



Trauma
Care

Newsletter

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Influence of Parents H A P

Hostile Aggressive Parenting Raising a child in a hostile-aggressive parenting environment is, without a doubt, one of the most **serious forms of child abuse and maltreatment imaginable**. The behaviours of HAP parents can seriously affect their children's emotional, social, and intellectual development in many ways.



To those with the knowledge to identify HAP, most children living under the influence of an HAP parent will exhibit some signs of being adversely affected.

Particular parental behaviors, such as maternal rejection or severe punishment, do not operate in isolation but occur in conjunction with other aspects of the home environment. In addition, the child's behavior may well affect his parent's reactions to him so that it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a particular parental method of handling a child is a cause or is a result of the child's actions. Second, a variety of methods, all subject to varying degrees of distortion and other sources of error, have been used to assess parental attitudes and behaviors.

Although parental punishment is intended to inhibit aggression, research has provided surprisingly little evidence of inhibitory effects. Theoretically, the use of strong punishment, especially physical punishment, can facilitate as well as discourage aggressive behavior. Since punishment is a source of frustration and pain, it may stimulate anger and aggressive tendencies. The parent who uses physical aggression in punishing his child is also serving as an aggressive model. The child, through imitation, may be acquiring aggressive response patterns although ostensibly being taught that aggression is bad. It is perhaps not surprising then that several investigators have found that severity of parental punishment for aggression is associated with the child's aggression in doll play and in other forms of fantasy.



HAP must be taken very seriously for it can significantly affect the child for his/her lifetime. The harm as a result of HAP can often be classified as **Complex Post Traumatic Disorder** with the same affect on the child as it does on an adult.

In many cases, it is not unusual for a child to exhibit signs of affection and love towards a HAP parent at some times which can be very confusing to the occasional or untrained observer who may see the child showing affection to the HAP parent at some particular time.



Psychologists have recognized for years that even children living under the care of abusive caregivers, often will have deep seated loyalties to those who may be physically and emotionally abusing them. Most children often long for the love and approval from their caregivers so it is not uncommon for a child who is being abused by an HAP parent to be seen showing affection at some times to their HAP parents. Where an HAP parent has been successful in alienating the child from another parent, the child may have the HAP parent as the only source of what the child

Behavioural problems

Children exposed to Hostile-Aggressive Parenting likely will demonstrate a number of behavioural problems ranging from minor to serious as a result of their exposure to HAP. These problems may be observable at school, in the home and in the community. Some studies have shown that as much as 85% of children with behavioural problems come from single parent (usually fatherless) homes. Behaviour problems associated with children of separation and divorce generally are the result of two contributing factors, both of which are closely connected to HAP parenting.

When children observe their HAP parent acting in an **anti-social and aggressive manner** over an extended period of time they often pick up on a number of these behaviours and over time, consider them to be socially acceptable. Children are a product of their environment and do learn what they live. Children living under the influence of a hostile-aggressive parent may become themselves, selfish, self centred and have growing anger management difficulties as years pass on.

Children who are being physically abused or yelled at constantly by a HAP parent will begin to deal with their own problems in the same manner, often **lashing verbally and physically** at siblings or schoolmates. Many of these negative behaviours are often observable at the child's school. HAP behaviours picked up by a child from the HAP parent will, in many cases, seriously affect a child's development and interfere with their ability to lead a normal and balanced life.



Some professionals may misdiagnose the child as having a conduct disorder and prescribe medication but, in reality, these professionals fail to realize that the child's own parent is instilling these types of negative and Some young children who exhibit behavioural problems as a result of exposure to HAP parents do improve over the years. However, at least half or more get worse.

Older children often develop a hostile, aggressive attitude as well as being **disobedient and defiant** to parents and authorities. Often these children get involved in more violent physical fights and may start to use weapons. They may steal or lie, without any sign of remorse or guilt when they are found out. They refuse to follow rules and may start to **break the law**. Teenagers exposed to the influences of an HAP parent start to manipulate the parents so that they can get anything they want. Remember, when children witness their HAP parent lie and deceive people and get away with it, then the child may develop the same attitude that if their parent can get away with it, then they can too.

