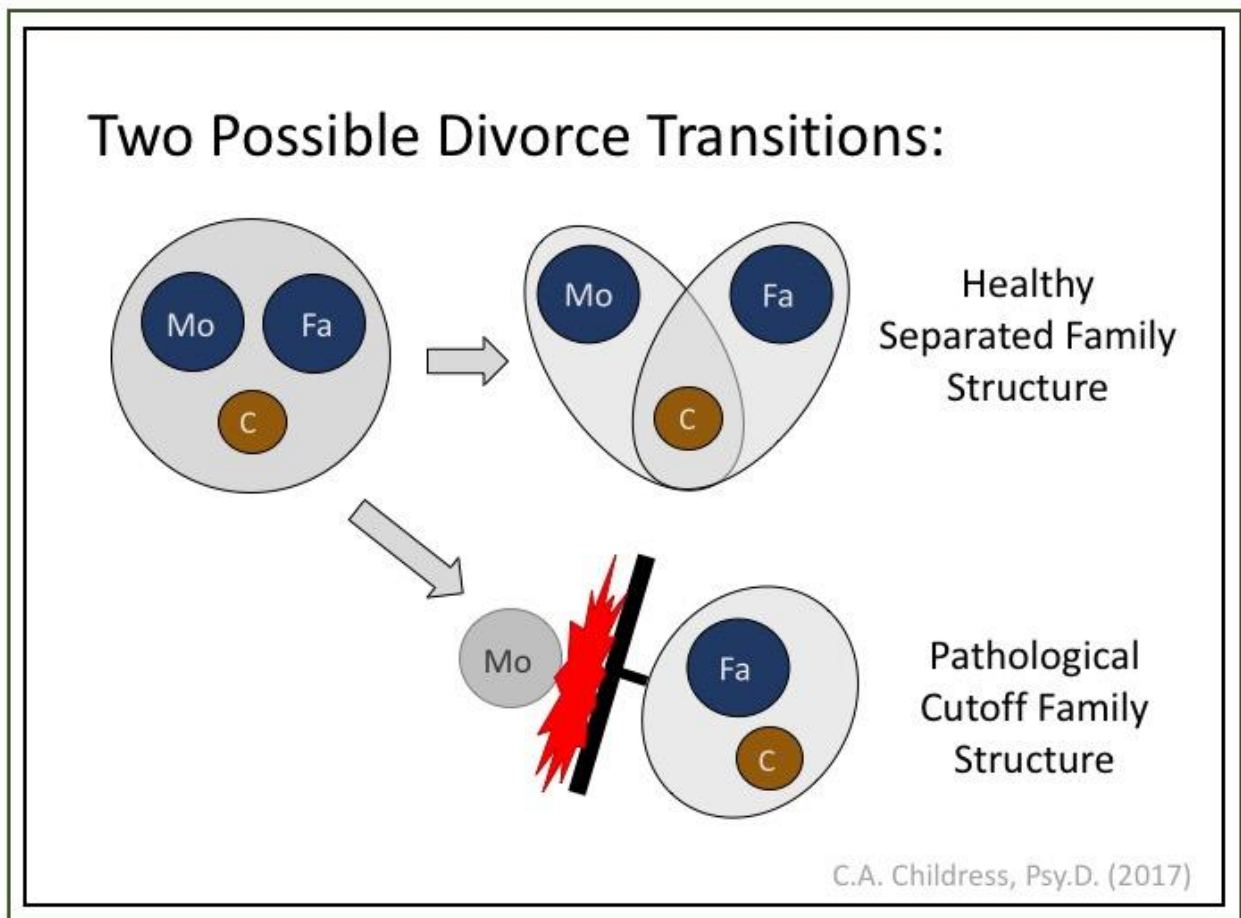


Guide for School Principals and Teachers



Children who reject a parent

It is not always easy for professionals working with children to understand when a child rejects or refuses to have a healthy relationship with a parent. We will attempt to make it clearer so that those working with children can more easily recognize, understand, and help.



Be aware of psychological abuse

If you work with children affected by psychological violence or psychological abuse, you must be aware that there may be someone saying bad things about the other parent that are not true. Psychological violence affects children and their behavior and can create great anxiety. Children affected by psychological violence often develop a fixed behavior where they reject one parent and form a strong alliance with the other. This is called a **cross-generational coalition**.

