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<p>Version 1 – for PAAA= Revision 1 – major revision and Banner – Incorporating other professional summaries</p>	<p>12 February 2013 Andries van Tonder 27 February 2021</p>

# Parental alienation is psychological and emotional abuse of the child

## Psychological and Emotional

Psychological and emotional are close entities, particularly in simple practical terms.

Psychology is more medical (mental illness, health, studying human behaviour) and emotional is a psychological experience or feelings.

The emotional impact might be to make you upset, or scared, or unhappy, but the psychological impact would be to cause or increase someone's tendency to mental afflictions, such as depression, or paranoia, or phobias. So psychological harm is usually more serious, and a deeper problem.

## Emotional abuse as summarised by TUSLA (Child and Family Agency) Ireland

Note <https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/definitions-of-child-abuse/#E>

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rejection</li> <li>• Lack of comfort and love</li> <li>• Lack of attachment</li> <li>• Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)</li> <li>• Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)</li> <li>• Continuous lack of praise and encouragement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions</li> <li>• Extreme over-protectiveness</li> <li>• Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)</li> </ul> |
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- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence

- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

## Psychological abuse summarised:

(Search the term “Recognition of Child Abuse for the Mandated Reporter” C4 on the Internet.)

- Acts of commission
- Acts of omission
- Presence of hostile behaviour
- Absence of positive parenting techniques

## The eight acts

### Terrorising a child

- making the child feel excessively guilty
- behaving chaotically to frighten the child
- punishing the child by playing on normal childhood fears
- using bizarre means of discipline
- laughing/ridiculing the child when frightened or putting the child down for expressing normal fears
- threatening/continually threatening suicide/abandonment
- refusing to comfort the infant in distress
- knowingly allowing the child to be involved in, or view violent behaviour
- threatening/frightening child with guns, knives, whips, etc.
- disciplining child inconsistently/capriciously
- routinely engaging in fights/frightening behaviour in front of the child

### Verbal Assault

- constant name-calling, cursing and insulting, harsh threats, sarcastic put-downs that

continually beat down the child's self-esteem with humiliation

## Corrupting and Exploiting

- encouraging & reinforcing destructive, antisocial behaviour until the child is so impaired in socio-emotional development that interaction in normal environments isn't possible
- using child as a spy

## Too much pressure

- using subtle but consistent pressure on child to grow up quickly & achieve too early in areas of academics, physical, motor skills, social interactions, leaving child feeling never good enough

## Over exposing the child

- domestic violence
- community violence
- violent games
- other behaviour that prevent child's personal safety

## Wilfully ignoring and failing to

- respond to the child's needs
- stimulate the child in an appropriate manner
- look at the child or call the child by name
- attach/bond to child
- recognize the child's presence
- show affection for the child
- be psychologically available on a consistent basis

## Rejecting the child by

- belittling/ridiculing

- purposefully & continually embarrassing child
- singling child out for criticism/punishment
- failing to allow child to develop autonomy/independence
- undermining child's attachment with others
- routinely rejecting child's ideas
- calling child names i.e. dumb, stupid, freak, nerd
- routinely putting child down publicly & privately
- inappropriately attributing undesirable characteristics to the child
- continuing to treat adolescent as young
- denying child needs/making child meet his/her own needs
- refusing access to needed psychological/medical/educational services

## Isolating the child by-

- disallowing child to participate in normal family routine
- disallowing child normal contact with peers
- physically separating child from family unit
- disallowing child to participate in social aspects of school
- routinely teaching child to avoid and distrust peers
- locking child in room, basement, attic
- punishing requests for interaction with family or others
- binding or gagging child to prevent interaction
- refusing to allow child contact with non-custodial parent, grandparent, siblings without justifiable reason
- hiding child from outside world

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### Reference:

- Recognition of Child Abuse for the Mandated Reporter 4E 4th Edition by [Angelo P. Giardino](#) (Author), [Linda Shaw](#) (Author), [Patricia M Speck](#) (Author), [Eileen R. Giardino](#) (Author)
- <https://parentalalienationspeaks.com/>
- Michael Corry
- <https://tusla.ie>
- and more