A PLAN**

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

There are no rules as everyone's case is unique, but there are 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. If you are, then the mother has achieved her purpose.

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 at local schools or clubs 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 any self-help organisation. Helping others helps you. The worst feeling is of helplessness. Doing something 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.

Remember that things change day by day. What seems impossible today might seem resolvable tomorrow. Here are a few real instances of changes that have happened to bring children back to the father.

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 parking tickets 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.