

# Reuniting with Adult Alienated Children

I hear from many parents of adult alienated children. In direct contradiction to the advice of many well-meaning therapists, when a child is out of touch with a parent for a long period of time this can raise formidable obstacles to ever achieving a reconciliation.

As I mention in my book, [Divorce Poison: Protecting the Parent-Child Bond From a Vindictive Ex](#), when alienated children grow up and become involved in close relationships, in some cases the alienated parent can make contact with the friend or spouse of the alienated child and use that as a bridge to reconnecting. Because the reasons given don't justify the complete rejection of a parent, and because someone who is not as close to the situation is more able to see things objectively and realize that there are two sides to every story, the new friend or spouse may encourage the alienated child to reach out to the rejected parent.

**To increase the likelihood of recovering the relationship, it is important to get a message to the child, either directly or through a mutual contact, that you have never stopped loving the child and would welcome a reunion.**

You do not want your child to expect an uncomfortable confrontation when first seeing you, or recriminations for past behavior. Most alienated children who reconcile do not want to discuss the past or acknowledge their shabby treatment of the parent. Although psychotherapists generally favor discussing past conflicts and facing them openly, in the case of a parent and child reconnecting after years of estrangement, it is better to focus on rebuilding the relationship than on rehashing the past. In some cases, once a stronger relationship is established, the past can be talked about in a gentle and noncritical manner.

**If there is any crisis in the life of the alienated child, this can be an especially effective time to reconnect by offering assistance and caring.**

Teenagers, in particular, are likely to reach out to a formerly rejected parent in a time of crisis, provided that the teenager is confident that the parent will be receptive to any overtures.

In cases where there does not seem to be any possibility of achieving a successful reconciliation, I have sometimes recommended sending a copy of my book to the adult child with a note that you found the book helpful in understanding what has happened to your relationship and that you hope it will open up the child's eyes enough to give you both a second chance at a rewarding parent-child relationship. It may help for the spouse or a good friend of the alienated parent to write a note to the child expressing an interest in meeting the child and expressing the opinion that "Your Dad is not the ogre you seem to think he is." Remember, if you are having no contact, there is little to lose by making some attempt to reconnect. I have been gratified that my book has served as a catalyst for reunions. In one case, after reading my book, the spouse of an alienated parent realized that her own alienation from her father was inappropriate and she promptly called him and reestablished a

normal relationship.

**Reconciling with alienated children is a delicate process and the relationship is especially fragile in the early stages of the reconciliation.**

A misstep or an ill-considered remark can torpedo what had been a promising beginning. For this reason I recommend that parents get assistance from someone who can coach them through the process. If the coach has experience with these situations this can make the difference between success and failure. If a coach is not available or affordable, choose someone whom you trust to be wise and objective, and confide in this person about how things are going in your efforts to repair the damaged relationship.

**It is important to realize that, even if your efforts are unsuccessful, you may have planted seeds that will bear fruit some time in the future.**

Divorce poison and its aftermath cause so much anguish and suffering. It is my hope that the media will give increasing attention to this problem and that this will make it easier for adult alienated children to recognize and face what is missing in their lives.

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