

Diagrams of the Family Transition as a Consequence of Divorce from an Intact Family Structure United by the Marriage to a Separated Family Structure United by the Children  
 C.A. Childress, Psy.D. (2014)

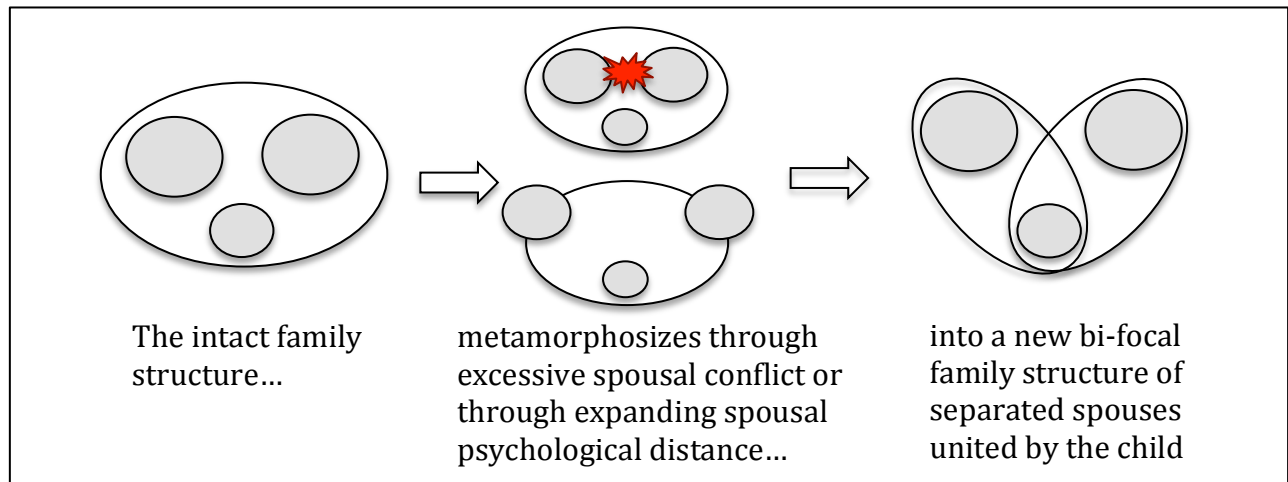


Figure 1. Family transition from an intact family structure to a separated family structure.