Alienation and manipulation

The alienating parent often channels their anger through the child toward the other parent in an inappropriate way. In recent years, an increasing number of accusations against one parent have been seen, ranging from claims that the child is afraid of the parent to more serious accusations such as violence and sexual abuse. Most of these accusations turn out to be unsubstantiated.

Purpose of the guide

This guide is designed to help you understand the behavior seen in children when they are affected by psychological violence. The behavioral characteristics are often very clear. If you understand this behavior, you are better able to help children living under these circumstances. When a child rejects a parent, this is called psychological violence from a close relation – also known as **Parental Alienation**.

You may have heard of the term before, or it may be new to you. This guide helps you deepen what you know and introduces you to the concept of psychological violence. Perhaps you haven't heard of it before, but you may still recognize the psychological violence as the guide unfolds.

Challenges for teachers

One of the biggest challenges for teachers working with children exposed to psychological abuse is when a child says they do not want to see the other parent and insists that this parent must not come to school events or even be on school grounds. This can put the school in a difficult position, and many schools choose to comply with the child's wish because they lack experience with psychological violence. If the school makes such a decision, it sends a signal to the child that one parent is acceptable while the other is not.

The school's role

Even when the school tries not to get involved, it is often drawn into psychological violence. Children need the school to be a safe place where both parents are welcome. It is important that the school clearly communicates that both parents are important to the child. Children should not have the right or responsibility to make the decision to reject one parent and align with the other. When this happens, it is a clear sign of psychological violence and can indicate a deeper problem in the family, such as deliberate manipulation, **grooming**, and psychological control from one parent.

Serious signs

When you see a child who strongly refuses and rejects a parent, it should raise your concern at the same level as with sexual abuse. It should prompt you to inform the police and the municipality.

The common perception of a child rejecting a parent is that the parent must have done something to cause that rejection in the first place. In reality, in these cases, it is generally misunderstood; the reason the child rejected the parent often turns out to be flimsy and weak. Children will tell us they do not want to see a parent because that parent made them eat broccoli or because the parent makes them do their homework. Another example could be that the parent did something that made the other parent angry.

Children do not reject a parent unless there is psychological violence, sexual abuse, gross neglect, or maltreatment. Most of the accusations raised are found to be unsubstantiated.

Characteristics of children exposed to psychological violence

The behavior seen in these children is very clear. If you understand this behavior, you are better able to help children living under these circumstances. When a child rejects a parent, this is called psychological violence from a close relation – also known as Parental Alienation.

One of the greatest difficulties for teachers is when children say they do not want to see the other parents and insist that they must not come to school events or be on school grounds. This can place the school in a difficult position, and many schools choose to follow the child's wish because they lack experience with psychological violence. If the school makes such a decision, it sends a signal to the child that one parent is acceptable while the other is not.

Even when the school tries not to get involved, it is often drawn into psychological violence. Children need the school to be a safe and neutral place where both parents are welcome. The message to the children must be that both parents are important, even if the child says they do not want to see one of them!

The school's responsibility and duty to act

When you see a child who strongly refuses and rejects a parent, it should raise your concern at the same level as with physical violence and sexual abuse. It should prompt you to inform the police and the municipality. (cps)

It is important to understand that children do not reject a parent without reason. In the absence of clear evidence of abuse, the child must be made aware that their rejection will not be upheld by the school. This sends a clear signal that both parents are important in the child's life and that the child can return to learning and playing like other children.

Psychological splitting and consequences

Children exposed to psychological violence often use a defense mechanism called **psychological splitting**. This means they see the world in black-and-white extremes – either something is all good, or it is all bad. This way of thinking can lead to generalized anxiety, insomnia, lack of focus, and problems with learning.

Children who become psychologically split are often unnecessarily involved in adult problems and lose the ability to enjoy play and learning. The school can help by having a clear policy for psychological violence, just as policies exist for sexual abuse.

A clear school policy for psychological violence conveys to staff and parents what the school will do if symptoms of psychological violence are found, and the school will communicate directly with both parents. Psychological violence is not permitted.

- **Provide information and newsletters** to both parents, not just via the child.
- **Document observations and concerns.**



Silent Screams...

International Ekspert

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Parental Alienation Awareness Organization EU

Eksposethem.eu