

From:

Childress, C.A. (2015). *An Attachment-Based Model of Parental Alienation: Single Case ABAB Assessment and Remedy*. Claremont, CA: Oaksong Press.

Appendix 2: Descriptive Analysis of High Road Protocol

Analysis of High Road to Family Reunification Protocol (Pruter, 2007-2015)

By C.A. Childress, Psy.D.

The *High Road to Family Reunification* protocol is an intensive 4-day psychoeducational intervention developed by Pruter (2007-2015)¹ to resolve the impact of negative parental influence that affects children’s relationship with the other parent. The *High Road* protocol involves a series of sequential steps that systematically restores the child’s normal-range and healthy functioning in family relationships.

The *High Road* protocol is not psychotherapy. It is a structured and systematic step-wise approach to restoring the child’s healthy family relationships. Traditional psychotherapy uses synthesizing interventions designed to integrate problematic experiences into more adaptive ways of thinking and behaving. For example, if a person were in a maladaptive psychological state “A” and the goal of therapy was to achieve a healthier psychological state of “G,” standard psychotherapy models would use synthesizing and healing interventions to create an integration of the past emotional and psychological struggles into a more adaptive current psychological state.

Traditional Psychotherapy

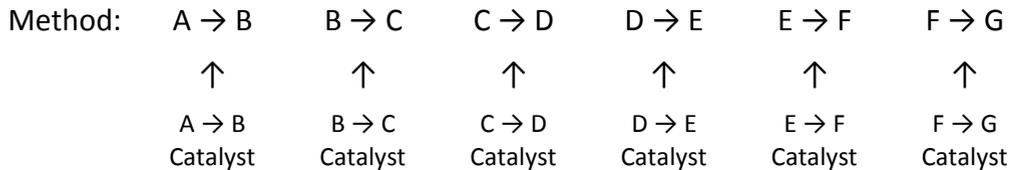
Goal: A → G

Method: Application of synthesizing therapeutic interventions to create → (AG)

Transformative Interventions:

Transformative interventions employ a fundamentally different approach to change. Transformative interventions use a structured set of catalytic interventions to sequentially change the person’s state through a series of changes to achieve the desired end result.

Goal: A → G



An example of a transformative step intervention is the 12 Step program of AA that involves a structured series of steps that leads to transformative changes. The *High Road* protocol is not a 12 Step program. The interventions used by the *High Road* protocol are uniquely developed to address parent-child and family conflict. However, the *High Road* protocol

¹ High Road to Family Reunification: www.consciousparentinginstitute.com/reunification

uses the same type of underlying transformative structure involving a series of catalytic steps to move the child and family from the currently dysfunctional psychological state to a healthier more adaptive psychological state.

The success or failure of this type of transformative catalytic intervention is dependent on two factors. First, on having the proper set of catalytic interventions, and second, on aligning these catalytic steps in the proper sequence. If an ineffective catalytic intervention is used at any point in the sequence, or the catalytic interventions are not arranged in the proper sequence, then the process comes to a halt at that step and the entire transformative intervention fails. This is contrasted with the synthesizing interventions of traditional psychotherapy that are more robust in their application. Psychotherapy is not as vulnerable to the sequence of the intervention, and a variety of synthesizing interventions are available, such as psychoanalytic models, cognitive-behavioral models, and family systems models of psychotherapy, all of which can be effective.

The reason that the catalytic interventions of the *High Road* protocol need to be delivered across a consecutive 4-day period is that the state changes created by the catalytic steps need to follow one on the other. If an extended break occurs during the delivery of the intervention, then the client's prepared psychological state can revert back to an earlier frame, and the full effect of the sequence of catalytic steps is lost. The transformative catalytic interventions of the *High Road* protocol need to be administered within a single period of time for maximum effect.

I have professionally reviewed² the *High Road to Family Reunification* protocol and in my professional opinion it contains the proper catalytic interventions in the proper sequence to effectively and efficiently resolve the issues surrounding negative parental influence on the child as a result of a cross-generational coalition of the child with one parent against the other parent. Ms. Pruter reports a 100% success rate with this protocol in over 70 families that have involved over 100 children, and based on my professional review of the protocol structure and my professional background in child development, clinical child and family therapy, and the development and expression of the attachment system during childhood, I would agree that this is a realistic and warranted appraisal of the protocol's likely effectiveness.

Protocol Structure:

The structure of the *High Road to Family Reunification* protocol uses a variety of activities and structured interventions to activate and restore the child's normal-range and healthy emotional and psychological functioning. The protocol does not seek to re-expose and resolve past grievances that can trigger guilt, blame, and defensiveness in the child. Nor does it blame either parent for the family conflict, thereby removing the child from having to take sides in the

²² Dr. Childress has no business or financial interest in or association with either the High Road to Family Reunification protocol or the Conscious Co-Parenting Institute of Ms. Pruter.

spousal conflict. This approach allows the child to love both parents without creating loyalty conflicts for the child.

The *High Road to Family Reunification* protocol structure includes:

- Reestablishing an appropriate family hierarchy of the parent's role of providing executive leadership for the family and the child role of cooperation and dialogue, as well as appropriate respect for adult authority generally and the authority of the court.
- Allowing an initial discharge of the child's emotional stress that relaxes the child and helps develop the child's trust.
- A structured series of activities that reactivate and restore normal-range empathy, compassion and kindness.
- A structured series of activities that activate increased cognitive mediation of emotional experience, which heightens self-reflection and inhibits emotional thinking and emotional discharge.
- A structured series of activities to restore normal range family communications and productive dialogue between family members.
- Semi-structured family dialogues which provide healthy non-blaming narratives for understanding family conflict.
- Semi-structured periods of supportive dialogue and empathy as normal-range attachment bonding motivations begin to reactivate.
- Structured activities to promote mutual respect and dialogue from an experience of caring and compassion.
- Semi-structured family discussions and activities that promote expressions of authentic autonomy and provide instruction in problem resolution of authentic differences.
- The entire *High Road* protocol creates permission for the child to love and to be loved.