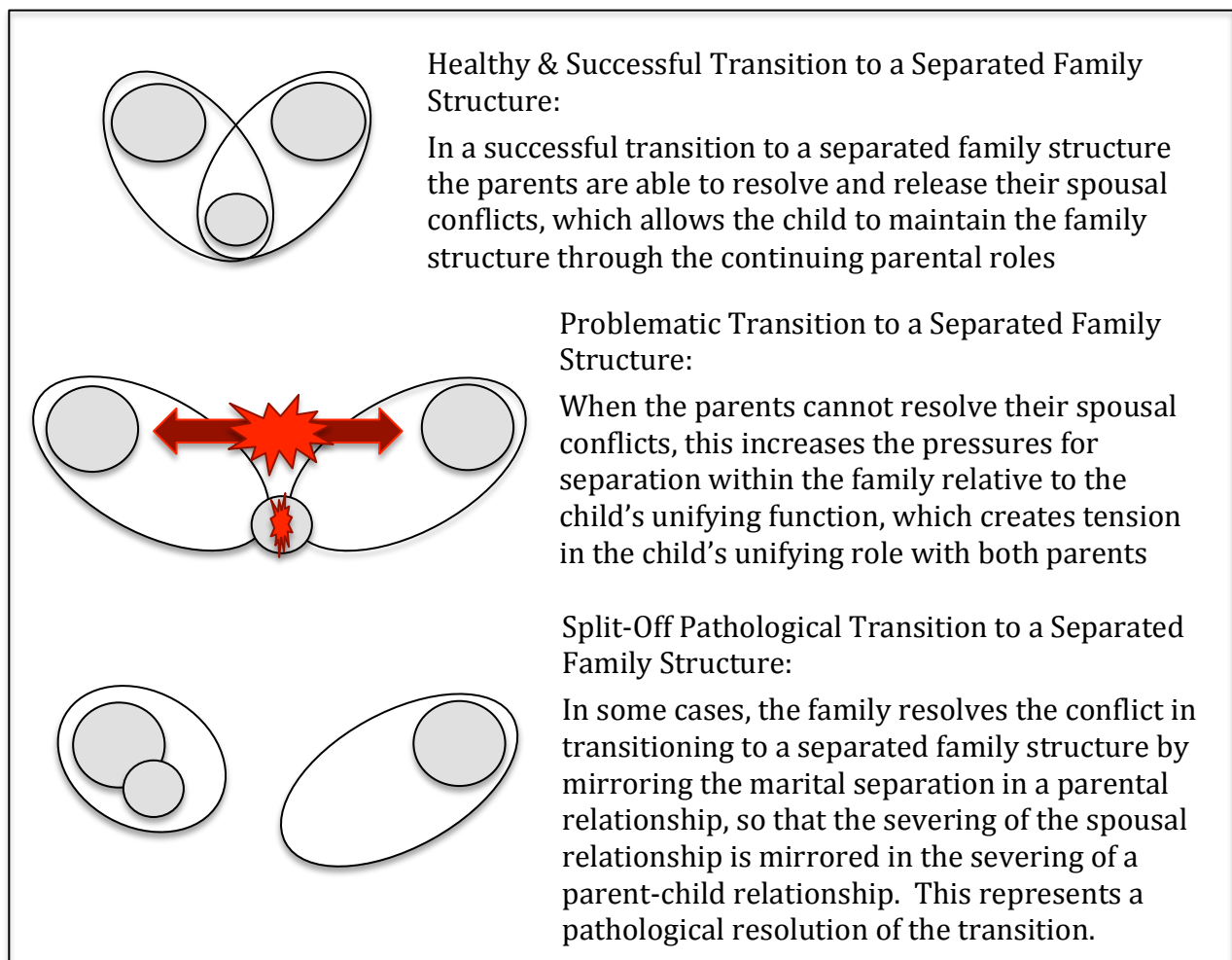


Figure 2. Healthy, problematic, and pathological family transitions from an intact family structure to a separated family structure.

## Levels for Understanding “Parental Alienation” Processes

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	Dynamic	Origin	Issue
Family Level	<p>Symptoms emerge from the family’s inability to successfully navigate the transition from an intact family structure that is united by the marriage to a separated family structure united by the children and by the continuing parental roles with the children.</p> <p>Due to one parent’s inability to adjust to a separated family structure, the termination of the marital bond also terminates a parent-child bond as a result of distorted parenting practices by the parent who is unable to process the sadness and grief of divorce.</p>	<p>A narcissistic-borderline parent is characterologically unable to experience and metabolize sadness and grief, and instead interprets sadness as “anger and resentment, loaded with revengeful wishes” (Kernberg, 1975, p. 229).</p> <p>The narcissistic-borderline parent then influences the child into interpreting the child’s own sadness and grief regarding the divorce in a similar way, as “anger and resentment, loaded with revengeful wishes” directed toward the other parent.</p>	<p>Misunderstood and unprocessed sadness and grief related to the divorce</p>
Personality Level	<p>The narcissistic-borderline parent defends against the self-experience of fundamental inadequacy and a fear of abandonment by projectively displacing these fears onto the other parent by means of the child’s induced/elicited symptomatic rejection of the other parent.</p> <p>“You’re the inadequate parent (person); not me. You’re the abandoned parent (person); not me.</p> <p>“I’m the <u>ideal</u>, never-to-be abandoned parent”</p>	<p>The inherent interpersonal rejection associated with divorce threatens to collapse the pathological parent’s narcissistic defenses against self-inadequacy and triggers an intense fear of abandonment.</p> <p>These fears represent the internal working models of the pathological parent’s attachment system, which is activated to mediate the interpersonal loss associated with the divorce.</p>	<p>The pathological parent’s own fears of inadequacy and abandonment are psychologically expelled by means of the child’s induced and elicited rejection of the other parent</p>
Attachment Level	<p>The internal working models of insecure (anxious-disorganized) attachment are activated by the interpersonal loss associated with the divorce (to mediate the experience of loss); resulting in the reenactment in current relationships of the trauma narrative contained in the tripartite pattern of: “victimized child; abusive parent; protective parent”</p>	<p>The reenactment of the trauma narrative represents the trans-generational transmission of attachment trauma patterns from the childhood of the pathological parent to the current relationships, in which the internal working models of the prior formative attachment figures become psychologically confused with and equivalent to current relationships.</p>	<p>The child is used in a “role-reversal” relationship with the pathological parent to regulate the emotional-psychological state of the parent.</p>