Often, the parent who may have practiced HAP parenting when the child was younger, now find themselves held hostage to a child terrorist. HAP parents, fearful that the child may leave them and go to the other parent if they don't get their way, often fall prey by letting the child set their own limits. The fear of losing child support payment, alone, is enough to make a parent ignore good parenting just to maintain their legal control over the child. Many of these affected children get involved in criminal activities. They may steal cars, break into houses or shoplift. They may take risks with their health and safety by taking illegal drugs or having unprotected sexual intercourse.

Children are less likely to act out aggressively when their parents use more effective parenting techniques than those who rely on hostile-aggressive techniques such as reacting to their child's wishes to have a reasonable relationship with their other parent with anger, and using negative rather than positive reinforcement to the child's relationship with the other parent.

Some children develop behaviour problems as a result of **unresolved anger and frustration** because of being forced to live under the control of a hostile and controlling parent. Too often, family courts place custody of the child in the hands of the wrong parent who is often the HAP parent. Too often, the non-custodial parent is rendered helpless to assist the children and placed fully under the control of the custodial HAP parent. Children become angry and frustrated by the efforts of the HAP parent to further interfere with their relationship with the non-custodial parent. This anger and frustration develops into severe behaviour problems which affect them at school and at home. Behavioural problems caused by frustration and anger can only be effectively addressed when the children's wishes and preferences are considered and the children provided the opportunity to have a meaningful relationship with their non-custodial parent.



From an early age, children need security and safety. A young child who does not feel safe and is exposed to the behaviours of a hostile-aggressive parent may have significantly elevated levels of **anxiety**. This might show up in simple nervous behaviours (habits such as twirling hair or biting nails) or actually be seen in the development of **phobias, panic disorders, and obsessive/compulsive disorders**. The anxiety that the child exhibits may be associated with a particular person or environment, or it may be more generalized with the child constantly feeling on edge or irritable.

Children may be afraid to talk about summer holidays or about future parenting periods for fear of saying something that may offend the custodial HAP parent. Young children often use avoidance to cope with this kind of anxiety or develop other symptoms such as **nightmares, bed wetting, or physiological symptoms such as headaches or stomach distress**.

Some children adversely affected by HAP parents may suffer from enuresis (bed wetting) with some affected children known to have wet their beds well beyond the time when most children are toilet trained. Some children abused by HAP parents have reported to have been still wetting their bed even as old as eight or nine years of age.



A **change in the child's personality** toward one parent may be noticed when the child is in the presence of both parents. Such a situation may occur at a school function where both parents attend. Persons may notice that the child is very affectionate with one parent such as holding hands and appearing excited and happy. As soon as the hostile-aggressive parent comes on the scene, the child will suddenly stop showing their affection to the other parent. The child recognizes the power that the custodial parent wields over them and in order to protect themselves, the child will hide the affection they would normally give to the non-custodial parent because they know the custodial parent will disapprove of this and may become angry.

A child's **sense of self** can be negatively impacted when living under the control of an HAP parent. Levels of self-esteem (a child's positive view of him or herself) and appropriate self-confidence (a child's realistic view of their capabilities) are crucial to the ongoing psychological development and well-being of a child. When a parent or guardian assaults the child's self-esteem using hostileaggressive behaviours, often this will negatively impact the child's developmental progress. When a child has an impaired sense of self or a reduced sense of self-esteem, they are often unable to cope with situations in which there is increased stress.



Exposure to HAP during developmental years can also have an impact when children need to separate or become independent from others in later years. The child may be subject to separation anxiety disorder at a later time in life. Later in the child's development the child may have difficulty in defining his/her own boundaries or appreciating the needs and desires of others in their environment.

In addition, children raised in an environment where he/she is being exposed to hostile-aggressive parenting may lack adequate selfprotectiveness and may at greater risk of being victimized or exploited by others.

Being a parent is one of the most fulfilling experiences a person can have. The most important thing a parent can give their child, however, is a sense of being loved. Young kids are like sponges, they notice everything. As parents we are our children's first role model. Pay attention to what you say or do around them and think about what kind of example you are making



This newsletter has been issued by:
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