

THE “BRAINWASHING” PROCESS

Clawar and Rivlin (1991) defined the interactional process by which the child is persuaded to accept and elaborate on the brainwashing program. Brainwashing occurs over time and involves repetition of the program, or code words referring to the program, until the child responds with additional and behavioral compliance.

Clawar and Rivlin identified eight stages of the programming/brainwashing process which results in severe Parental Alienation situations. The eight stage step-by-step process involves the following:

- i) A thematic focus to be shared by the alienating/programming parent and child emerges or is deliberately chosen by the parent. This may be a result of some form of ideology which can be related to the family itself, religion, an ethnic belief or other focus.
- ii) A sense of support and connection for the child toward the programming parent is created.
- iii) Feelings of sympathy for the programming parent are induced in the child.
- iv) The child begins to show signs of compliance, such as expressing fear of visiting the targeted parent or refusing to talk to the targeted parent on the phone.

- v) The programming parent tests the child's compliance in various ways. For example, the parent may ask the child questions after a visit and reward the child for giving "correct" answers to the parent's questions. (i.e., Did you have a good time? No I had a lousy time, I never have any fun when I go there).
- vi) The programming parent tests the child's loyalty by having the child express views and attitudes that suggest a preference for the alienating parent over the targeted parent. (i.e., Where do you have the most fun? If you had a choice which parent would you like to live with?, etc).
- vii) There is an escalation/generalization that occurs as the program is broadened with embellished or new allegations. The result is the child rejects the targeted parent in a global and unambivalent fashion.
- viii) The program is maintained along with the child's compliance by the alienating parent. This may be done with minor reminders and suggestions including intense pressure. The kind of maintenance required seems to depend on Court activity, the child's frame of mind, what the targeted parent is doing etc.