

# Diagnostic Checklist for Pathogenic Parenting: Extended Version

C.A. Childress, Psy.D. (2015/2017)

All three of the diagnostic indicators must be present (either 2a OR 2b) for a clinical diagnosis of attachment-based “parental alienation.” Sub-threshold clinical presentations can be further evaluated using a “Response to Intervention” trial.

## 1. Attachment System Suppression

Present	Sub-Threshold	Absent	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The child’s symptoms evidence a selective and targeted suppression of the normal-range functioning of the child’s attachment bonding motivations toward one parent, the targeted-rejected parent, in which the child seeks to entirely terminate a relationship with this parent (i.e., a child-initiated cutoff in the child’s relationship with a normal-range and affectionally available parent).

### Secondary Criterion: **Normal-Range Parenting:**

yes	no	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The parenting practices of the targeted-rejected parent are assessed to be broadly normal-range, with due consideration given to the wide spectrum of acceptable parenting that is typically displayed in normal-range families.

Normal-range parenting includes the legitimate exercise of parental prerogatives in establishing desired family values through parental expectations for desired child behavior and normal-range discipline practices.

## 2(a). Personality Disorder Traits

Present	Sub-Threshold	Absent	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The child’s symptoms evidence all five of the following narcissistic/(borderline) personality disorder features displayed toward the targeted-rejected parent.

### Sub-Criterion Met

yes	no	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Grandiosity:</b> The child displays a grandiose perception of occupying an inappropriately elevated status in the family hierarchy that is above the targeted-rejected parent from which the child feels empowered to sit in judgment of the targeted-rejected parent as both a parent and as a person.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Absence of Empathy:</b> The child displays a complete absence of empathy for the emotional pain being inflicted on the targeted-rejected parent by the child’s hostility and rejection of this parent.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Entitlement:</b> The child displays an over-empowered sense of entitlement in which the child expects that his or her desires will be met by the targeted-rejected parent to the child’s satisfaction, and if the rejected parent fails to meet the child’s entitled expectations to the child’s satisfaction then the child feels entitled to enact a retaliatory punishment on the rejected parent for the child’s judgment of parental failures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Haughty and Arrogant Attitude:</b> The child displays an attitude of haughty arrogance and contemptuous disdain for the targeted-rejected parent.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Splitting:</b> The child evidences polarized extremes of attitude toward the parents, in which the supposedly “favored” parent is idealized as the all-good and nurturing parent while the rejected parent is entirely devalued as the all-bad and entirely inadequate parent.

## **2(b). Phobic Anxiety Toward a Parent**

Present	Sub-Threshold	Absent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The child's symptoms evidence an extreme and excessive anxiety toward the targeted-rejected parent that meets the following DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for a specific phobia:

Criterion Met	yes	no
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- |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Persistent Unwarranted Fear:</b> The child displays a persistent and unwarranted fear of the targeted-rejected parent that is cued either by the presence of the targeted parent or in anticipation of being in the presence of the targeted parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Severe Anxiety Response:</b> The presence of the targeted-rejected parent almost invariably provokes an anxiety response which can reach the levels of a situationally provoked panic attack.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Avoidance of Parent:</b> The child seeks to avoid exposure to the targeted parent due to the situationally provoked anxiety or else endures the presence of the targeted parent with great distress.  |

## **3. Fixed False Belief**

Present	Sub-Threshold	Absent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The child's symptoms display an intransigently held, fixed and false belief maintained despite contrary evidence (a delusion) regarding the child's supposed "victimization" by the normal-range parenting of the targeted-rejected parent (an encapsulated persecutory delusion). The child's beliefs carry the implication that the normal-range parenting of the targeted-rejected parent are somehow "abusive" toward the child. The parenting practices of the targeted-rejected parent are assessed to be broadly normal-range.

## **DSM-5 Diagnosis**

If the three diagnostic indicators of attachment-based "parental alienation" are present in the child's symptom display (either 2a or 2b), the appropriate DSM-5 diagnosis is:

### DSM-5 Diagnosis

309.4 Adjustment Disorder with mixed disturbance of emotions and conduct

V61.20 Parent-Child Relational Problem

V61.29 Child Affected by Parental Relationship Distress

V995.51 Child Psychological Abuse, Confirmed (pathogenic parenting)

## Checklist of Associated Clinical Signs (ACS)

evident	not evident																												
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 1: Use of the Word “Forced”																											
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 2: Enhancing Child Empowerment to Reject the Other Parent																											
		<table border="0"> <tr> <td>evident</td> <td>not evident</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>“Child should decide on visitation”</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>“Listen to the child”</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Advocating for child testimony</td> </tr> </table>	evident	not evident		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	“Child should decide on visitation”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	“Listen to the child”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advocating for child testimony															
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 4: Parental Replacement																											
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 5: The Unforgivable Event																											
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 6: Liar – “Fake”																											
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 7: Themes for Rejection																											
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 9: Excessive Texting, Phone Calls, and Emails																											
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 10: Role-Reversal Use of the Child (“It’s not me, it’s the child who...”)																											
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 11: Targeted Parent “Deserves” to be Rejected																											
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ACS 12: Allied Parent Disregards Court Orders and Court Authority																											
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